



Soaring with Spirit

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Melbourne, KY

Pastor's Report:

Arnie Voight writes in [The Bright Star of Bethlehem, Devotions for Advent](#),

"The organ began the hymn at the opening of worship. I didn't expect to understand the words – after all, they were in Arabic, and I have only a three-word Arabic vocabulary. But the melody startled me; I had heard it often as a boy in North Carolina: "Way Down Upon the Swanee River"! What a culture shock! "How did Stephen Foster get to Bethlehem?" I wondered. Things will not be as expected!



This was Sunday morning, my first in Bethlehem. Two friends and I were at worship at Christmas Lutheran Church in the West Bank."

God keeps surprising us! God keeps showing up in unusual and creatively new ways when we open our eyes and keep watching for the new things God is doing, when we posture ourselves to seek God's hand and presence in our daily lives. God continues to find touch-points that surprise us and causes us to stop a moment, to see God in a new light, to deepen us to a new understanding of our relationship in Christ.

Bishop Bill Gafkjen keeps reminding us of God's promise in Isaiah 43, **"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"** It has been the theme of our Indiana-Kentucky Synod, our Assemblies, the Deans' Conference, Synod Council, and so many other aspects of our work together throughout Indiana and Kentucky for these last several years.

Now we're coming to an entirely **New Year**. God only knows what new things God has in store for us, what new relationships might be springing forth, what tired or broken relationships are budding into a renewed opportunity to grow together, to care for one another in a whole new way, what new possibilities will come to us each day to share with someone how much God means to us when perhaps that person is in need of just such encouragement, what new ways God is coming through us to those around us or through someone else into our life at precisely the moment God knows we need Him.

God only knows what is in store for St. John in this coming New Year. We have ideas and plans, and the Council Retreat will open some time for our leadership to consider, plan, and develop these ideas and plans. But ultimately only God knows what's precisely in store for us, and I think God enjoys surprising us in such wonderful, nurturing ways.

For instance, no one but God knew that the Promise of a Messiah who would restore Israel to glory and bring fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would come in the form of a Baby who would grow up to sacrifice Himself and be put to death on a cross. Surprise!

And after the grief and tears had only just begun after Good Friday, God had another Surprise! in store for us on Easter Sunday morning. Our Lord rose from the dead!

You'd think by now we'd be so watchful for God's surprises that it would be even more challenging for God to find a new way to take us aback.

But we get so caught up in the details and "stuff" of our daily life that we forget to be watchful.

This New Year, may one of our resolutions, both individually and as a congregation, be to keep our eyes open for each **New Thing** God does in our midst, knowing and trusting that each new direction and turn is to bring God's gentle reign and rule more fully into focus.

May each new day be greeted with excitement and anticipation of what Our Lord is going to do this day!! And may we sing a new song, even if in the tune and melody of a beloved favorite.

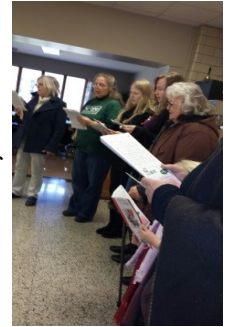
Life is so full and rich this time of year. December saw:

Annual Election and Budget Meeting marked another step St. John takes each year. We passed a budget to guide our ministry and elected a new church council. We look forward to the leadership Ron Beiting, Ryan Lange, Julia Willmoth, and John Walker (re-elected) bring to the 2015 Council, and thank you for all your hard work and leadership to Nancy Enzweiler, Dennis Conner, and David Pleiman. May the Lord continue to bless our mission and ministry, rooted in faith for over 150 years and growing in new ways in the year ahead.

Two Trips to Mid Ky Community Action Partnership, in Beattyville, took place between Thanksgiving and the New Year. Because of your generosity, a great number of families will have a happier Christmas and will be a little more comfortable and warm this winter. The sock and underwear drive for the youngsters of the Head Start program was especially successful. You let the Light of the World shine through your compassion and care. Thank you.



Caroling to our Homebound and at Holy Family Retirement Center was a heart-warming, joy-filled moment with friends and family who are such an important part of our lives. What a meaningful way to spend a Sunday afternoon! Not only did the people we were visiting offer us wonderful hospitality, but they joined in our caroling and sang along. Getting to see some of those we don't see very often was a moving experience and we hope we brought a little more Christmas cheer into their Holiday Season.



Hanging of the Greens was a lot of fun and fellowship, as well as hard work and care to get the tree put together, the lights arranged to satisfaction, ornaments hung, the garland hung on the choir loft rail, the angels proclaiming the Lord's birth in place in the windows, bows and candles arranged in the aisle candle stands and all the other ways we prepare to celebrate Christmas Eve in the powerful, moving, and inspiring **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship** service. As one of the two most important worship services of the year, we gather to acknowledge **God's incredible, extravagant love** in the Most Awesome Gift of all time, Christ becoming one of us, joining in all it means to be a human being, experiencing and understanding life from our creaturely perspective, in order to bring us the fulfillment of the Promise of Salvation, Redemption, and Sanctification. Gather with us for this Holy Moment, in tempo and rhythm with all of creation.



Food Pantry Christmas Distribution took place Thursday, December 18th, and words cannot express the gratitude and thankfulness of our guests and clients. For many of our families, this represents a Christmas miracle in itself, a reflection of **the Christmas Miracle** of Christ's birth. Our children got involved themselves and collected non-perishable items to be distributed through the Food Pantry. Thank you for your graciousness and generosity.



And January is looking forward to:

Property Improvement Team will meet on Monday, January 5th, to discuss the latest plan and estimate from the architect and builder. Please join us for this important conversation as we shape a proposal to take to council and the congregation concerning the necessary and mission-oriented improvements to the building.

Installation of Council and Officers will be part of our worship Sunday, January 4th. Our prayers and Scripture readings as part of the Rite of Installation invite God's blessing and guidance on the leadership of our congregation for this upcoming year.

Leadership Retreat offers a moment in our busy lives as we begin 2015 to take a breath, build space to listen for God's voice and direction, diligently immerse ourselves in Scripture, and think as creatively as our Creator whilst we contemplate St. John's footsteps into the new year. Please join the Church Council Friday evening and Saturday morning & early afternoon, January 23-24, at Camp Springs Vineyard who have graciously hosted our retreat for the last several years. Please let Pastor know you are coming, so we'll know how much lunch to prepare for Saturday.

Annual Congregation Meeting & Potluck, Sunday, January 25th, immediately following worship presents a snapshot of all the ministries we've accomplished throughout 2014 and gives us a chance to share food and fellowship together. Please reserve this vital and important time on your calendar and come, share this time together.



Souper Bowl Sunday, February 1st, will feature our "Noisy Collection" as we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of this "blitz" to help eliminate Hunger. We'll "team up" with almost 8,000 churches and schools who participated last year to raise over \$8 million (over \$100 million since Souper Bowl's beginning in 1990)

to "tackle" hunger for 2015. Use the "piggy banks" to gather your loose change, dollar bills, and checks and bring them to church to "be a Champion"!!

Deadline for Annual Reports from ministry leaders is Sunday, January 11th.

FOOD PANTRY MEETING - A **serious** meeting on the direction of our Food Pantry will be held in Fellowship Hall, Saturday, January 10, 2015 @ 10:00 am. This will be in regards to the USDA Distribution, the Selection Room and the number of volunteers it requires to continue this service. Whether you are directly involved in the Food Pantry or not, your input and ideas are needed. Please won't you join us for this most important decision making meeting. Coffee and donuts will be provided.



Toothpaste & Toothbrushes



Manwich

Chef Boyardee



Gerald Benson
Highland Springs
Room # 1305
960 Highland Ave
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075

Milton Chalk
182 Dogwood Dr.
Highland Hts., KY
41076

Ruby Emmelhainz
2335 Darlington Road
Melbourne, KY 41059

Joann Huck
2634 Fender Road
Melbourne, KY 41059

Charlie Johnson
c/o Bill Johnson
5 Bryan Lane
Alexandria, KY 41001

Please let the church office know if there are others who need to be added to our list



To forgive is to love



We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. —Martin Luther King Jr.

Resolve to listen



Christian philosopher Paul Tillich said, “The first responsibility of love is to listen.” Yet in our fast-paced culture, truly listening to someone has become a lost art.

The intricate Chinese written character for the verb to listen offers wise insight about how to listen to people so they feel heard. The symbol is actually a combination of characters for ears, eyes and an open heart. Basically it reads, “I give you my ears, my eyes and my undivided attention.” What a great image of being fully engaged during the act of communication!

James 1:19 offers two wise resolutions for the year ahead: Be “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” (NRSV). Practicing the skill of active listening is a much-needed way to minister to other people, serving as Jesus’ “ears” in a hurting world.

Keep breathing

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, said many Christians live on a “spiritual roller coaster,” going from one emotional experience to another in a worldly way, feeling “frustrated and fruitless.”

To counteract that, Bright recommended a spiritual breathing exercise as a reminder of God’s love and forgiveness. Simply exhale as you confess your sins and impurities. Then inhale to receive life and forgiveness — and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, who empowers you to resist sin and temptation.

Dying to see Jesus

At age 20, George Ritchie fell gravely ill and was pronounced dead. Amazingly, he revived, convinced he’d had what some call a near-death experience. Ritchie’s return to physical health left him longing so deeply to experience Jesus again that he prayed to die.

Some 15 months later, as an army medical technician, Ritchie became consumed with the care of a particular patient. Then he had an epiphany, recounted in *Return From Tomorrow* (Chosen Books): “If I wanted to feel the nearness of Christ ... I would have to find it in the people that He put before me each day. ... in caring for [Jack] I had lost sight of myself. And in losing myself, I had discovered Christ.

“I wondered if we always had to die, some stubborn part of us, before we could see more of Him ... to stop trying to recapture that other-worldly vision of Jesus, and start looking for Him in the faces across the mess table.”


Christian symbol

Sand dollar



These pretty shells in shades of white, brown or purple are from sea urchins related to starfish and sea cucumbers. The shell’s unique characteristics call to mind Christ’s birth and death: the poinsettia- and lily-like images, holes representing the four nails and spear that pierced Jesus, small bones inside the shell resembling doves and thus symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

January 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>4 Second Sunday of Christmas</i> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship Installation of Church Council and Officers 11:15am Modern Lutheran</p>	<p>5 7:00pm Property Improvement Committee</p>	<p>6 <i>Epiphany of Our Lord</i></p>	<p>7 11:00am Young @ Heart 3:00pm Coffee & Conversation Bible Study</p>	<p>1 </p>	<p>2 7:00pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>3 10:00am Bread of Life Food Pantry Meeting</p>
<p><i>11 Baptism of Our Lord</i> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:15am Bake Sale 6:30pm <i>Girl Scouts</i></p>	<p>12 2:00pm-4:00pm Bread of Life Food Pantry</p>	<p>13 7:00pm Council meeting</p>	<p>14 9:30am E KY Ministerium 3:00pm Coffee & Conversation Bible</p>	<p>15 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i> 9:00am Quilters</p>	<p>16 7:00pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>17</p>
<p><i>18 Second Sunday after Epiphany</i> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 6:30pm <i>Girl Scouts</i></p>	<p>19 <i>Martin Luther King Day</i> 6:00pm Convent for the Dream Program</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 3:00pm Coffee & Conversation Bible Study</p>	<p>22 9:00am Quilters 10:00am-3:00pm Dean's Meeting</p>	<p>23 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Leadership Retreat</p>	<p>24 9:00am Leadership Retreat</p>
<p>25 <i>Third Sunday after Epiphany</i> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:15am Annual Meeting & Potluck 6:30pm <i>Girl Scouts</i></p>	<p>26 2:00pm-4:00pm Bread of Life Food Pantry</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 3:00pm Coffee & Conversation Bible Study</p>	<p>29 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i> 9:00am Quilters</p>	<p>30 7:00pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>31</p>

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory as a father's only son, full of grace and truth" Jn 1:14

St. John Lutheran Church
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Join us for these special events:

Property Improvement Committee, Monday, January, 5th, 7pm

Young at Heart, Wednesday, January, 7th, 11am

Bread of Life Food Pantry, Monday, January, 12th and 26th, 2pm-4pm

Council Meeting, Tuesday, January, 13th, 7pm

Annual Meeting & Potluck, Sunday, January 25th, 11:15am

Breaking Bread Bible Study, every Wednesday, 3:00pm

Quilters every Thursday, 9:00am

Girl Scouts, Sundays, 6:30pm

AA Meetings, every Friday, 7:00pm