

St JOHN'S EAGLE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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JANUARY 2012

LAYAWAY ANGELS

While visiting in Fort Wayne recently, I heard a rather curious news story. As Christmas approached, there were reports of shoppers with items on layaway, coming in to pay them off only to find out that someone already had. Upon further investigation, the media had discovered that these pay-offs were taking place randomly. They were not being made secretly by family members or friends, but by complete strangers. Thus, the media had dubbed them, "Layaway Angels."

What kind of person would do such a thing? What kind of person would even think of doing such a thing, especially at a time when the financial future is so uncertain?

I do not know any layaway angels personally, but I do know the kind of person who thinks and acts like one. In fact, I'm surrounded by them right here at St. John's!

I don't know if the layaway angel fad will ever catch on here, but I do know that I am blessed with a church full of angels. Your thoughtfulness and generosity in response to Christ's love never ceases to amaze and inspire me. You really do love Jesus and it shows, not just at Christmas, but all the time!

I love Jesus too. He's my layaway angel. Before he came along, I had a debt of sin on layaway that I was never going to be able to pay-off. Then one day, someone told me that I had no debt, because Jesus had paid it off for me. They told me that, thanks to him, I never have to worry about that stuff any more, because he has it all taken care of, including the stuff I haven't even put on layaway yet. They said that I was completely debt-free and would be forever. They said, thanks to Jesus, I now have a charge card with no limit and no payments. Wow! What kind of person, what kind of God, would do such a thing for a hapless shopaholic like me?

There is really only one way to respond to a grace, to a love, like that, right? I guess that's why I'm smiling and trying to be an angel all the time too, and I suspect that's why you are too. What a joy it is to be flapping my wings with all of you!

Pastor Joe

Dear Members & Friends of St. John's

The St. John's staff extends our heart-felt thanks and love to everyone for their thoughtful and generous Christmas greetings and gifts.

You are a blessing in our lives!

We wish you a New Year filled with the joy and hope and wonder given to us in the birth of our Savior!

Pastor Joe Pastor Peg Robert McConnell

Jan Wendel, Rafael Gonzalez



FROM OUR PASTOR OF YOUTH & FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

I live by lists. Shopping. To do. Planning. Appointments. And at this time of year—Resolutions.

On the resolution list is one that I'll be sharing during 2012: to be a partner with you in raising spiritually healthy children. Each month I resolve to bring some thoughts and actions for you to consider for your challenging, beautiful and holy job of raising your child(ren).

"Spirituality is the pattern by which we shape our lives in response to our experience of God as a very real presence in and around us," writes Christian educator, Howard Rice. Even the tasks that may seem unrelated to faith, such as assigning daily chores or deciding how we handle our finances, are reflections of our faith in a living, loving and forgiving God. God doesn't expect us to be perfect. God abounds in grace, and we rely on that grace over and over again as we raise our children.

For January: On Being a Pretty Good Parent

You don't have to be a perfect parent. There's no such thing, in fact.

We enter parenthood with the very best intentions. We dream about the ways we'll love our child as no child has ever been loved. We promise that we won't make the same mistakes our parents made. We will be consistently loving, patient, gentle, supportive, wise. The perfect parent.

And then reality hits. This parenting stuff is hard work. Endless work. Rewarding but impossible work. We may still have all of our good intentions, but it's easy to get discouraged with all the ways we fall short of our own expectations.

You make mistakes. More than one. Big and small and all sizes of mistakes in between. You lose your temper and your patience. You say and do things you wish you hadn't, and you don't do and say things you wish you had.

Know this: you can't be a perfect parent and so the task is to become comfortable with being a "pretty good parent," a "good enough parent" as some have described it. Say to yourself, even when you hardly believe it, "I am a good enough mother." "I am a good enough father." Trust yourself as being a pretty good parent, good enough and then some, for your child. God is with you both.

Copy or memorize this passage this month: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely only on your own understandings. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way." --Proverbs 3:5-6

Pastor Peg

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

MLK DAY OF SERVING – MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 10 AM – NOON

It's a day off school and a day to honor Dr. King's work for peace and justice by doing some of our own. Dr. King's faith bedrock was in God's costly forgiveness, freedom and love made known in the cross of Jesus Christ. In our serving, we're remembering that our same faith in Jesus makes it possible to provide for neighbors, forgive enemies and act in peaceful ways.



Come and serve on the 16th! We'll have a variety of projects for all ages, through high school (and beyond!).

CONFIRMATION NEWS

Lutherdale Camp Retreat for Chicago-area confirmands!

A weekend of learning and fellowship with soon-to-be-friends from all over the Metro Chicago synod at Lutherdale, Elkhorn, Wisconsin February 17-19th. Details coming directly to families; contact Pastor Peg for additional information.

Large-group Confirmation class, January 11 at Trinity (3637 Golf Road, Evanston), 5:30-7:30, include dinner.

Large-group Confirmation serving event, Souper Bowl of Caring: Make and serve meal at the soup kitchen at St. Paul's Lutheran, 1004 Greenwood, Evanston, 1-4:30 pm

TUESDAYS WITH TOM—AND THE YOUTH AT TRINITY METHODIST

Take a study break on Tuesdays! Dinner, friends, and a great movie featuring Tom Hanks. We've been invited to get together with the youth at Trinity Methodist, Wilmette, to share in all that, January 24 and 31, February 7 and 14. Four hits from Hanks, a meal with friends, and a faith-lens perspective. Contact Pastor Peg, Tim Witt or Chris Nibeck with questions.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday school children did a WONDERFUL job of telling the story of our Savior's birth, with their performance of A Capital C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S. Many thanks to Hannah McConnell, Jane McInnis, and Kathy Nibeck for their musical talents, confirmands Annika Danielsen and Daniel Nibeck for their participation in the program, the Sunday school staff and Pastor Peg for her great leadership and direction.

We will return to our classrooms on January 8, 2012, with a special celebration and lesson. Some of the Bible stories we will look at this month include The Boy at The Temple, John the Baptist and Jesus Goes to Nazareth. Wishing you all a very Blessed New Year!

FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

For the Eagle this month, I wanted to pass on a daily devotion that I recently read, which was written by Dr. Scott Murray, pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. It is a meditation on the beauty of God. It is somewhat lengthy, but it truly fired my imagination and I hope that it does the same for you. It ends with an apt prayer for musicians. Merry Christmas,

Robert McConnell

“Post-modernists have argued that there is no difference between the beautiful and the ugly. Present fashion fads confirm this judgment; just consider the ubiquitous piercing and tattoos. But who, given the choice between looking at a beautiful sunset and looking into a cesspool, will say that he would prefer to look into a cesspool? No one. Why is that? No one would argue that they are equally beautiful, even if they might be hard pressed to state precisely why. If beauty is an attribute of God, we begin to see why humans, who are created in His image, might be attracted to that which is more beautiful and not attracted to that which is less beautiful. The Psalmist connects the worship experience with the experience of the beauty of God: "One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple" ([Ps 27:4](#)). The Hebrew word which is translated "beauty" here also means pleasantness and the favor of God, and thus is not far from the meaning of grace. It's in the same "semantic domain." Perhaps grace could be thought of as God's beauty in action.

“When we are thinking of the beauty of God we are not thinking of mere appearance. We are not talking about skin-deep beauty. With God we are talking about beauty pure and simple; the beauty of holiness, beauty in its very essence. See how we grope when we try to speak of God's attributes! We have no experience of such things unalloyed by our creatureliness and sin. So our groping for God through the attraction of the things of beauty is either only a faint hint of God's existence and character or merely a byway in which our speculation traps us and makes us subject to the creation rather than children of the Creator. These are the elemental things of the world, created for our blessedness, signs of God, but not a sure revelation of the divine character.

“The aesthete worships beauty; its objects are the things of this world, many of them visible. But what makes the thing seen superior to the instruments of the body and mind that perceive such things? How is a beautiful sunset a clearer intimation of God's character than the eye that sees it? The eye was created by God to perceive beauty and thus has priority over the things of beauty themselves, because humans are the foremost creatures of God. Humans can partake of the beauty of holiness because they are gifted with it by the One who is Himself beauty and holiness itself.

“The perfect beauty of holiness comes to us in the person of God's Son. Even though "his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind" ([Is 52:14](#)), He was the most beautiful because His beauty was placed at the service of that same mankind that thought Him marred and were the cause of it. His cross is the key that unlocks all the beauty in the world and tells us that it belongs to God. Mere prettiness is silenced by the beauty of the man born of a peasant mother, who shoulders the world's sin, offers his face to the mockers, his back to the smiters, and is nailed to the ugliest sign of beauty: the cross of Christ. The hymn confronts us with it: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness/ My beauty are, my glorious dress." Such gory beauty! It becomes us well unto salvation. Here is the beauty of holiness.”

God of beauty, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven, be with Your servants who make art and music for Your people that with joy we on earth may glimpse Your beauty. Bring us to the fulfillment of the beauty that will be ours as we stand before Your unveiled glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

WORSHIP & MUSIC



Epiphany Worship With Our Lutheran Partner Churches

Friday, January 6, 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church (1004 Greenwood St., Evanston)

Epiphany is a holiday in the church year that can get lost in Christmas shadows, but it's time to throw some light on it—literally! It's a celebration that includes those famous visitors to Jesus: the 3 Kings (also called Magi), who brought gifts as well as the recognition that God was making good on the promise to bring Light and Life to our darkened world.

This year's worship theme is Light of the Whole World and in celebrating that Jesus Christ has come for all the world, there will be music and fabric/decorations from around the globe. If you've lived or traveled in other countries and would be willing to let St. Paul's borrow decorations for their worship space, please let Pastor Joe or Pastor Peg know. And come worship with friends from St. Timothy's, Trinity, Grace and St. Paul's!



WOMEN OF ST. JOHN'S

ALL women in the congregation are included in the Women of St. John's group. There are no dues, meetings or other requirements for membership. Our primary goal is fellowship.

December was a busy month for Women of St. John. At the monthly dessert meeting, disbursement of our remaining rummage funds was discussed. \$7,000 was sent to local, national and international charities, with the remaining \$7,000 given to St. John's.

The Advent Concert and Santa Lucia Lunch was a huge success! Thanks to all who donated food, served or attended (or did all three).

Looking for a way to keep busy during the long days of winter? How about weekly Bible study on Tuesdays at 10:00am in the conference room downstairs across from the parlor? And the Quilters would love to see you the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month. They assure that no special talent is needed. They begin around 10am and work until early afternoon so bring a sack lunch.

January Schedule:

- January 2 @9:30am --Board meeting at the home of Leslie Bieler, 2542 Old Glenview Rd., Wilmette
- January 5 @12:30pm -- Dessert meeting in the Parlor.
- January 22 @3:00pm--NEW--Book Club--Join us in the church parlor for an organizational meeting. How often? When? What books? You decide!

Upcoming Events:

February: Cooking Demo

We are in the final stages of planning what looks to be a fun evening. Tell us what you would like to learn!

Leslie Bieler & Jan Rassenfoss

ADULT EDUCATION

Did you make any –

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS?

Here's one resolution that would enhance your life all thru 2012! *Interested?*

Resolution:

I will read this article and spend just five minutes contemplating its potential for positive enrichment of my life.

Pretty simple, eh? Here we go!

My need – (My) God's help – (God)

(My) I'd like to clarify my role and goals in this life, while in God's world.

(God) I speak to you through my word and sacraments (one being the Lord's supper) and through community with my people who share with, care about and love one another.

(My) I recognize that, with all of the commitments put upon my daily life, I could use a little help in prioritizing and then carrying them out.

(God) Matthew wrote that I said: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

(My) I believe that God is out there somewhere, but there are so many questions and not enough answers.

(God) Matthew also reported me saying: "Ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you."

(My) Sometimes I feel my personal relationship with God is a little distant. If I felt closer – I would find it easier to talk to God – like to a good friend – or to a father.

(God) I taught my disciples to pray: "Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, - - -"

(My) Is anyone else going through this struggle? Misery loves company, you know. Perhaps I could learn from and with others things that would make it easier for me.

(God?) Try the Adult Hour that meets in St. John's Womens' Parlor every Sunday morning from 9:15-10:15.

That's our cue to announce: **New Adult Hour Schedule!**

Beginning Sun. Jan 15th, we will begin a six week DVD series by John Ortberg ("If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat.") who is interviewing Dallas Willard (U. of S. Cal. School of Philosophy). The series title is "The Divine Conspiracy" or "God's Master Class for Life". Each of the six sessions has some helpful gems. If you can't make all six, at least gather a few gems from the weeks that you can. They need some facet and polishing work to enrich your life in God's kingdom – here – today. Check the Sunday newsletters for each next week's session title, the first one being "The Divine Conspiracy".



CARE-GIVING WORKSHOP

Ryan Whitmore of Wisdom Flame will be back on January 22 to help families and interested persons develop a care-giving plan. The free workshop begins at noon.

THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY

Do you have a heart for families in need? Can you welcome them and make them feel at home? Can you be here to show them around and help them get settled in for the evening? Are you a good listener?

We are in need of 2 or 3 new Family Promise host coordinators (formerly known as site coordinators). No previous experience is necessary. Duties include working with our church staff and volunteers to help provide a good host week experience for everyone involved.

If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity that is both challenging and extremely rewarding, this is one. If you or someone you know has what it takes to help us help our guest families help themselves, please contact the church office. You do not have to be a member of St. John's Church to help ministry happen here.

**** Our next Family Promise host week is February 12-19, 2012**



FROM OUR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Members of St. John's:

Christmas has wrapped up. The festivities are over and it is now time to take down the tree and lights, find a proper place for all of the presents and pack up the decorations. It sure seems to me like we just finished putting everything away from last year. The words from John Lennon's song echo in my head as the season winds down:

And so this is Christmas, And what have we done
Another year older, A new one just begun

Somehow, listening to those words begins to fill that space between last Christmas and this one. What HAVE we done? Looking at the past year at St. John's, I'd say quite a bit. I feel I can answer the question Mr. Lennon poses to us very emphatically, WE HAVE DONE A LOT. Suddenly, that past year feels very full and rewarding. We have housed and fed families who are temporarily homeless, we have served hundreds of meals, we have packed over a thousand sandwiches to be passed out on the streets, we have walked to support the fight against hunger, we have helped in providing relief to those affected by natural disasters locally and globally, in addition to the many other causes we support. We have worshiped together for a full year and celebrated with Oktoberfest, an ice cream social, Easter breakfast, a celebration brunch during the stewardship campaign, a St. Lucia/Advent brunch and just days ago, over 300 people attended our worship services celebrating Jesus' birth. Our ministries continue to grow and our most recent stewardship campaign has supported this growth. We have a strong team of ministers and staff in place that are energetic, innovative and enthusiastic.

This coming year we will look at our facilities and how they can be better used to fit our ministries. We will enhance our online presence to better inform the outside community about who we are and what we do. We will expand our relationship with other churches in the area to help all of us to become stronger faith communities. But, best of all, we will continue to be a caring place where everyone can live, learn and grow together in Christ.

Jeff Danielsen

TREASURER'S ALCOVE



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Toward the end of the year, when I report actual income and expenses, I compare it to the budget. The budget is a guideline for spending. In most years, our expenses are usually in line with those parameters. Income, on the other hand, can be a little more esoteric. The fact that our Consecration Sunday program was such a success, will be very helpful in estimating what offerings should be in the coming year.

The process first begins with a meeting of a task force consisting of several members of the council and Pastor Joe. Prior to our first meeting, program leaders have been asked to estimate what they hope to spend in the next year on projects. A preliminary budget is presented to the task force, some tweaking and discussion ensues, with a follow-up meeting planned. Then this proposed budget is presented to the Council for review in January. When the Council approves the proposed budget, it will be mailed out to the congregation, with a congregation meeting scheduled within a two-week period. The Sunday prior to the congregation meeting, there will be a budget review open forum for any members of the congregation to ask questions or make suggestions. **At this writing, the open forum will be on January 22 and our congregation meeting will be on January 29.** Your involvement in this process is always welcomed and encouraged.



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS FROM DECEMBER 13, 2011

- Jeff Danielsen announced that Jessica Barnes and Christi Wise have resigned from the Council. These vacancies instigated consideration of decreasing the council size, which has been unanimously approved by the Executive Committee. Our approach is twofold: fill the two open seats now via the Nominating Committee, and move forward to amend the constitution so that we will be ready for the next council terms in the summer. It was moved and seconded that we do so. The motion passed unanimously.
- Jeff emphasized the need to utilize social networking to improve our presence in the community and be more inviting to all. This includes creating a St. John's Facebook page.
- Improving the look and content of the church website was discussed. Jeff and Buck will consult with our current website host and look into websites of other churches.
- Stewardship update: Cindi informed us of the following: 71 estimates of giving for \$232,208 for 2012 compared with 60 estimates of giving for \$197,747 for 2011. This is an 18.89% increase!
- The baptism of Axel Moore Beckers, infant son of Paul Beckers and Anya Moore, will take place on Sunday, January 8th.
- Envelope offerings are 100% of budget. Revenues are at 107%. Expenses are at 94%. Benevolences for 2011 are paid.
- The recent fire inspection went well. The stage curtain needs to be fireproofed.
- A Lifeline Screening Event is scheduled for 3/10/12 from 9-3 P.M.
- Further estimates will be sought for air-conditioning the nursery, gym and parlor.

OUR JOYS AND PRAYER CONCERNS

Our Joys!

All of the many blessings we all received in 2011.

Our neighborhood Christmas toy collection introduced us to several new families.

Over 300 people worshiped with us on Christmas Eve.

PR. Pegs' engaging presentation of "Santa's Favorite Christmas Story."

The Chili Potluck and Christmas Sing was a real gas!

The children did a marvelous job proclaiming "The Christmas Story" on Dec. 18!

Our neighborhood carolers were met with tooting horns and thumbs up all around.

Our Advent concert and smorgasbord drew its largest crowd ever!

Our 2012 estimates of giving grew by nearly 20%.

The good news that God is with us!

Our Prayer Concerns

Mary W. as she awaits test results.

Bob & Pearl Lussky.

Gordon C., Betty C., Carol D., Diane G., Jeanne L., Chris M., Jean P., Ruth R., Paula R., Euhla S., Gladys T., Ruby U. and Betty W.

Those seeking help for their addictions.

Our students and teachers as they return to the classroom.

Stronger, healthier families and family values.

Those preparing for marriage in the new year.

A stronger, more compassionate economy with jobs and sustainable income for all.

Peace among nations and peace among peoples.

Our January worship attendance and offerings.

