



PILGRIM LUTHERAN CHURCH

44 CHAPEL ROAD – KENMORE, NY 14217

(716) 875-5485

A Congregation in Mission, Community and Service

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

DECEMBER 2018

PASTOR: Rev. Ben Eder

SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:00 AM

EDITOR: Mary Werth

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY: 9:30 AM

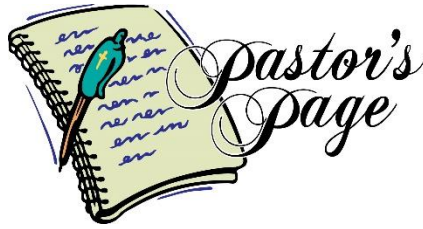
ASSOC. EDITOR:

WORSHIP: 10:00 AM

*“This will be a sign for you:
you will find a child
wrapped in bands of cloth
and lying in a manger.”*



Luke 2:12, NRSV



At times, particularly when there may be a low attendance at a service, I may be asked, “Where are the people?” or questions to that effect. This column is my attempt to address that question.

My first impulse is to get defensive, but I don't want to be defensive. After all, I've been the pastor here for over 25 years; in that sense, “I own this” and can't blame my predecessor or anyone else (as I may be tempted to do).

Since our current active membership comprises about 100 people, the fact that we average around 50 on Sunday and 10-12 on Saturday is really pretty good. Of course, we can always do better. My saying is, “I want everyone to come to Pilgrim Lutheran Church!” We also have numerous guests and visitors who attend and support the church financially (and in other ways), so we actually reach more people than one realizes.

We must also acknowledge that we are living in an increasingly unchurched society: many are not familiar with the Bible and the thought of visiting or attending a church isn't even on their radar screen. So, if we want to see more people in church it is important that we extend an invitation to our friends, family, and neighbors to attend (better yet, bring them with you). Many surveys indicate that people haven't visited a church because they weren't invited but would consider attending if they were.

Who comes to church and fills the pews (or who doesn't) is outside of my control, or of any human being. I can't control who comes to church any more than who goes to Shea's or the Bills game. What I do know is Jesus' promise that where “two or three are gathered, there I am in their midst.” - Matthew 18:20.

What has encouraged me as a pastor is God's promise that “the Word shall not return to me void but shall accomplish the purpose for which it was sent.” - Isaiah 55:11. God's Word has power, and no mere human can determine the impact it has on a person or even a group of people.

Also, it is reassuring to know that while we are called to proclaim the Gospel, the growth of God's kingdom is in His power and out of our hands. Speaking to this, the Apostle Paul declared, “I planted, and Apollos watered, but God gives the growth.” - 1 Corinthians 3:6

As we enter the Season of Advent and prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth on Christmas, this season provides us with an opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with others. The Season of Christmas (and Easter too) does lead more people to examine what they believe and to hear what the Church has to say about matters of sin, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. We can use this festive occasion to reach more with the joyous message that “On this day in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” - Luke 2:11

Rather than being overly concerned with numbers, let us instead focus on people and the impact that the Gospel has on individuals: in that way, the numbers will take care of themselves.

Your Servant in Christ,

Pastor Ben Eder



SUNDAY SERVER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 2018

DATE ➡	Dec. 2	Dec. 9	Dec. 16	Dec. 23	Dec. 30
READER	Tim McGuan	Alex Ruby	Carolyn Alessi	Abigail Size	Mary Werth
USHERS	Tyrone Bryant * Jim Miller	Mike Weurch * Dianne Weurch	Jim O'Brien * George Alessi	Eric Fellner * Gary Smith	Tegwanda Alford * Peggy Clark
COMMUNION ASSISTANT	Frank Alessi	Jim O'Brien	Gary Smith	George Alessi	Eric Fellner
NURSERY	Amber Trimmer	Linda Eder	Ruth & Gaby O'Brien	Peggy Clark	Carol Obot



A merry balance

In Luke 10:38-42, Martha gets a bad rap. After all, we need Marthas to get things done and to show hospitality. (Note that Martha is the one who opens up her home to Jesus in the first place!)

Marthas are needed in December, but holiday preparations shouldn't shift our focus from the reason for the season. When we become "worried and distracted" as Martha did (v. 41, NRSV), we're tempted to trade God's "one thing" (v. 42) for the world's many worthless things. Yet if we're only like Mary, we may forget to let the world know who we're celebrating!

So, this Christmas, keep a proper balance between your inner Mary and your inner Martha. Take time to "be Mary," kneeling at the manger, so that all the merry things you do as Martha have meaning and serve the newborn king.



December

BIRTHDAYS

Paul Holway

Dec. 2

George Alessi

Dec. 4

Sarah Hinterberger

Dec. 7

David Porter

Dec. 16

Greg Jakubowski

Dec. 28



December

ANNIVERSARIES

Dec. 19

Jim & Judy Miller

From a church newsletter:

JOIN us for a holiday tea!

Family photos will be taken by the
Christmas tree.

RSVP by December 2

That's one talented evergreen!

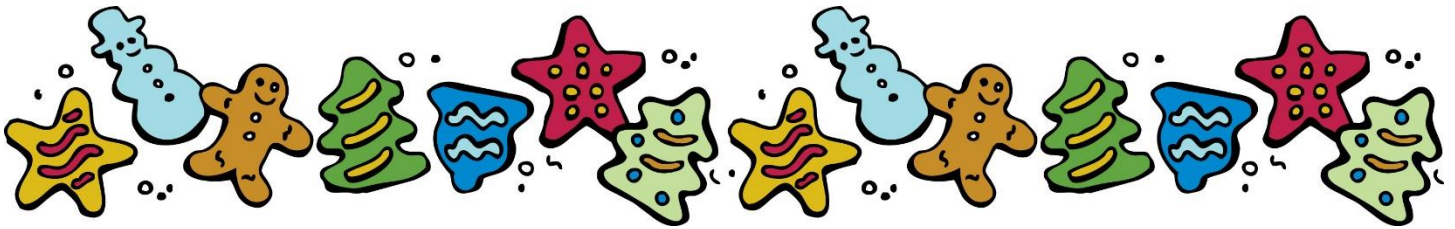
From a church newsletter:

THANKS to our new suggestion box ...

... you can remain anonymouse ...

... while commenting about the church

Now the church mouse's identity can remain secret.



It's cookie time! All of you are invited! On Dec. 10th, the Esther Circle is sponsoring a cookie exchange. We will meet at 6 p.m., have a short devotion and meeting, and pack boxes for our shut-ins. Then we will exchange the remainder of the cookies. If you wish to participate, please bring at least 3 dozen cookies (without nuts) for the exchange.

At 7 p.m., Ron Calandra will present a short talk about Hearts for the Homeless, the charity you have supported at coffee hours and pot-faith lunches this year. Then we will enjoy a time of fellowship (and eat a few of those cookies.)



Judy Miller has generously donated a crocheted afghan for a raffle. The profits from this and other fundraising activities enable us to donate to Lutheran Hour Ministries, Lutheran Bible Translators, Meals on Wheels, and other charities. On Nov. 25, Dec. 2 and Dec. 9, we will be selling tickets for 50 cents each or 3/\$1. We will draw the winning ticket Dec. 10. Think about supporting these charities and winning an afghan for a Christmas gift or for keeping yourself nice and warm.

Just a reminder—used stamps trimmed with 1/4 inch around them can be given to Pat Watkins; Karen Smith will accept your “mites”—pennies or other change—for LWML; and Sue Holway will be turning in the Dash's grocery receipts you have been saving by Dec. 19.

May you all have a blessed Advent season and a joyous Christmas as you prepare for and celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Carol Obot and Sue Holway



How did Christmas Candlelight Vespers start?

Each year, since 1943, Valparaiso University has celebrated the Advent season with a special Vespers service the first Sunday in Advent. The Chapel of the Resurrection, on the Valparaiso University Campus, now hosts this annual event. Since 2003, they have used a system of “assured seating cards”, for the two services. Imagine one of the largest collegiate chapels in the world, with seating for more than 2000 had to find a way to accommodate over 4000 people desiring to be a part of the wonderful evening of scripture and song! Praise God for the dedicated musicians and staff and the blessed congregation.

The Buffalo area Vespers began as a tradition of support for Valparaiso University (Valparaiso Indiana). Guild chapters around the country have hosted Vesper services in honor of Valparaiso University, but Buffalo is now the *only* Christmas Candlelight Vesper service outside of the University campus!

In 1956 and the very first Vespers was held at First Trinity, while it was still at its Michigan Avenue location. E.W. “Hap” Schroeter was the service coordinator and adult choir director for that service, and for many more years. Holy Trinity and St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church also played host to Vespers in its early years. Rev. Richard E. Blemaster worked with, and eventually took over for Hap, when Vespers was held at Kleinhans Music Hall from 1962 through 1977. For the first Kleinhans Vespers over 1100 people were in attendance! In 1978 it returned to First Trinity and a then recent Valpo grad, Janet Grotke, shared her talents with the Vespers Choir and the community, with the theme “Oh, How Shall I receive Him”. In 1979 Ruth Kovach began her tenure as the musical director. Ruth lovingly continued this ministry until the 50th Christmas Candlelight Vespers - “We Hail Thee with Rejoicing”. Following Ruth, we were blessed to have Susan Brese and her musical gifts to help us carry on the Vespers tradition. Sue had been accompanist for the Vespers for many years before she took on the new role of Music Director. In 2017, when Sue announced she would retire, David Werth graciously agreed to be the new Music director. David has a strong Valpo connection (daughter Kaitlin is a recent graduate) and had often travelled to hear the Vespers at Valparaiso University. His vision was to emulate the atmosphere that is present on campus at their Advent Vespers. We are very excited about this perspective and hope that it leaves you with the warmth and peace of this blessed season.

Valparaiso University Guild members have been sponsoring this event since its beginning in 1956 and several committee members have been on the team several decades! Over the last 63 years many dedicated people have worked to assure the Vespers is part of the western New York Advent Season. Martin Luther Christian School Parent Teacher Organization was a partner for many years. After 57 years of dedicated service to their pupils, the school, unfortunately, closed. This, however, brought a new partnering opportunity with Pioneer Camp and Retreat Center. It has been an honor to work with such a fine Christian organization that does so much for the community. We pray for God’s continued blessings for Pioneer and their ministry.

We also wish to recognize the very dedicated singers in the Vespers Choir. Choristers come from all over Western New York. They begin weekly rehearsals six weeks prior to the service, in addition to two dress rehearsals. Our fine instrumentalists also spend many hours practicing for this event. We are thankful for them as well. Our special guest choirs have always been a treat, and this year is no exception!

We are especially grateful to First Trinity Lutheran Church and its members that offer their help to insure the success and continuation of the Christmas Candlelight Vespers. May this ministry give glory to God for many years to come – *How Can I Keep From Singing!*

During this Christmas season, if anyone is interested in purchasing my mom, Doris V. Neumann's book about the Lord's Prayer, entitled, "God's Rainbow of Promise", please let me know and I can get a copy for you. It's a wonderful gift to give to friends and family. The cost is \$14.00. You can call me at 835-9075 and leave a message if I'm not able to answer. Thank you.

I wish everyone a Blessed Christmas!

Marilyn Schneck



CHRISTMAS

One early Christmas morning
I gazed up to the skies
And I beheld the strangest sight
Before my very eyes.

I saw an angel praying
And thanking God above
For giving us the greatest gift
Of His eternal love.

The stars were in the heavens
The moon was shining bright
And snow was gently drifting down
'Twas such a heavenly sight!

The sheep were in the meadow
A lamb was standing by
And I beheld a precious child --
He softly breathed a sigh.

I shall remember always
Each time I kneel and pray
The precious gift of God's own Son
That blessed Christmas Day.

12/11/10 Doris V. Neumann

LHM Ministry Response



The ministry center in Uganda distributes Bibles, brochures, topical booklets, and other Christian literature to those with specific needs or concerns in their lives. Individuals who respond to LHM—Uganda's outreach often enroll in **Bible Correspondence Courses (BCC)**.

In addition to literature and **BCC**, LHM—Uganda organizes film video rallies for rural communities. Illiteracy prohibits a large population of Uganda from reading the Gospel, so LHM—Uganda enters these communities to visually present the Gospel. The film/video ministry continues to gain popularity among the people, as do LHM—Uganda's choir and drama groups.

Serving as dynamic witnessing tools for evangelism, the choir and drama groups travel to villages where they reach out with traditional Gospel music and plays by performing publicly for large audiences.

LHM—Uganda ministry programs:

- 15 minute Radio Program
- TV Holiday Specials
- Text Messaging
- Email
- Christian Music CDs
- Booklets
- **Bible Correspondence Courses**
- Drama/Storytelling Performances
- Concerts
- Film Showing
- Youth Ministry
- Small Group Ministry
- **Equipping the Saints** Workshop
- AIDS Care & Support Initiative

The Compliment (by Marjorie Holmes)

I want to suggest a new Beatitude: “Blessed are the sincere who pay compliments”.
For I have just had a compliment, and it has changed my day.
I was irritated. Tired. Discouraged. Nothing seemed much use. Now suddenly all this is changed.
I feel a spurt of enthusiasm, of energy and joy. I am filled with hope. I like the whole world better, and myself and you.

Lord, bless the person who did this for me.
He probably hasn’t the faintest idea how his few words affected me. But wherever he is, whatever he’s doing, bless him. Let him, too, feel this sense of fulfillment, this recharge of fire and faith and joy.

Thank You, God, for this simple miracle so available to all of us. Remind us to use it more often to heal and lift and fortify others’ lives: a compliment!

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Romans 12:9-10 – Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.



Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. Teamwork divides the tasks and doubles the success.
(from an inspirational poster at the Buffalo VA hospital)



“Christ builds His church with different stones
and makes each one secure;
All shapes and sizes fit in place
to make His church endure.”

(Anon.)

Make this fun decoration as a reminder of the joy Jesus brings.

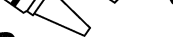


What you need:

- Pencil
- Poster board
- Scissors
- Craft pompoms (red, white, green, silver, gold)
- Glue

What you do:

1. Trace large capital block letters J, O and Y on the poster board.
2. Cut out the letters.
3. Glue pompoms on one side of each letter, completely covering it.
4. Share JOY by displaying the letters in your home.



Joy to the WORLD

In Luke 2:10, the angels share good news that continues to bring great joy today.

In Luke 2:10, the angels share good news that continues to bring great joy today.

Directions: Circle all the complete small “joy” words — forward only.
Count the total. Bonus: See if you can find “Jesus” amid all the joy!

[illegible]

TOTAL JOY=_____

Answer: 36 (10 in the J, 15 in the O, 11 in the Y); Jesus is at the bottom of the large O

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE
JANUARY 2019 NEWSLETTER IS DECEMBER 23RD.**