

Bethany Lutheran Church

22384 State Rd 48/87

P.O. Box 8

Grantsburg, WI 54840

(715) 463-5746

Pastor's home phone number (715) 463-5552

blchurch@grantsburgtelcom.net

www.bethanylutheran.grantsburg.org

Sunday Worship

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Worship

Women's Circle Meetings for December

Hope.....Meeting has taken place prior to this printing.

Love..... Meeting has taken place prior to this printing.

Faith..... Meeting has taken place prior to this printing.

December, 2008 From Bethany Lutheran Church ELCA

Dear friends in Christ,

We don't often have the opportunity to hear from Bishop Mark Hanson, the presiding Bishop of the ELCA. Last year about this time there was a program that aired entitled "In God's Name." This was a two-hour television program that featured 12 of the "world's most influential religious leaders," including ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. The program, produced by Jules and Gedeon Naudet, and aired on CBS, Dec. 23, 2007. I have had the opportunity to hear him speak on several occasions and the Bishop is an extraordinary speaker. Since we don't have this opportunity often, I would like to share Bishop Hanson's Christmas message with you this month.

In Christ,

Pastor Jay

2008 Christmas Message

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ~ Luke 2:15

Let's go! Now! When angels came to some shepherds with a brilliant message one night long ago, the shepherds had a brilliant idea. *Let's go! Let's see what God is doing!*

The unknown dangers of the night did not hold them back. Perhaps they knew that some of God's best work is done under the cover of darkness — the creation of all things, wrestling with Jacob, Israel's escape from slavery.

Or maybe they didn't. Maybe all they needed was the announcement of what God was up to this time. This time God would be conducting a rescue like none before — saving the whole world, bringing peace and goodwill. Once again it's an undercover operation — God hidden deep in the flesh and working "under the sign of opposites" (as Martin Luther called it). Arriving as a baby in diapers, God's Son recruited tax collectors and fishermen, social misfits and despised sinners in a rescue mission that culminated in the hidden power of the cross.

What if the shepherds had yawned, "That's interesting, some other time," and remained sitting in the night, in the dirt, in the comfort of predictable hardships and familiar enemies? Would promised joy have found them anyway?

Let's not test that speculation with our lives. *Let's go! Let's see what God is doing!*

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson

Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Greetings from Luther Point!
December 2008

Bethany Walker Resigning Post as Program Coordinator: It is with sincere regret that we announce the resignation of Bethany Walker as our Program Coordinator. Bethany wrote the following in her letter of resignation, "After many months of discerning and prayerful consideration I have

decided to leave my position as Program Coordinator at Luther Point so that I can focus more on being a mom." Her last day of work will be December 19, 2008.

This is a great loss for the ministry of Luther Point Bible Camp. Bethany is a person of deep faith in Christ Jesus our Lord and that has been evident in her dedicated and committed work here at Luther Point for the past three years. She will be greatly missed by our staff and all who have been touched by her ministry here.

Let us come together with words of "Thanks be to God" for the gifts that Bethany has brought to this ministry. In her resignation letter, Bethany also reminded us that "God is Faithful" and it is with trust and hope in God's faithfulness that we move forward with confidence that God will continue to provide for the needs of Luther Point as we seek to find a new program coordinator.

Grace and Peace be with Bethany, Nate and Lillian as they move into their next chapter on their faith journey. Thank you so much for your dedicated and committed service to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through your witness here at Luther Point Bible Camp over the past three years.

RETREAT OFFERINGS: Check our website for more details regarding upcoming retreat events scheduled for this fall and winter months, some of the offerings include:

- **Grandparent /Grandchild Weekend Camp:** December 6-7
- **New Year's Family Retreat:** December 31-January 1, 2009
- **Senior High Weekend Camp:** March 14-15, 2009
- **3rd-5th Grade Weekend Camp:** March 21-22, 2009
- **Prayer Shawl Retreat:** April 21, 2009, 9 am-3pm

Register online or call and talk with Lisa. 715-689-2347

Windfall Gifts Still Needed in December: As mentioned last month, the camp experienced a significant decline in camper participation this past summer. The decline has caused the camp to be in a deficit spending situation. We lay this situation out before you and ask for your prayerful consideration to share a year-end gift with the ministry here at Luther Point.

This ministry continues to impact hundreds of people every year on their journey of faith. Outdoor ministries is vital to raising up future leaders in the Christian Church. Our trust and hope is in Christ Jesus as we move into the coming months.

Thank you for your partnership! Craig M. Corbin, Director

Ring in the New Year at Luther Point Bible Camp!!

New Year's Eve Retreat

December 31, 2008-January 1, 2009

5 pm-10 am

Gather your family and friends and bring them to Luther Point for a family friendly New Year's Eve Celebration. Camp is beautiful in the winter whether you use the sledding hill, gather round a bonfire, build a snowman or enjoy the warmth of the indoors while playing board games.

The cost of this retreat will be \$60/room (each room sleeps five people) and \$10/person for meals. This cost includes lodging in the Retreat Center, two meals and a snack. You can reserve your room for this celebration online at LutherPoint.org. Begin 2009 with Christ at the center.

Luther Point Bible Camp, 11525 Luther Point Road, Grantsburg, WI 54840 (715)689-2347



2008 Christmas Message from the Bishop

“. . . an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, „Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. “” [Matthew 1:20b-21]



The Christmas story according to Matthew doesn't have the same flare that Luke's familiar account has. There is no census, no journey to Bethlehem, no manger, no shepherds, no angel chorus. The story in Matthew is told from the perspective of Joseph, a nervous man who finds his intended bride pregnant, and the actual birth of Jesus is referred to only in the past tense: “. . . until she had borne him a son; and he named him Jesus.” No, Matthew's account just doesn't have the same flare as Luke's.

Nevertheless, Matthew's story has its own uniqueness, its own witness. What I like most about Matthew's account is the emphasis on the name of the child—Jesus.

In biblical times, names were extremely important. A person's name often carried deep meaning and sometimes revealed the very character of the person. *Jacob* means *he who supplants*, and he supplanted his brother Esau. *Peter* means *rock*, because his confession is the bedrock upon which lives of faith are built. *Isaac* means *he who laughs*, for Sarah laughed at the thought of having a child in her old age.

Our granddaughter turns three in December. I remember the amount of thought that went into choosing Mya Rayne as her name. *Mya* means *great*; *Rayne* is a Norwegian nickname that means *queen, pure*. My name, *Duane*, means *little dark one* – hmm, I wonder what my parents were thinking!

Back to Matthew's Christmas story! *Jesus* means *he who saves*. The Lord's name reflects who he is, why he was sent, and what his life would mean to us all. Names matter, and when we witness in the name of Jesus, or when we pray in the name of Jesus, or when we serve in the name of Jesus, we do so with the full freight of the one who died and rose for us. The Savior saves us from all that would hold us captive, all that would separate us from God, all that would diminish us as God's beloved.

Sometimes the manger, shepherds and angels of Luke's Christmas story can get in the way of Jesus, the one who saves from sin. But the words of an angel to Joseph keep us centered squarely on who Jesus is and why he came. Jesus is the Savior, the one who came to save you and me from our sins.

Merry Christmas!
Bishop Duane Pederson

From the Secretary's Desk...December 2008

Greetings friends,

Here we are at the end of another year, in the month of transitions. December is when we as the church transition from one church year into the next, it's when we transition from the season of Advent into the season of Christmas, it's even when we transition from one calendar year into the next. Let's face it December is rife with transition! As if there were not enough already I must add one more: I will be leaving as church secretary.

A recent family decision following many months of discerning has led Bethany, Lillian and I away from this place. Bethany yearns to be home full time with Lillian and as we have sought a situation in which we can do this we've found that it will require us to leave Grantsburg. We will be moving in early January and thus I will no longer be able to fulfill my duties as secretary. It has been an enjoyable time while I've been here but God is calling us to a different place. I thank you for the opportunity to serve you in this capacity and I wish you all many blessings in the future.

As I transition out of this position I am happy to announce that Larissa Lee will be transitioning in. She is a very capable person who will do a wonderful job as your church secretary.

As I reflect on Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

This verse comes into play in my life in times of change and challenge as I am reminded that God calls us to run the race with perseverance. I must trust that the Lord will provide as he always does. I must continue forward knowing that with each step I am closer to where he would have me in his good plan for me. If you too are running such a race take heart and know that God and our great cloud of witnesses, watch over us and care for us.

May the steadfast and providing Lord care for us, one and all, as our lives change and our roads diverge. May you all be blessed as we close out this year and into the years to come.

Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly. (Colossians 3:16)

Nate

Printed from the Women of the ELCA website.

ADVENT

Active waiting

Luke 1:46–55

Into my heart, into my heart,

Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Come in today, come in to stay.

Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

—Harry D. Clarke (1924)

This is an Advent song I remember well from when I was a young girl. We sang it in children's choir every year, using sign language as we sang those simple yet powerful words. Of course as a child I did not recognize the connection between that beautiful little hymn and the word Advent itself. Advent is Latin meaning "to come." And as we celebrate this Advent season, we are indeed saying "come to us, Lord Jesus." Advent means waiting. We are waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

And how should we spend these weeks so filled with great anticipation and excitement? As a child, I spent them waiting for Christmas presents, waiting for Christmas dinner, even waiting for enough snow to fall so I could go sledding during Christmas vacation. Now I know better that what we are waiting for during this season that spans most of December is our Lord Jesus, who promises peace and justice for all. We are waiting for the one who brings good news, who shows mercy and love, and who turns hierarchy on its head and lifts up those in need.

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." (Luke 1:46–55)

So today, it is these words of Mary's song, the Magnificat, that most clearly come to me during the Advent season. Mary knew that the baby she was waiting for meant good news, especially for the poor, the lowly, and the hungry. During this Advent season, we should wait both with the excitement of a child waiting for Christmas and with the knowledge that those in need also are waiting for the coming of Christ. We can wait actively, giving of our time and resources. Just as Mary waited with Elizabeth, we wait for the Christ Child not alone, but with others, singing together, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus."

Offering Prayer: *Good and gracious God, as we sing our songs of Advent praise this season, let us wait actively for Jesus' light to shine, remembering those in need who are also with us, waiting. Amen.*

Emily Hansen is an associate for programs for Women of the ELCA in the areas of grants and scholarships, stewardship, and justice issues related to poverty and wealth.

The Advent of Christ

In many parts of the country it is during Advent that the winter settles in with its snow and cold. The days grow shorter and the nights longer. No wonder we gather around the Advent wreath, with its light that grows brighter as Christmas approaches. Aware of the darkness, we welcome the light of Christ into our world, our homes, and our lives.

Though many people are already celebrating Christmas, we quietly observe these days of hope and expectation. It is not that there is anything wrong with celebrating Christmas throughout the month of December. Rather, the scriptures, hymns, customs, and images of Advent are among the richest in our spiritual tradition.

During Advent we prepare to meet Christ when he comes at the end of time and as he comes today in the word, in water, bread and wine, and in acts of justice and kindness. Even in our day we find Christ among the poor, the powerless, and all those who wait for his light and healing.

Congregational Announcements:

Youth Group Speaker: December 17th from 6:30-8:30pm, the youth group will be hosting a speaker who has been a missionary in many foreign countries. She will be talking to the group about some of her missions work and her experiences in other parts of the world. Anyone is welcome to attend.

Bethany Lutheran Display: a reminder to drive through Memory Lake park to enjoy the Christmas lights and see Bethany's church display.

Food Shelf: Bethany church is responsible for manning the food shelf the second half of December. We need volunteers to help stock shelves on Tuesday the 16th, 23rd, and 30th from 10-12 and to help distribute food the following Thursdays. Sign up in the Narthex and see LuVerne Anderson if you have any questions.

Christmas Eve Readers: we are looking for readers on Christmas Eve. If you are interested see Pastor Jay.

Christmas Worship Schedule: Christmas Eve services will begin at 4:30pm with a service of Lessons and Carols. Christmas morning's communion service will be at 10:00am.

Youth Group Fundraiser: The youth group will be having a silent auction and bake sale on 12/21 after worship. If you have some gently used items to donate please put them in the senior high Sunday school room by Sunday 12/14. Proceeds will go towards the National Youth Gathering trip next summer.

The New Lutheran Study Bible: if you would like to pre-order a copy of the new Lutheran Study Bible see Pastor Jay right away. If we can put together an order of 10 or more copies we can get a 35% discount! They are available in hardcover (Regularly \$34.99 each. Discounted: \$22.75) or paperback (Regularly \$24.99 each. Discounted: \$17.50). **Orders must be in by December 31st in order to get the discounts.**