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Pastors Page ~ "Stir Up Our Hearts"

In a recent conversation, several of us agreed that the word *listen* was an apt description of our *Journey of Faith* process here at Bethlehem. The process begins again this month and is a gift to the new people God has brought to our community. Besides deepening their connection to the Bethlehem community, the process focuses on the essentials of Christian living: prayer, worship, scripture, relationships and service to the neighbor. Listening is critical to practicing these disciplines. For example, small group exercises approach the Scriptures with prayerful and attentive listening. The process is based on an ancient process called the Catechumenate. The root of that word means "a sounding in the ear." It is all about listening.

As I reflected on this, I began to appreciate how the word *listen* might apply, as well, to the season of Advent - a time to slow down, pray, take a breather, and be attentive to God's presence in our lives. As we wait for the light to invade our winter darkness, we take time to be still and to pray. Advent is a time to listen.

As I ponder the Sunday scrip-

ture readings in Advent, they are begging us to listen. On the first Sunday in Advent we get a kind of wake-up call. The vision laid out for the future bids us to be faithful in the present. In the weeks that follow we hear the preaching of John the Baptist and his call to turn our lives toward the coming Savior. John urges us to be open to hear God's will. Finally, as we approach the awesome mystery of Christmas, we hear the good news of the promise of Emmanuel, meaning "God with us" and seek to discover God's presence in our daily lives. In our rather busy and frenetic culture, it is often difficult to listen, but taking the time to listen provides an alternative that might just be worth the effort. Advent begs us to listen.

One of the venerable traditions in Advent is the "Stir Up" prayers. The Prayer of the Day for each Sunday begins with the request for God to stir up. So, we pray: "Stir up your power" or "Stir up our hearts." Note the sense of urgency in these prayers. Yes, we take time for quiet contemplation and even greater silence, but these disciplines are never ends in themselves. We listen so



"Watchfully Pray"

that we might be stirred up to new and radical obedience. Put another way, we disengage for a while so that we may reengage to love our neighbor.

How might you listen over the next weeks? Perhaps Advent is a good time to begin to pray the daily lectionary readings, read through a Gospel or another book in Scripture. You might want to take some quiet time in your daily routine, prepare an Advent Wreath for your home and watchfully pray with the ever expanding light. You could take some time to listen more closely to a friend, family member or neighbor in need. The world tends to get rather busy during December days. Advent is opportunity to order our days a little differently. By listening a little we might discover something new and even life-changing.

Peace,

Pastor Bryon +

The Advent Wreath



As Christians, we use symbols to visually express our life of faith and as reminders of our common pilgrimage in Christ. Symbols can have heightened meaning for us when associated with particular seasons in our journey of faith. One such symbol is the Advent Wreath.

The Advent Wreath has its roots in pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People longed for the return of the sun during the darkest time of the year. So, at the time of the winter solstice, people would light fires and candles. In the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to show forth the

coming of Christ into the world. With this same symbolism, the Advent Wreath developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of Jesus. The circular wreath came to represent the eternal victory over death through Christ. Evergreens became a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lighted candles were a reminder of the light of Christ come into the world.

Look for the large Advent wreath hovering over the worshipping assembly at Bethle-

hem. May it remind us of God's promises of life and light. The candles are royal blue, signaling longing and hope. Blue is also the natural color of the dawn before the sun rises and the deep shades of midnight.

The hope of Advent looks not only to the celebration of the Christ Child in the manger, but even more to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time. At the same time, the wreath may direct our attention to all the ways the light comes into our present. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

"The hope of Advent looks not only to the celebration of the Christ Child in the manger, but even more to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time".

Gift Making for All-Meaningful Gifts

Come enjoy an evening of gift making and fellowship on the first 3 Wednesdays in December. Bring friends or family members and enjoy supper at 5:30 p.m. and gift making from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Come for all three Wednesdays and create three different handmade gifts—all are high quality yet easy to make—we call them Meaningful Gifts.

Ages six and older preferred.

- 12/1— we will make gold and silver beaded bookmarks. A great gift for anyone who loves to read, whether it's fiction, cookbooks or the bible.
- 12/8— we will make pins that you can wear on your sweater or jacket along with gift tags and ornaments.
- 12/15— we will make hand-dipped candles and luminary bowls.

In order to have enough materials for all, the instructors need to place orders for the supplies, so reservations are required. We are limited on space so call or email to hold your spot TODAY. Although there is no cost for supper or crafting, donations are requested. Please contact Patricia Slaven-Irvin (developtalent@gmail.com) to reserve a spot.

Bring your friends, children or grandchildren and enjoy some quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of the season, and create some Meaningful Gifts, too.

Childcare provided for those younger than six years old.



12 Things You Don't Know About Mrs. Kathye Hamm

Number 5: Christmas is my favorite holiday! I have bins and bins of decorations and have some kind of tree in every room of our house. I carry on the tradition of baking cookies – using many of my Grandma Jennie's recipes. Some years I make 10 or more different kinds. This year I will not put up all of my decorations, as we have 2 new kittens who love to climb and push things around!



**CALLING
ALL KIDS**

ARISE AND THE WELL

We want you to join us at ARISE and THE WELL!

Sundays 9:45 – 10:45 am Godly Play

There will be no Godly Play Sunday, December 26!

Arise! and join us for Godly Play every Sunday! This innovative learning draws on the traditions of ancient storytelling. The teachers model how to use the language of the Christian tradition through presentations of parables, sacred stories, liturgy and silence. The Godly Play classroom provides a space to worship God, not just speak about God. Just as adults experience the Sanctuary as sacred space, so do the children experience the Godly Play room as sacred space.

Wednesdays 5:30 – 7:30 pm K.O.W.

There will be no K.O.W December 22 & 29!

Kids On Wednesday (K.O.W.) joins Confirmation and Journey of Faith on Wednesday nights at **The Well**. We will all gather together for dinner from 5:30 – 6:00 pm. Kids will then participate in blocks of fun, hands-on learning. Topics will include Music, Art, Healthy Living, Cooking and Games.

For more information or to register, talk to Kathye Hamm.

Art Notes

A new exhibit “All is Calm,” is up in the sanctuary. People who have contributed are: Lorraine Clark, Inge Henderson, Randi Olson, Kathy Ryan, Richard Reid, Dave Schermann, Monika Latona and Loren Clark. Also in the gallery this month is children's art, by Kids on Wednesday. Please check out the sculp-

ture creations; Artists are: Dylan DeValk, Kylie Bowman, Megan Erickson, Mariah Erickson and Shelby Kindice.

We always appreciate participation, and invite everyone to submit an art piece for consideration. Contact Kathy Ryan for more information.

Also, the “faux” stained glass window display will be gradually going up through Advent.

In January we will have a guest artist, Judy Lew Loose, from Sacramento, with portraits of tent city residents. Judy will be on-hand for an artist's reception January 23 at 9:45 to hear her talk about her

work. We will have an accompanying appeal for canned goods for the food closet on that day.



Sermon on CD's

Sermon CD's are available from November 2009 to present. If you would like a copy, let Frank Hampton or Randi Olson know. Memorial service CD's are also available for most of the year.



Holiday Bake Sale, December 4 & 5

Bring cookies, cakes, jams, jellies and any other goodies (preferably wrapped and ribboned) to the church on Friday, December 3rd for our yearly Holiday Bake Sale that will be held after all of our worship services the weekend of December 4th and 5th. What a great way to begin the festivities here at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Update from Kibungo On Property Purchase

The Following e-mail was a response from Gerard when I informed him of our proposed rummage sale. Even though the money raising efforts are taking longer than expected it is good news that they can proceed with their building program.

"Dear Don,
Indeed its my pleasure to hear from you! Surely we promise to continues to pray for you for very successful fundraising action next year. The good news from here is that the owner of the property agreed to release the land to us so that we can start the construc-

tion works. We have paid him half of the money needed for the property agreeing we will pay the remaining money in July next year. We have started mobilizing money from our parishioners so next month we start construction activities like clearing site, and digging a foundation. By the middle of November I will send you some photos showing the site, and works in progress so that you can put them on your web to help you during fundraising ac-

tion. More news from LCR is that next month starting from 5th -7th December our church executive meeting and synod will meet to elect a new Bishop. Please pray for us so that we use our wisdom to elect a good leader to lead our church well in future. I will share your message with Pr. Gerard and members of the Kibungo parish. Greet all brothers and sisters at Bethlehem Lutheran Church , God bless you,
Mr. Gerardson Gerard

Because of your love and generosity, Bethlehem has contributed approximately \$2,000 to purchase property for our sister congregation in Rwanda

Rummage Sale for Kibungo



Contact Don Schultz or Tia Desplancke to get involved.

The **Kibungo** Parish (our sister-congregation in Rwanda) needs \$5000 to purchase property to build a church building. Because of your love and generosity, Bethlehem Lutheran has contributed approximately \$2000 towards the purchase of property. A **"RUMMAGE**

SALE" is scheduled this spring on or about April 30, 2011 to assist with raising the additional funds needed for the **Kibungo** Parish. We are asking for everyone's support at BLC for this rummage sale. We are encouraging you to save items needed to make this rum-

mage sale a success. You can clean your closets, drawers and **Kibungo** can purchase desperately needed property. Contact Don Schultz if you encounter storage problems at 916-276-4881 (cell) or you may email Don Schultz @ dps313@sbcglobal.net

From Bryan Whiteside-Director of Youth

A few weeks ago Coreena and I went and watched a documentary titled "Race to Nowhere." It is a film that was produced by a concerned parent who was observing the stress placed upon her children. The unrealistic systemic expectations in education and extra-curricular activities are great affects on teens in our society nationwide. Over and over again, the students in the film talked about the lack of sleep, lack of time, and the physical symptoms attributed to the expectations placed upon them by the adults in their lives.

My curiosity took over and I began to talk to the teenagers at BLC about their average day. Every high school student that I have spoken to has said that their average day, from the moment they get ready for school, until they are finally

done with homework and sports, is between 13 and 15 hours. One student said that her average day is 19 hours until she is finally done with everything that she "must do." The thing that was most disturbing, was they had bought into the lie that they are only as good as they produce. Their identity had become their achievements.

My mind began to wander to the people of the Exodus. As people redeemed from slavery, God had to provide the Hebrews with a detoxification period at Mt. Sinai. It is here that God gave Moses and the Hebrew nation the Ten Commandments which included the command to rest (Sabbath). God needed to show a group of human beings what it meant to be human beings. At Sinai, God called these people His own. Their identity was now

children of God rather Egyptian property.

These pressures are pouring over into home life and everyone is feeling it. The unrealistic expectations that are placed on kids is creating stress and conflict with parents and siblings. As Christians, we must proclaim a different reality that says to children, "who you are and who you are becoming are more important than your GPA." We all have a responsibility to remind the teens in our lives what their true identity is: **beautiful children of God.**

If you are interested in the subject teen health and would like to create a healthier environment for teens in our community please come to the local organizing ministry meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday December 1 in the "garden room."



Wholistic Health For The Soul

PLEASE ANSWER MY CALL

When I was in nursing school, I received a letter from my mother stating my aunt Ruth was ill. This aunt was a registered nurse, a WWII veteran, married late in life, childless, and my idol. Every summer as a child, she would invite my sister and me to visit for a week in the big city of St. Paul where she took us shopping, to movies, and the annual State Fair. She loved serving us sweet corn on the cob, dripping in butter. But now the news...she was ill. Each day when my uncle would leave for work, it seems she would draw the drapes throughout the house, lock the doors and take the phone off the hook, pacing and wringing her hands in

worry until she heard my uncle's car driving up at the end of the day. After several weeks of this behavior, my uncle coerced her into seeing the doctor and having several shock treatments (the most common way to treat clinical depression at that time) severe anxiety/depression caused by menopausal hormonal changes in the behavioral portions of her brain. This was my first close encounter with mental illness.

Today we are fortunate to have specialists to whom we can go for assistance and therapy immediately when encountering mental illness, just as we do for our physical illnesses. The National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI) recommends churches and the medical community work together in support for those of us who

experience mental illness. They believe our minds are capable of healing by becoming educated in defining mental illness and its symptoms, and participating in recommended treatment. No longer do we have to labor under the stigma of social un-acceptance of mental conditions if our spiritual family extends understanding and caring. Mental conditions are as common as physical ailments, and most are as treatable.

On Monday, January 17 we will have a chance to eat a meal of hot chili, soup and bread followed by a chat with Dr. Jordan Hamilton, a warm and caring counselor from the California Relationship Center here in Auburn. He plans to assist us in defining different kinks of mental illness and putting

our minds at ease by knowing how to determine when one needs to take steps in getting help. Please feel free to invite friends and relatives.

Just as my Mom was begging her sister, my aunty Ruth to answer her telephone calls, my aunt was begging for help by locking herself in a protective shell until help arrived. She was back to her happy, social self in another six months following treatments and in turn, dedicated many days after, advocating for mental health and wellness. They were two sisters of strong faith, learning from each other the importance of acceptance and love. This is what Christianity is about. May your Christmas be blessed with mental health and happiness!

"Come to me all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

Matthew 11:28



"My care giver is my lifeline to the church"

Stephen Ministry Update

"What does a Stephen Ministry care giver mean to me?"

"My care giver is my lifeline to the church. it is like keeping in touch with my faith and another believer. Physically, I can't sit through an entire service, and transportation is difficult to arrange on a Sunday. My care giver and I have devotions, prayer and communion. It is the next best thing to being in church.

"Another thing I really appreciate is the listening that my care giver offers. I feel free to talk about very personal things such

as my feelings, concerns, frustrations, and raising my kids. I know she can be trusted and will not discuss my personal business with others. I really look forward to our time together, as she lifts me up."

These are the words of a care receiver here in the BLC community, who desired to share them with you. What about you, or someone close to you? Would a Stephen Minister be helpful at this time? Several are available (male and female), so please speak with the pastor or any

Stephen Minister for more information.

New Training Class

We are still recruiting as well for the Spring 2011 Training Class. It's a life-enriching experience, so if you would like more information about it, please let any of our S-M's know. We will kick off the training in January, with once a week evening sessions. We are excited to bring this layperson's ministry to the people of our church -- so if that sounds appealing and you hear God calling, please step forward!

Women's Ministry News

GOOD NEWS GIRLS

Women of Bethlehem will meet December 19th at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall for a bible study on the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit". Ruth Dugan will lead the study. If you would like to participate in a cookie exchange. Please bring 18 cookies and take a dozen home.

COOKIES

We also will meet, in the kitchen, on November 30th at 9:30 am to bake cookies. Bring your dough, again any kind. We will bake them and package them in preparation for our Bake Sale the following Saturday and Sunday, December 4th and 5th.

THANK OFFERING/ LOVE OFFERING

We will have a love offering in February in Thanksgiving for all Our Lord has done for us. This will be sent to our national woman's office for seed grants, in some cases out-right grants, to disadvantaged women in the United States and internationally.

More information coming soon.

LWR

School Kits will be our gift to Lutheran World Relief this year. This and quilts have been requested. We decided to do School Kits instead of health kits this year. Watch for more information soon.

The Verge



Our Adult Fellowship group will gather for a Progressive dinner on December 11th at 6:30 PM. We will meet for Appetizers at the Schermann's home, main course at Anderberg's and

Dessert at Pastor Bryon and Britt's. Please contact Diane Allison by email at johnallison@juno.com to bring an appetizers, main course, or dessert item and to RSVP.

Daily Lectionary for December

W Psalm 124
Isaiah 54:1-10
Matthew 24:23-35
Th Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 4:2-6
Acts 1:12-17, 21-26
F Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 30:19-26
Acts 13:16-25
Sa Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 40:1-11
John 1:19-28
Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12
M Psalm 21
Isaiah 24:1-16a1
Thessalonians 4:1-12
Tu Psalm 21
Isaiah 41:14-20
Romans 15:14-21
W Psalm 21
Genesis 15:1-18

Matthew 12:33-37
Th Psalm 146:5-10
Ruth 1:6-18
2 Peter 3:1-10
F Psalm 146:5-10
Ruth 4:13-17
2 Peter 3:11-18
Sa Psalm 146:5-10
1 Samuel 2:1-8
Luke 3:1-18

Third Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11
M Psalm 42
Isaiah 29:17-24
Acts 5:12-16
Tu Psalm 42
Ezekiel 47:1-12
Jude 17-25
W Psalm 42
Zechariah 8:1-17
Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34

Th Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:1-17
Galatians 3:23-29
F Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:18-22
Galatians 4:1-7
Sa Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:23-29
John 3:31-36
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25
M 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Genesis 17:15-22
Galatians 4:8-20
Tu 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Genesis 21:1-21
Galatians 4:21—5:1
W 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Genesis 37:2-11
Matthew 1:1-17
Dec 22 Luke 1:46b-55
Isaiah 33:17-22

Revelation 22:6-7, 18-20
Dec 23 Luke 1:46b-55
2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29
Galatians 3:6-14
Dec 24 Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]
Dec 25 Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:[1-7] 8-20
Dec 26 Psalm 148
Acts 7:59—8:8
Dec 27 Psalm 148
Proverbs 8:22-31
1 John 5:1-12
Dec 28 Psalm 148
Isaiah 49:13-23
Matthew 18:1-14
Dec 29 Psalm 20
Jeremiah 31:15-22
Luke 19:41-44
Dec 30 Psalm 20
Isaiah 26:1-9
2 Corinthians 4:16-18
Dec 31 Psalm 20
1 Kings 3:5-14
John 8:12-19

December Birthday's

Jon Tribur
Linn Tjornhom
Ann Leitze
Joyce Brintnall
Tom Larson
Dora Sather
Frank Hampton
Sue Gonella
Bee Toomey
Don Schultze
Conrad Brower
Diane Williams
Rod Stoltenburg
Jane Vandenhoff
Joanne Kutzman
Diaane Allison
Bernard Tupper

Christmas Caroling

If you are interested in gathering with some folks for Christmas Caroling we will practice on Saturday December 4 from 4 to 6. We will have various caroling tours visiting shut ins, and convalescent care homes. For more in-

formation contact Joe Irvin . We will sing to shut-Ins, Gathering Inn and other opportunities. For more information contact Joe Irvin.

Help make the Christmas Season joyful and bright for our shut-ins and others. Come Sing a song of joy.



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We Are on the Web

www.bethlehemplutheranauburn.org

Worship Services

Saturday Evening 5:00 PM

Sunday Morning 8:30 AM & 11:00 AM

Evening Service of Prayer, Meditation
and Peace— Last Sunday of the month
at 5:30 PM



CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE

6:00 PM

7:30 PM

11:00 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY

10:00 AM Worship

2:00 PM Community Christmas Dinner

December 26

One Service 9:30 AM