



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

412 E. Benton Street

Joliet, Illinois 60432-2456

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

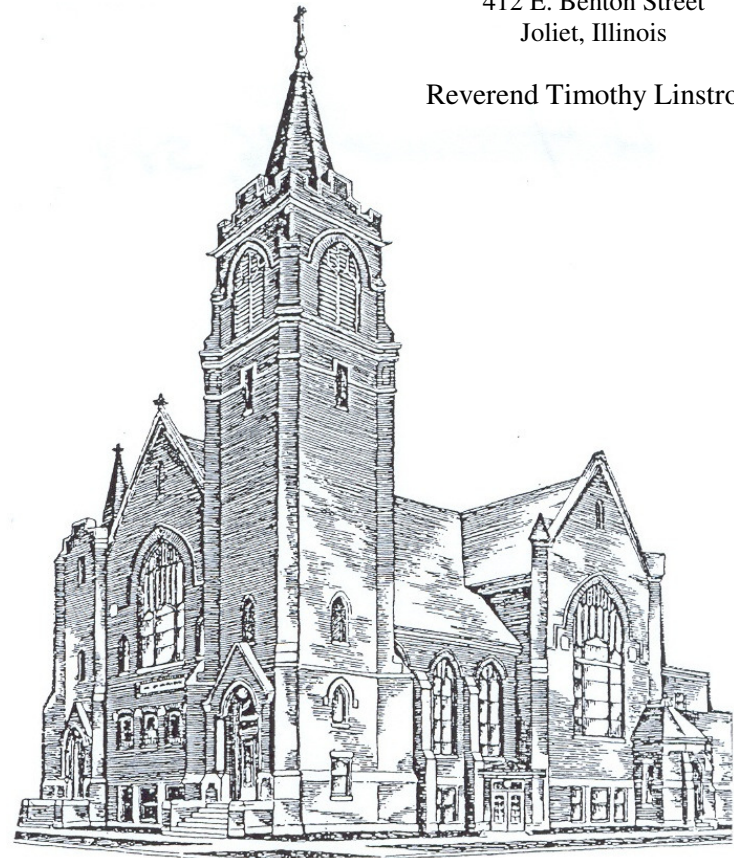
Fall/ Winter Schedule
8:30 am Choir Practice
8:45 am Education Hour
9:30 am - Worship Service
Communion on the first and third
Sundays of the month

E-mail - bethlehem0412@att.net
Website - www.blcjoliet.com

The Bethlehem Lutheran

412 E. Benton Street
Joliet, Illinois

Reverend Timothy Linstrom



February 2012

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR LINSTROM

Dear Friends in Christ,

During the past month and up until the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, we have been journeying through the season of Epiphany, which is a special time in the life of the Church. The dictionary defines “epiphany” as “a revealing, a manifestation, an unveiling.” Our church sees the Epiphany season as the time when Christ’s lordship over all creation is revealed, manifested, unveiled. What was once made known only to the Holy Family and the shepherds at Christmas became known to a much larger and greater audience. First, Jesus is revealed as Son of God to the Magi, who came from distant lands to worship and give tribute to this infant King. Jesus is revealed as Son of God to John the Baptist and his disciples at the river Jordan and to the great crowds that came to declare their repentance. Jesus is revealed as Son of God around the Sea of Galilee, particularly to group that would become his followers, some fishermen, and even a tax collector. The season of Epiphany concludes with the Transfiguration of our Lord, when Jesus went to the mountaintop with his disciples and shone like the sun, as God again revealed to Jesus’ disciples that this is God’s Son, the chosen one, and that we must listen to him.

Jesus’ epiphany as Son of God reaches across time as we gather together as the Church each Sunday, to hear God’s word proclaimed and to feast at the Lord’s Table. And as Jesus is revealed to us once again in the breaking of the bread we embrace His call to “Come and see, come and follow, go and tell others.” Because Christ is here, and present among us, we, who have come and followed, must reveal him to others so that they too may know him as the Son of God. We must broaden our vision of Christ’s work here on earth, and more specifically here in Joliet, so that all may

is sent to be tempted by Satan. Christ, the source of life, is on His way to the cross. In these clashes of Christ, we find victory.

Christian Symbols

40

This number appears many times in Scripture, often indicating a time of trial or testing, or simply marking something significant. It rained 40 days and nights during the Great Flood. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus fasted for 40 days and was with the disciples for 40 days between his resurrection and ascension. Taking this symbolic number to heart, the Christian church has long observed 40 days of Lent (not counting Sundays).



Bible Quiz

During Jesus’ time in the wilderness after his baptism, Satan tempted him to do three things. Which of the following was *not* one of the temptations?



- A. To change water into wine so wedding guests would know he was God’s Son
- B. To throw himself down from the top of the temple, expecting angels to save him
- C. To turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger
- D. To worship Satan in order to gain all the world’s kingdoms

"Worship for Shut-Ins", the Lutheran TV program can now be seen every Sunday on a new station, Comcast Channel 138 at 11:30 am (which is still TLN). It is also seen at 10:30 am on Sundays on DIRECTV Channel 377 on the Total Christian Television network (TCT). For more information, you can call toll free 1-888-286-8002 or go to their Website www.worshipforshutins.org and even view recent programs online.

February 5, 2012 - Mark 1:29-39

"Christ's Activity, and Our Life"

by Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier III, Concordia Theological Seminary~Fort Wayne, IN

From the text, Mark 1:29-39, we are reminded how Christ is acting today, and how we are to live.

February 12, 2012 - 2 Kings 5:1-14

"Too Simple"

by Rev. Paul E. Shoemaker, Emanuel Lutheran Church~New Haven, IN

God comes to us in Word and Sacrament. There are no fireworks, parades, pomp & circumstance. By the power of His Almighty Word, He creates and sustains faith; simple words with great power.

February 19, 2012 - Mark 9:9

"See, Listen, Now Tell"

By Rev. John Westra, Zion Lutheran Church~Holland, MI

See the Christ. Hear HIS Word and now we may share the great news.

February 26, 2012 - Mark 1:9-15

"Clashes in Christ"

By Rev. Dr. Daniel J. Brege, St. Paul Lutheran Church~Decatur, IN

As Christians we see Jesus experiencing clashes in His life, just as if He were one of us...a fallen, sinful, dying human being. Christ, the sinless one, becomes sin. (2 Cor. 5:21) Christ, the one completely endowed by the Holy Spirit, is cast by the Spirit into the wilderness. Christ, the Son of God,

come to know that Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). One of my favorite images of Jesus is the "Light of the World," and John writes, "If we live in that light as disciples, following Jesus as Lord, we become children of light. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons and daughters of light" (John 12:36). "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

In this season that considers how Christ is revealed to us and how he is manifested in our lives, let us attempt to fill that call to be a light for all who live in darkness, and live a life full of love and grace. As we invite our friends to join us in worship and celebrate our 130th anniversary, let us embrace the fact that Jesus' light not only shines on us, but his love and his light shines through us for all to see, and for all to see the way to Him.

When we focus our lives on Jesus, we can break through all the challenges and disappointments that often come with these cold and dreary days, and we can bring the light of Christ to all who so desperately need it. So shine on! Shine on, all you faithful believers, shine on all you children of light, shine on! Shine like the Son!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Tim



Old enough to serve

In a worship committee meeting, much debate occurred about the minimum age for acolytes. “If kids can’t reach the pulpit to place the Bible, then they shouldn’t be allowed to carry it,” some said. Others complained that young participants didn’t carry the cross straight enough or that their childish delight seemed irreverent.

The conversation seemed to overshadow the central question: “Who gets to serve?” Does God’s calling have limits? Shouldn’t our faithful, joyful hearts, not our talents or abilities, define the quality of our service?

Perhaps we can learn from the child standing eagerly in the back of the sanctuary, clutching a Bible to his chest and asking, “I help God?” I don’t want to be the one to tell him no. ~

Did you know.....

Bethlehem is turning 130!!! On Sunday, February 19th we will celebrate 130 years of faithful ministry to the Joliet area with a festive worship service and potluck following the service. Invitations are available to deliver to guests as we invite the whole community to celebrate this anniversary with us. God has been good to us and has led Bethlehem to years and years of fruitful ministry. Let’s all honor God and all those faithful servants who have gone before us by celebrating this grand milestone.

We have designated February 12 as “Invite-a-friend-to-church” Sunday, and we look forward to having many guests come to share in the joy of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. As we consider who to invite, pray for them, and be open to the people God puts before you that you might not have even considered inviting before. Church researchers tell us that most inactive worshippers would not only welcome such an invitation, but they have a desire to



Ian Alton, Bonnie Johnson Anderson, Lela Anderson, Sandra Anderson, Barbara Crum, Patricia Erickson, Gertrude Hoover, Robert Johnson, Jayne Josephson, Pastor Rodney Juell, Norma Larson, Bev Smith, Karen Steinquist, and Anita Tomastick.

Refocus for Lent

- Give up complaining—focus on gratitude.
- Give up harsh judgments—think kind thoughts.
- Give up worry—trust God to provide.
- Give up discouragement—be full of hope.
- Give up bitterness—turn to forgiveness.
- Give up hatred—return good for evil.
- Give up anger—be more patient.
- Give up pettiness—become mature.
- Give up jealousy—pray for trust.
- Give up gossiping—control your tongue.
- Give up sin—turn to virtue.
- Give up giving up—persevere.



BIBLE STUDY... Pastor Tim has started a Wednesday morning Bible Study. Beginning at 10am every Wednesday, he mediates discussion on the lectionary readings for the upcoming Sunday. Please join us for a wonderful time of learning how to apply God’s word to our daily lives.

St. Valentine's Sacrifice

Every February 14, we celebrate the loved ones in our lives with cards, flowers and chocolate. But Valentine's Day has another meaning that's been lost.

First declared a holiday by King Henry VIII of England in 1537, it commemorates the beheading of St. Valentine on February 14, 270 A.D. His crime? Performing wedding ceremonies after Roman Emperor Claudius II had outlawed marriage.

Valentine was martyred for faithfully doing the work God had given him. Although it's good to celebrate love and marriage, let's also remember the courage of a man who gave his life following his convictions. ~

Transfiguration

All over this magnificent world, God calls us to extend his kingdom of shalom-peace and wholeness—of justice, of goodness, of compassion, of caring, of sharing, of laughter, of joy, of reconciliation. God is transfiguring the world right this very moment through us because God believes in us and because God loves us.

What can separate us from the love of God? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. And as we share God's love with our brothers and sisters, God's other children, there is no tyrant who can resist us, no opposition that cannot be ended, no hunger that cannot be fed, no wound that cannot be healed, no hatred that cannot be turned into love, no dream that cannot be fulfilled.

- Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream*

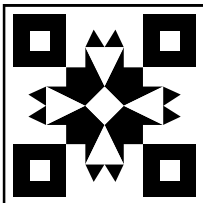
become involved in a faith-based community, so invite anyone you meet, to come and see what's going on at Bethlehem.

We are beginning to develop an Evangelism strategy for our church, and our first step involves understanding hospitality and visitor sensitivity, and we have started to form a team to address those issues. The Hospitality Team is currently looking for volunteers to be Greeters and will be exploring ways to make our church more visitor-friendly. If you are interested in being a part of this team, please contact Craig or Mary Lewis, or Pastor Tim.

A meeting to discuss Youth issues and programming took place this past month and plans are being made to develop this important ministry. Parents and volunteers committed to providing regular activities, a well-structured program, and a Vacation Bible School program this summer. Plans are also being made to turn the cloister room back into a Youth room so that our children and youth may have a place of their own in the church.

Ash Wednesday is February 22nd and we will have a special service that evening at 7:00 p.m. This service leads us into the penitential season of Lent, a season marked by stripping away the non-essential and unimportant, reflecting on our own sinfulness, and focusing on God's gift of forgiveness which comes through his Son, Jesus Christ. Plan on attending this service of self-examination and renewal to kick off your Lenten journey.

Mid-week Lenten Services will begin Wednesday February 29th at 6:30 and will continue each Wednesday evening through March 28th. Choir rehearsals will follow these services at 7:30 in preparation for a Palm Sunday Cantata and Holy Week services. ~



Bethlehem Quilting Day

The quilters meet on the fourth Thursday of every month from 9 am until 2 pm in the church parlors. We have a job for everyone!

Please bring a sack lunch. Come join us, lend a hand in this worthwhile cause, and enjoy the fellowship. Everybody is welcome! The next quilting day is February 23, 2012.

Lectors and Lay Assistants:

- 5 - Lector: Judy Simonich
Lay Assistant: Dennis Kress
- 12 - Lector: Judy Simonich
- 19 - Lector: John Lavelle
Lay Assistant: Sheryl Hudson
- 26 - Lector: Bruce Kursell

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild chair for this month is Debbie Slick.

Truth Circle

Truth Circle will meet at Elna Anderson's home on Thursday, February 9 at 7pm.

ANNIVERSARY COFFEES throughout the month of February (5th, 12th, and 26th). We will celebrate the 130th Anniversary of our church with a series of coffee hours for members and friends of Bethlehem. Please come and share your recollections and reflections on our rich history while enjoying a hot cup of coffee or a cold glass of juice and a treat. On Sunday, February 19, we will be holding a Potluck luncheon for members and guests. Beverages, meats and rolls will be provided for the luncheon...please bring your crowd pleasing favorite dish to pass. ~

folder when a man nudged Ryan's shoulder and asked if they would mind moving further down the row because they were in the place where he and his family always sit.

Despite some moments of confusion and unfamiliarity with local customs, the service proceeded fairly smoothly for the visitors. After the benediction the pastor welcomed visitors, inviting them to a coffee hour in the lounge. Ashley and Ryan thought it would be nice to go to the coffee hour, but they did not know where the lounge was. Hesitantly they went in the direction they saw most of the people going. At the coffee hour a young man approached them and asked if they were visitors. They told him they had just moved to the area and were looking for a church. He seemed genuinely interested in them, and after noticing the signs of Ashley's pregnancy, he asked them how long they had been married. When Ryan told him they weren't married, though, the man frowned and quickly excused himself.

Soon after that uncomfortable encounter, Ashley and Ryan left the church and went to brunch at a local restaurant. The hostess greeted them warmly and graciously asked them to follow her to their table. She handed both of them menus and said their server would tell them about the specials and answer any questions they might have about the menu. The server came just as the hostess was leaving. After taking drink orders, he carefully explained the special entrees and apologized that one of the menu items was not available. Ryan and Ashley thoroughly enjoyed their brunch. They felt welcomed, accepted, cared for, and affirmed. Ashley noted on the drive home that the church they had attended could take a few lessons for the restaurant where they had brunch.

The exercise of hospitality does not happen automatically – it requires intentional effort on our part. Welcoming, greeting, accompanying, serving, guiding – these are all components of the church's ministry of hospitality. ~

Hospitality – the art of warmly inviting and graciously welcoming people and opening to them the worship life of a congregation is essential to the worship of the church. The following account of a young couple, from the Worship Handbook for Ushers and Greeters (Augsburg Fortress, 2002) can help us become more aware of the needs of our visitors, and guide us to become a more hospitable congregation:

On Sunday morning in late June, Ashley and Ryan were on their way to church. They were new to the area and had found an advertisement on the internet for a church nearby. When they arrived at First Lutheran Church they were impressed by the physical plant. After parking, they tried to decide which door was the main entrance. On the way toward the closest door, the couple passed a number of people deep in conversation. No one said hello to them. They entered the building looking for the worship space, or at least for a friendly face, someone who might be approachable. Standing outside a classroom was a teen-aged girl who smiled and said hello to them. They explained to her that they were visiting and did not know how to find the worship space. She pointed down the hall and told them to turn left at the end of the hall. As Ashley was about to thank the girl for help, the girl took a step forward and said she would be happy to show them the way. She brought the two to the narthex where many worshippers were milling about greeting one another.

As Ryan and Ashley were about to enter the worship space they looked for an usher to give them a worship folder. They saw two ushers at one of the doors, but the ushers seemed to be in the middle of a disagreement of some sort. Finally, seeing some worship folders on a small table, they helped themselves. Several people smiled at them, but no one spoke. They entered the worship space and sat in a pew near the back. They had begun to look through the worship

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 - Maj. Gen. Richard Gustafson
2 - Doris Becker
5 - Todd Lukas
6 - Sandy Griffin
11 - Rocky Gutierrez
11 - Rosalie Olson
13 - Phyllis Holmquist
15 - Willa Schroeder
18 - Al Lewis, Sr.
21 - Betty Green
21 - Njoki Uribe
28 - Robert Ceci



Pronoun Shift










Society encourages us to focus on ourselves. The pronouns in the parable of the rich man indicate that he fell into this trap, too: “*He* talked to *himself*: ‘What can *I* do? *My* barn isn’t big enough for this harvest. ... I’ll tear down *my* barns and build bigger ones. Then *I’ll* gather in all *my* grain and goods, and *I’ll* say to *myself*, Self, *you’ve* done well!’” (Luke 12: 16-19, The Message).

What a difference other pronouns would have made. He could have asked, “What would you have me do, God?” He could have seen things as God’s, on loan to him to share with others: “This barn you’ve blessed me with, God, isn’t big enough for this harvest you’ve provided. I’ll share the extra with others, as you’ve commanded.”

And instead of taking credit himself, he could have offered praise: “God, you’ve cared so well for me. Thank you, Lord!” ~

February 2012



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10am Bible Study 	2 Groundhog Day 	3	4
5 8:30 Senior Choir 8:45 Education Hour 9:30 Worship Service w/ Holy Communion Coffee hour	6 7pm Property Board	7	8 10am Bible Study 	9 7pm Truth Circle	10	11
12 Invite-A-Friend Day 8:30 Senior Choir 8:45 Education Hour 9:30 Worship Service Coffee hour	13	14 Valentine's Day 9:30am Lay Ministry mtg. 	15 10am Bible Study 	16		18
19 8:30 Senior Choir 8:45 Education Hour 9:30 Worship Service w/ Holy Communion Anniversary Potluck	20 President's Day  7pm Council meeting	21	22 Ash Wednesday 10am Bible Study  7pm Service	23 9-2 Quilters	24	25
26 8:30 Senior Choir 8:45 Education Hour 9:30 Worship Service Coffee hour	27	28	29 10am Bible Study  6:30pm Service			