

REFLECTIONS

from
St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA
December 2011

DATES TO REMEMBER



Saturday, December 10th

8:30 am *Decorate the Church for Christmas*

Saturday, December 17th

5:30 pm *2nd - 6th Grade Christmas Program*

Sunday, December 18th

10:45 am *3 yr - 1st Grade Christmas Program*

Saturday, December 24th

4:00 pm *Christmas Eve Candlelight Services*

6:00 pm *Christmas Eve Candlelight Services*

10:00 pm *Brass Ensemble*

10:30 pm *Christmas Eve Candlelight Services*

Sunday, December 25th

10:00 am *Worship Service*

Staff & Contact Information...

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Custodian: Brad Ufken

Part-time Custodian: Judy Renken

THE PASTOR'S PAGE

"Do unto others . . ."

In early November, I accompanied five young people from St. John's to a junior high retreat at Lutheran Lakeside Bible Camp in Spirit Lake. During this retreat, I went to a break-out session on the topic of bullying. The speaker was a pastor who had been a public school teacher for quite a few years, and therefore was familiar with the school scene. The session was attended by about ten girls, plus myself.

The speaker asked if we knew where most bullying takes place at school. Most of the girls in attendance seemed to know that the majority of bullying takes place in the restrooms—where there are no cameras on the walls, and not much adult supervision. The girls were aware that restrooms were the place where young people were most likely to exchange insults or spray hairspray at each other contemptuously. I marveled that I was the only person in the group who did not know about the prevalence of bathroom bullying.

Recently, I sat in on a small-group session during catechism class. It happened to be a group of girls. The theme for the day was the Fifth Commandment: "You shall not kill." We talked about how the Fifth Commandment forbids not just murder, but also put-downs and ridicule. The young women in this group said that they believed that girls were more likely to engage in trash-talking, while boys were more apt to push one another physically or knock the books out of someone's hands. The girls talked about bullying matter-of-factly and nonchalantly. They made it sound like a common occurrence.

I do not believe that bullying is strictly a problem for children and teenagers. Bullying can be a problem in the adult world, too. I know that some grown-ups cope with bullying in the workplace and elsewhere in the community. Church is a place where bullying can happen, too—at committee meetings, church council meetings, congregational meetings, or person-to-person.

Bullying would include any sorts of insults or put-downs, name-calling, threats, bellowing, or acts of physical violence. The opposite

of bullying, of course, would be *civility*—treating others with courtesy, respecting the rights of others to disagree with you.

I know what our Lord says about bullying:

- *"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."* (Matthew 7:12)
- *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Matthew 22:39)
- *" . . . just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."* (Matthew 25:40)

The church needs to be aware of the problem of bullying—and oppose it strenuously.

I have heard that a speaker will be discussing the problem of bullying—for the benefit of parents--at the Le Mars Middle School on Sunday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. I know that our church council has invited a counselor from Orange City named Deon Wynia to work with our congregation on essential building-blocks like respect and communication.

Jesus has already weighed in on the matter of bullying. He gave us The Golden Rule: *"Do unto others . . ."*

Pastor Greg Gabriel

* * *



as of November 22, 2011

Current Income Received	\$333,581.35
Benevolence Offerings	\$ 55,783.38
Current Debt	\$ 15,200.00
Renovation Loan Balance	\$ 10,000.00

Our **Christmas Offerings** have been designated to the Lutheran Services in Iowa and Ingham Okobojo Bible Camp.

From the A.i.M.



As you read this, you may be waiting for a sheet of cookies to bake in the oven, bread dough to rise for Christmas morning cinnamon rolls, writing on a Christmas card, or wrapping a gift. Whatever you are doing this month, it is in preparation of the reason for the season. There are many things we want and need to do this month and this is

because Christmas is a big deal. Yes, our salvation all began when God sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior who unconditionally **gave** us eternal life. He **gave** this to us—a **gift** without strings, attached out of love. Jesus came as such a surprise—not expecting our Savior to come as a babe in a lowly stable. For all this, we celebrate. God continues to work in mysterious ways in our lives.

I read recently in a tract that “just as every cookie is hand-made and decorated so uniquely, no other person has ever been created—nor will there ever be one—who is just like you.” As I travel among our parishioners, each visit is so special. I share a different scripture at each visit because of what we have talked about. Each person has a different personality, unique talents, different needs, and a most interesting life of experiences. What a joy to be a listener in each person’s midst.

So in light of that, we recognize the Bible speaks to each of you on an individual basis in God’s infinite wisdom and love.

Colossians 1:16 ***“For by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him.”***

It is so important to keep our “head on straight”—especially in December. As a Christian, you are to be ever mindful to always keep looking toward the “lighted path” on which God has chosen for you. God values you; after all, you were made in His likeness. Never, never forget God created **you** for a special purpose. Ephesians 1:11 – ***“All things are done according to God’s plan and***

decision; and God chose us to be His own people in union with Christ because of His own purpose, based on what He had decided from the very beginning.” What a blessed assurance for you and me for comfort and motivation with each new day.

So as you move into December, move in spiritual guidance with these words of truth: ‘God’s love for you is so great, that even when you ignore Him, He still reaches out to you.’ With that thought secured in your heart, let us pray,

Lord God and Savior, there are stormy times in my life when I doubt you. There are times in my life when I veer from Your lighted path You have chosen for me. During those times, remind me that You created me, You made me unique and special, and You have a purpose for me that is designed only for me. Open my ears to hear and open my eyes to see so I may do Your will and serve others according to Your desire. Amen

Have a special Christmas,
Pastor Marcía



Ethan Lee Rachuy



Randy Wiener
Bob Lancaster
Lois Lancaster



Membership

IN

Doug, Bobbie, Logan & Sydney Schurr



Music Notes from Cathy

Have you seen Him? Will you miss the Miracle? As you are reading this newsletter, we will be awaiting the arrival of the small babe to be born in Bethlehem. The season begins with anticipation, wonder, and excitement as the story begins to unfold! It is a time filled with miracles and amongst the hustle bustle of this time of year we need to keep the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts not only during the Christmas season, but throughout the coming year. The season will abound in rich music - this will be a wonderful opportunity to share musical talents. Please contact the Church Office or Cathy Seaton if you would like to share your musical talent(s) during the Christmas season.

December Music Schedule:

December 4th - 2nd Sunday in Advent

8:15 am - Men's Chorus

10:45 am - Open

December 11th - 3rd Sunday in Advent

8:15 am - St. John's Choir

10:45 am - People of Praise

December 17th - Saturday evening

5:30pm - Children's Christmas Program

December 18th - 4th Sunday in Advent

8:15 am - St. John's Choir

10:45 am - Children's Christmas Program

December 24th - Saturday/Christmas Eve

4:00 pm - Candlelight Worship w/Communion/Open

6:00 pm - Candlelight Worship w/Communion/Open

10:00 pm - Brass Ensemble

10:30 pm - Candlelight Worship w/Communion /St. John's Choir - Men's Chorus

December 25th - Happy Birthday Jesus!

10:00 am - Service of the Word-Open

No Sunday evening service

December 31st - Saturday evening/New Year's Eve

5:30 pm - Open

January 1st - New Year's Day

10:00 am - Service of the Word-Open

No Sunday evening service

God's Peace - Christmas Blessings!
Cathy Seaton



COTTAGE MEETINGS UPDATE

We are getting ready to form our cottage groups so that we can start to get to know each other better and in turn grow in building our loving relationships among the family of St. John's. We are still looking for people to help facilitate these cottage groups. You may have received a notice asking if you can help out. If you didn't and you would like to volunteer, you can contact Pastor Gary. Remember you will have special training and help in getting your cottage group going. We hope to have our first gatherings going sometime during the winter season.

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USHERS



FOR DECEMBER

5:30 P.M. SERVICE: Walt & Russ Martfeld, Matt Beeck, Dave Klave, Bert Stellingwerf, Doug Wiederholt, Mike and Leland Wiener

8:15 A.M. SERVICE: Emmet Ferguson, Capt., Dean Dunn, Kyle Beach, Mike Hoffman, Dylan Hoffman, Daniel Hystad, Bob Lubben, Norm & Elvira Nielsen, Bill Young and Earl Draayer

10:45 A.M. SERVICE: Gary Borchers, John Brangwin, Harold Lee, Jeff Jelken, Mike Schleis and Lowell Klemme

* * *

For those having trouble hearing...

As a part of our new sound system, we have individual hearing devices which you can use to listen to the service. Each device is a small box with an earphone. They will amplify what is going out over the speakers. If you should want to use one, contact one of the ushers or the pastor to get you a box which is found in the office.



TUESDAY MORNING

We will look at the Biblical stories and the myths and legends of the Apostles as we walk their journey. This will be our topic for the next few weeks. Come and hear the great stories of courage and witness the mission and ministry of those who gave so much to get the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Join us every Tuesday morning in the Library at 7:30 AM.



GOOD SAMARITAN VILLAGE BIBLE STUDY/COMMUNION

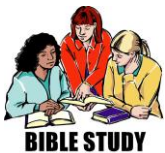
It's that special time of the church year when we get ready to receive our Lord. We will celebrate Advent/Christmas this month, taking time to thank and praise our Lord for the gift of His Son. Join us on December 15th at 11:00. We meet in the activity room and we hope to see you.

PLYMOUTH MANOR BIBLE STUDY/COMMUNION

It is time to celebrate! That's what we do when we worship our Lord, but at this time of the year we take special time to celebrate the gift of the Christ Child. We will have a special Advent/Christmas worship. Join us on December 29th at 3:00 PM for our time of worship, Holy Communion and Celebration. We meet at Plymouth Manor.



BOOK OF THE MONTH



We continue our look at the Apostles. This month we will look at Simon the Canaanite. Sometimes he was called the Zealot. What does it mean to be a zealot? Come and hear his story and learn what a special apostle he was and maybe why Jesus chose him. Join us on December 12th at 10:00 AM. We will only be meeting once this month and we meet in the youth room. Hope to see you there.



St. John's is sponsoring **RADIO MESSAGES** Fridays on KLEM, advertising our services and special music for the upcoming weekend. The cost of these ads is \$10 per week. Sponsors will be recognized in the bulletin and newsletter. Please contact and leave your donation in the church office. Thank you.

SPONSORS FOR DECEMBER:

4th - In memory of Mildred Laudenschlager by Don & Yvonne Law.

11th - A friend of St. John's.

18th - In memory of George Vander Tuig's birthday by Martha.

25th -

Sponsors are needed for December 25, and January 2012.

FORTRESS OF FAITH is a half-hour program broadcast on KLEM/AM, 1410, on Sunday afternoons at 1:00 P.M.

SPONSORS FOR DECEMBER:

4th - In memory of Mildred Laudenschlager by Don & Yvonne Law.

11th -

18th - In memory of George Vander Tuig's birthday by Martha.

25th -

Sponsors are needed December 11th, 25th, and January 2012. If you would like to sponsor a program, stop by the church office or call 546-8855. Cost is \$25.

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SERVERS FOR DECEMBER

Elvira Nielsen, Chr., Cindy Kamies, Becky Klohs, Carol Hallberg, Paula Kommes, Erin Kommes, Beth Strub, Christine McInnis and Eliese Hoffman



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1: - 1:30 PM WELCA Board Meeting in the Library Lounge.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13:
6:30 p.m. Naomi, Library Lounge
Salad Supper

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14:
1:30 p.m. Dorcas, 25896 Kestral Ave
Merrill, Dorothy Dunn, Hostess

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15:
7:00 p.m. Ruth, 855 9th Ave SE
Yvonne Law, Hostess

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19:
1:30 p.m. Leah, at Park Place
Iris Hemmingson, Hostess

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20:
9:00 a.m. Hannah, Habitue
12:30 p.m. Sarah, Library Lounge
Lunch and Meeting

WELCA Circles



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DIAL-A-DEVOTION - 546-7404

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A new devotion is available each weekday. *“Thoughts for Daily Living”* is a ministry sponsored by the Women of the ELCA. We thank those who prepared and recorded the messages in November:

Lynne Bogh, Cathy Seaton, Judy Renken, Ray Seaton, Ruth Peters, Arlene Wiener, Karen Schroeder, Bonnie & Jim Driscoll, Glenda Wiener and Shirley Lang



Adult Sunday School

Grab a cup of coffee and join **Adult Sunday School**. Classes meet in the Dining Room and classroom B-2. All are welcome!!!

B-2 ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL meets each Sunday morning at 9:30 and is led by Julie Albert and Peg McAllister. This fall the group will study the "Christ in Our Home" daily devotional and the upcoming Sunday's scripture lesson used during our Worship services. Join the group in the basement classroom #B-2 for coffee, scripture, and inspiration to start your week!

Education Team

Our Education Team would be pleased to have some new members. Might God be coaxing you to serve in this way? If you are interested, let Pastor Gabriel know.

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We need a new director for the Brass Choir! If you are interested in using your God given talents in this capacity, please notify Pastor Gary or Cathy Seaton. This is a paid position of the congregation. We really need your help.

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We will again be decorating the altar area with Poinsettias this Christmas. If you would like to purchase a poinsettia in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone, call the church office soon. The cost is \$14.00. Orders will be taken until December 16th.



BY JOAN SEVERSON

*****Amy (Janssen) Kinney**'s husband Jason, was the speaker at the Gehlen Catholic School veteran program. Jason has returned from a tour of duty with the Iowa National Guard in Afghanistan.

Previously he had served in Iran with the National Guard.

*****Kajsa Hallberg** was chosen to be part of the Northwest Iowa Honor Band Festival. Kajsa is a student at the Le Mars Community Middle School.

*****Yashila Permeswaran, Marty Balmer and Karter Ewing** were among the Le Mars Community High School students who were selected to play in the Iowa All-State Chorus, Band, or Orchestra.

*****Yashila Permeswaran and Meredith Rand** won All-conference medals for finishing in the top 14 runners in the Lakes Conference High School Track Meet.

*****Meredith Rand and Yashila Permeswaran** also were members of the Le Mars Community High School varsity cross country team that won first place and the trophy in the Lakes Conference event.

*****Women of the ELCA** of St. John's sent the following to Lutheran missions: 135 Quilts, 27 2010 School kits, 147 2011 School kits, 3 Blankets, 17 Sewing kits, 5 Fabric kits, 45 Health kits, 19 Personal Care kits, 25 2010 Layettees, 22 Baby Care kits, 266 rolled Bandages, 23 Newborn Kits, and 8 Aids/Hospice kits. Also sent were: 11 pounds of cancelled stamps to TubFrim and 31 cell phones, 62 used Bibles, and 32 New Testaments. This report was submitted by Rachel Westhoff, Do-Day volunteer.

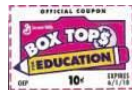
*****Shelby McMurray** danced in the High School State Dance Team Event. She danced in the Individual Solo contest and placed tenth out of 90 dancers.

Please call Joan Severson at 546-6429, with "Good News" items.

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Save Box Tops...help area schools!!!

There is a container in the lobby for your donation.



GROCERY CART MINISTRY

The Outreach Team emphasis for the Christian Needs Center for December is "**Red & Green**".

Gift cards, meat certificates, gas certificates, phone cards, beauty college cards, and chambers bucks are some ideas. Leave these cards in the office, clearly marked, the next time you are in church. Thanks.

CNC Needs: canned vegetables, (preferably corn, tomatoes, peas and beans) canned fruit/fruit cups, canned soups, chicken, tuna or hamburger helper, boxed potatoes, pancake mix, jello, pudding mix/pudding cups, jelly, juice, granola/breakfast bars, crackers and sugar. Please note -- when donating food please be sure to check the expiration dates. The Christian Needs Center is open each Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Please call 546-9428 with questions. The new director of the Christian Needs Center in Le Mars is Barb Waltz.

WISH LIST FOR CSADV: canned goods, adult tooth brushes and toothpaste, wash cloths, Dixie disposable cups, children's fever reducer, cough & cold medicine, laundry baskets, plastic spoons & forks, shampoo, conditioner, women's socks, women's underwear (sizes 5 - 9) diapers (sizes 4, 5 & **URGENT NEED FOR SIZE 6** and pull-ups) baby wipes and hair brushes. Hy-Vee & Walmart gift cards, movie tickets, pool passes, miniature golf passes and bowling passes would also be welcomed. If you would like to donate any of these items to the CSADV, contact Theresa Gehrke-Herwynen (712-277-0131 or theresa@csadv.org).

All of CSADV services are free and confidential. If you need help or want to help call our 24 hour crisis line at 712-258-7233 or toll-free at 1-800-982-7233.

WISH LIST FOR MID-SIOUX: The pantry is about empty. Our most requested items are Pasta, spaghetti sauces, cereal, toiletries, tuna, canned meat, mac & cheese and boxed meals. Any non-perishables are welcome, although we do have a freezer. Thanks for your support!

The Art of Christian Conversation

Have you ever had difficulty expressing your thoughts and having your friend, co-worker, spouse or family member really hear and understand what you are trying to convey?

I am sure we all have!

If you would like to learn more about the "Art of Christian Conversation" Please join us for one of two sessions led by professional Deon Wynia and learn more about how important it is to express ourselves and be heard in a Spirit filled Christian manner!

The two sessions will be [from 7-8 p.m. November 29th](#) and [December 1st](#) in the church dining room. The sessions will cover the same material so you need to only attend one of the two sessions.

After these two introductory sessions, you will be invited to join in further discussions relating to ELCA Church policies or other concerns you would like our congregation to discuss.

Even if you do not wish to participate in the follow-up discussions....Please join us for this wonderful opportunity to learn more about "The Art of Christian Conversation"!

*Kathy Stelzer
Council President*

* * *

For Parents: An Assembly on “Bullying”

A speaker will discuss the problem of bullying at school on Sunday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. at Le Mars Community Middle School. Kirk Smalley will share the story of his son, Ty, a victim of bullying who took his own life. Hear Kirk’s message of hope, and aspiration to motivate our children to believe “I Am Somebody.”

This presentation is intended **for parents**. The admission is free.



What is Fall Convo?

Each fall your newsletter, bulletin, or announcements may include the information that your pastor will be attending Fall Convo. Fall Convo is short for Fall Convocation, an opportunity for the Bishop, and his assistants, to meet with the rostered leaders and spouses of the Western Iowa Synod. It also provides a time for worship, rest, recreation, and continuing education.

Fall Convo was held in Sioux City this past September. It included Dr. Matthew Skinner of Luther Seminary, who led a study of the Book of Mark, which will be the preaching Gospel for the next year. Dr. Skinner helped the group to view the Gospel with fresh eyes.

Diana Wooley taught the group about drama. Diana, a member of Augustana in Sioux City, is an actor, and CEO of Lamb Theater. She helped the group gain a new appreciation for The Lord's Prayer with rap.

Worship was led by the synod's worship team.

The Bishop provided the state-of-the-synod information, and the assistants to the Bishop described their responsibilities. Fall Convo also provides time for informal conversation with all participants.



*Have a blessed Christmas Season
from the staff at St. John's!*



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

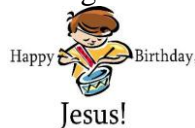


A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1

Jesse Tree: This year during the Sunday School opening, the students are introduced to what a Jesse Tree is. The objective of a Jesse tree will show the children the genealogy of Christ through the Old Testament through the use of story and symbols. We choose to use pictures of the people. The Jesse Tree represents the family tree, or genealogy of Jesus Christ. It tells the story of God's salvation plan, beginning with creation and continuing through the Old Testament, to the coming of the Messiah. We are stressing, the Old Testament Bible stories they are learning in the Witness Curriculum are some of the Biblical stories that lead up to Jesus. Jesus is referred to as a shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse, the father of David.

Witness Curriculum: During the month of December, the Sunday school kids will discuss The Peaceful Kingdom, Mary Learns about God's Plan, and Jesus Is Born.

Pioneer Village Christmas Wonderland: December 3 & 4 and December 10 & 11 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Be sure to check out the St. John's Sunday School Tree in Century Hall. The 3 year olds-8th grade made ornaments and the high school kids decorated the tree.



Christmas Program: Saturday, December 17 at 5:30 p.m. is 2nd - 6th grade Christmas Program and Sunday, December 18 at 10:45 a.m. is 3 year olds - 1st grade program.

NO Sunday school December 25 and January 1.



Jesus Loves You!
Lisa Chihak & Carol Hallberg
Sunday School Co-Superintendent's



2011-2012 Bible Adventures Save these dates!

- 1-15-12: 'Snow' Bible Adventure. Bring your snow suit and gloves!
- 3-7-12: 'Bible Bad Guy' Bible Adventure. What was up with that Judas guy?
- 4-6-12: 'Good Friday' Bible Adventure. The Passion Story. 3rd annual event at St. John's.
- 7-11-12: 'Get Wet!' Bible Adventure. You'll learn about John the Baptist and will have the opportunity to get wet (if you want) so wear your swim suit!

Please, JOIN US!! As an extension of St. John's Sunday School, Bible Adventures are a Bible-based experiential way to learn about the Bible, make memories and friends, AND have loads of fun! We will act out Bible stories, sing, learn Bible verses, watch clips that support the stories, make stuff and play!

All Bible Adventures are open to children 4 years old to 6th grade. It's helpful for a parent or sibling to stay with a younger child. Parents are always welcome to come and help or just watch.

C A T E C H I S M

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December Catechism Events

December 7th - Large Group Servant Event - Adopt-a-Family

December 14th - Learning Event #7 - 7th Commandment

December 21st & 28th - No Catechism - Christmas Break



It's time for our annual Quiz Bowl prizes of an all-expense paid trip to the Dairy Queen for some lucky small groups. There are 2 ways to be eligible to win: 1. Small Group members must correctly answer Quiz Bowl questions at each learning event. If a group correctly answers each question, their group name gets put in the Quiz Bowl jar. In November we drew out a group name and Julie & Todd's group will get to spend Small Group time at the DQ on the 14th! 2. At a random time this semester, the music leaders judged the participation of each small group during music time and the group with the best participation will also be going to the DQ during Small Group time on the 14th and the best participating group for November 9th was Carol & Kathy's Group! Congratulations!

Our Large Group Servant Event for December will be shopping for Adopt-a-Family. Students will gather at the church at 7:00 on December 7th and go to Wal-Mart with their Small Group to shop for someone in need. They will return to church to wrap those gifts and then will enjoy refreshments. If students wish to donate money for this cause, they can bring donations to the December 7th event. Students will also assemble fruit baskets for our carolers to deliver to shut-ins when they carol on December 11th. In their small groups students have discussed what they need to bring for this project. Please ask your student about this.

Christmas Break will run from December 21st - December 28th. Our next time to get together will be for a Learning Event on January 4th. The memory verse brought home on December 14th should be returned at the January 4th Learning Event.

Parents of 9th Graders - Make sure the date January 29th is marked on your calendar for your student. That is the date of our annual 9th grade retreat where planning for confirmation day takes place! This event will begin at 3:00 and run until about 7:30 at the Baymont Inn here in Le Mars. Pastors Gary and Greg, students and guides will be meeting for fellowship, fun, food and an important planning session for the upcoming Rite of Confirmation.

Parents of 8th Graders - As a part of your child's Catechism year, you are to plan and carry out a family service project with your student some time during this Catechism year. Project ideas include: Greet at church (Contact the church office to set up a time), Work at the Paper Drive (1st Saturday of every month), Help serve at the Annual Meeting Soup Lunch (January 22nd), Help serve at Lenten Dinners (Feb. 29 - Mar. 28), help serve at Easter Breakfast (April 8th),shop for items to put in the grocery cart, shop for items for CASDV, participate in Adopt-a-Family, work at a Habitat for Humanity site, make a meal for a neighbor in need, shovel a neighbor's sidewalks and driveway, spend time with someone who is in the nursing home or hospital, rake someone's leaves, work together on a school project. Once you have completed the project, fill out the form which is available on the church website. Your student should turn this form in to his or her guide or Kay.

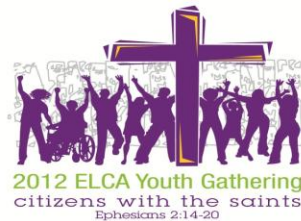
Prayer Partners are a very special part of our Catechism program. Each student is secretly partnered during their 7th grade year with someone from our congregation. That person prays for their student for the entire three years of their Catechetical instruction. Prayer Partners also remember the students throughout the three years of study with notes of encouragement. The evening of the students' rehearsal for their Confirmation service is when the Prayer Partners are revealed! It is a wonderful time for both the student and their partner! Whether you are a Prayer Partner or not at this time, we ask you to keep our Catechism program, its students and guides in your prayers this year. If you would like to be a Prayer Partner in future years, please contact Kay Michaelson to get your name on the list!

LYO NEWS

December 2011



Congregation Christmas Caroling. Let's get together and spread some cheer to our fellow St. John's members. Meet at the church on Sunday, December 11th at 3:00 pm. We will drive around Le Mars in the Richard's family bus. Everyone is welcome to come along. After the singing you are invited out to the Dan Albert farm and enjoy a light supper provided by the Youth Team. See you there!!



ELCA Youth Gathering. We hope everyone has taken a moment to look at the "Mardi Gras" tree in the lobby. It is decorated with the faces of the young people and chaperones that will be attending the 2012 Youth Gathering. Also, you will find envelopes on the tree. Our hope is you will take an envelope and consider making a donation, in the amount of your choosing, to help fund the groups trip down to New Orleans. As you will see on the envelope it is quite costly for a child to attend the gathering. We are trying to fundraise 2/3 of the cost, while the other 1/3 will be paid by the child's family. We hope, with the congregations help, these young people will get to experience Jesus' direction to go out and help others next summer.

Thank you again, to all those who helped support our fundraising efforts at the Pizza Ranch, Stop & Shop, bake sale and Fall Clean Up, held in November. We still have the Hy-Vee coupon books available and also Friendship Bracelets. Call the church office if you need to find a contact to purchase one of these items.

Report from the Junior High Gathering. Five students and one adult from St. John's attended the Western Iowa Synod Junior-High Gathering at Lutheran Lakeside Camp at Spirit Lake on November 4-5. The group from St. John's traveled to the Bible camp in a mini-van. They occupied themselves en route by playing "Simon Sez."

About 97 people attended this retreat. In the first of his three presentations, the featured speaker, Eric Willits, explained what Jesus meant when he said, "Whatever you did to someone overlooked or ignored . . . you did to me" (Matthew 25). Later that night, there was Dodge Ball in The Barn. The girls stayed overnight at The Lodge, while the guys slept at someplace called The Man Cave.

The next day there were small groups for discussions. Students also had opportunities to attend breakout sessions on topics like bullying, prison ministry, and the ELCA Malaria Initiative. The trip home was a traveling spelling bee, interrupted by a stop at McDonald's.

What was the most fun part about the Junior High retreat? Sydney, Gina, Dayton thought it was Dodge Ball. Alexandra liked Malaria Tag the best. Lindsey enjoyed meeting new friends.

What did the students learn about faith at this retreat? Alexandra recalled, "You should help everyone, especially the less fortunate." Gina learned "how Jesus is everybody, and by giving clothes or donating food, we are clothing and feeding Jesus." Sydney and Lindsey both said, "Love your neighbor as you love God." Dayton concluded, "Being a Christian doesn't just mean to follow the Ten Commandments . . . God wants us to do things with all our hearts and with full effort."



LIBRARY CORNER

GET READY!

Library Weekend will be January 21 & 22.

Check out these changes to your St. John's Library:

Have you noticed the new shades that adorn the windows to the lobby? These window treatments were paid for entirely by memorial funds to replace the decades-old floor length drapes which previously provided some privacy. THANK YOU to those who chose to remember their loved ones in this way!

Another change is that we have moved many of the family DVDs to the shelf on the east window wall. As we have added to our DVD collection, we wanted to place these wonderful family titles in a location that is more accessible. Movies are a great way to spend time together as a family, so be sure to watch this growing collection.

Every fall, we purchase books to fill in or finish up series already on the shelves. We did this a little late this year, but we are in the process of adding to several of the series we already had. We were also able to find a few more Large Print Books to add to the library. Be sure to take a peek at the New Books shelves to make sure you haven't missed the next installment from your favorite author.

Letters to God by Patrick Doughtie actually began as a movie. Both the book and the DVD are available in the St. John's library, and either will touch your heart. Nine-year-old Tyler has incurable brain cancer and begins to write letters to God. His suffering turns into spiritual lessons for his widowed mother, his adolescent brother, and a troubled postman. Letters to God probes some of the often-asked questions that trouble people of faith: 'Why do we suffer?'; 'Where is God?'; 'Why do godly, faithful children have to battle cancer?' This inspiring story of hope will help readers (and watchers) of all ages work toward greater understanding of God's presence and care.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
and
MERRY CHRISTMAS
from the St. John's Library
Committee!