

The Call

A Publication Of
Spirit of Peace Lutheran Church

December 2009

John 1:5

Spirit of Peace Lutheran Church (ELCA)

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*Deadline for
January Newsletter
December 20, 2009*



*The light
shines in the darkness,
but the darkness
has not understood it.*

*Service of Lessons and
Carols with Communion*

*Thursday, December 24th,
5:00 pm at Church*

*Fellowship Before
at 4:00 pm*

Christmas Eve Worship

From The Pastor

Timothy Edmondson

“Among
you
stands
One
whom
you do
not
know.”
John 1:26

Dear Friends—

John the Baptist uses a curious turn of phrase in one of the Gospels. He begins by saying, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said. . . I baptize with water.” And then he says about Jesus even before he met Him, “among you stands **one whom you do not know.**”

Jesus the Stranger. That theme stuck with Him all of His earthly life. At His birth He came as a peasant’s baby; utterly unknown and only honored by a few.

Later on there were fleeting moments of recognition: once by John the Baptist when Jesus came to be baptized; once by Peter who said, “You are the Christ, the Son the Living God!” who as we also know, later denied knowing Him. Maybe now and then by the Pharisees who hated Him precisely because they did for an instant, sense who He was. The Roman centurion at the foot of the cross recognized Him and said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.” Fleeting moments, but otherwise, for the most part, no one really knew Him. His life was that of an unknown alien.

Even His own parents were bewildered by him. While Jesus was a boy He wandered off to the temple to the dismay of His parents who did not know where He was. When they found Him, Jesus said, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” Even then, one gets a sense that they didn’t realize who their son really was.

Jesus’ disciples mistook Him for a ghost one day as He came walking to them on the water. Even this John who says in our Gospel, “Among you stands **one whom you do not know,**” before he was beheaded, sent messengers to Jesus asking if he was really the Messiah or should they be looking for another.

After the Resurrection Jesus was not recognized. Mary Magdalene thought He was the gardener. The disciples on the road to Emmaus didn’t know Him. From the beginning to end, the Gospel is the story of a Stranger on earth.

Even now He is a stranger to our familiar assumptions, alien to our cherished prejudices, foreign to our insulations from the anguish of the world, an unwelcome intruder into our lingering notions that we can transform human existence ourselves by science, government programs, or genetic engineering, or free public education, or group dynamics, or positive thinking, or whichever fad of self-improvement is available at the time.

Perhaps we need to look more carefully at the occasional greeting card that portrays a Japanese Jesus or an Eskimo Christ. Maybe it would help if in white churches we put a black baby doll in the manger. Or if in the pageants, we portrayed Mary and Joseph as Indians, the shepherds as Argentine cowboys and the three kings as Russian politicians. At least it might remind us that the Child is not someone familiar. He is different; He is the Stranger in our midst.

A contemporary writer gives us this vivid illustration:

We are closer to the truth if we recognize God’s sheer vulgarity! –the vulgarity of God who created human beings with the freedom to reject Him; the vulgarity of a God who splashes the sunset with colors that no decent painter would ever put side by side; the vulgarity of a God who won’t stay in heaven, but gets down in the muck of the world; the vulgarity of God who was born in a cave –among cattle and died on a gallops between crooks.

Too commonly we create for ourselves a familiar Jesus, a prettied-up Jesus, sweet and tame and prim and proper. When that happens, we do not know the One who stands among us. Then, we miss the social explosion He caused, going about eating dinner with crooks and traitors, forgiving sins instead of shunning sinners.

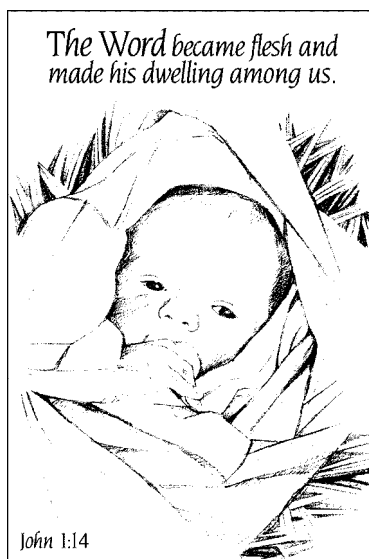
He was strange to the people of His time —strange! At first, the common people heard Him gladly because He was so strange, a novelty in their drab

lives. But in the end, He was too much for them, too strange, too different. They had to do something about it. The cross was what they did.

Do we really know the Lord of Advent, the One who is coming in just a few weeks? Not unless we recognize Him as the Stranger. That is the reason for the manger, the star and the angels and the shepherds and the Magi. They are not meant to decorate the familiar, but to proclaim the mystery of the unpredictable One, the God whom we cannot control or pin down or wrap up. When you and I are in the presence of the mysterious Son of God, the mystery becomes more mysterious. God does not shrink when we know Him. He expands. God does not become smaller, He becomes bigger.

Have you put God in a box? Think you’ve got Him all figured out? Do you really think you know the baby in the manger? Then this Christmas, meet the God who is bigger than you could ever know, the Jesus who is mystery Himself: **The One whom you do not know.**

Deep Peace,
Pastor Tim



Sisters and brothers in Christ of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

I greet you with the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:1-2a).

Where does the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) stand today? We stand together in God's grace, but we are not standing still. We proclaim Jesus Christ and are fully engaged in this mission by actively caring for the world that God loves. God's mission is serious work that calls for serious commitment. We bring all that we are -- especially our rich diversity, our shared tradition and even our disagreements -- in service of God's mission.

We go forward in this mission trusting that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5b). Evidence abounds of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon us and through us:

- Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Naples, Fla., recently purchased land for a new ministry center. They also convened ELCA partners, seminaries, synods, and churchwide staff to envision together a vibrant, evangelical and multicultural Lutheran presence in southwestern Florida.
- Our new directors of evangelical mission, based in synods, are trained and ready to serve ELCA congregations that they might continue to grow as evangelical centers for mission.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi told Global Mission colleagues traveling in the region that they are ready to deepen their relationship with the ELCA so that together we can more generously and faithfully respond to malaria, HIV and AIDS. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, ELCA coordinator for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, writes, "The ELCA, especially through the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, will be part of a movement that changes the world. It's certainly going to change Malawi."
- In summer 2009, 37,000 youth, young adults and adult leaders attended the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. They spread throughout the city, wearing orange t-shirts in a witness of service that touched the hearts of residents and has them talking still.
- ELCA Chaplains Michael Lembke, Richard Brunk and Paul Dirksmeyer bore witness to God's mercy at Fort Hood, Texas. They ministered to families, friends and an entire nation grieving the tragic shootings at the nation's largest military base.

These are just a few examples. Think of the signs of the Holy Spirit being poured out in your life and in your congregation! Thanks be to God for this continued outpouring of the Spirit among us.

When the ELCA Church Council faced the reality of reduced financial resources for mission, it made a difficult but necessary 10 percent budget reduction. The decision, however, does not diminish our resolve and commitment to engage together in God's mission for the life of the world.

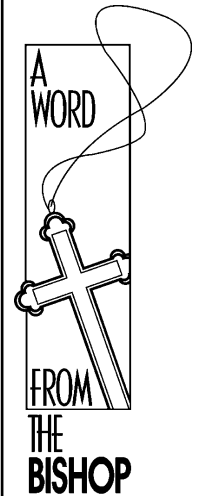
We will engage Christ's mission with everyone who stands together in God's grace, using the rich gifts that the Holy Spirit has poured into our lives:

- Together we will proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord in worship spaces and workplaces, in online conversations and around kitchen tables.
- Together we will develop new ministries in every synod in multicultural communities and among people living deep in poverty.
- Together we will raise up and welcome faithful, wise and courageous leaders by sustaining vital and creative seminaries and campus ministries.
- Together we will send missionaries to accompany new and growing Lutheran churches throughout the world.

I invite you to deepen this conversation with me in an online town hall forum on Sunday, December 6, at 4:30 p.m. (CST); check www.elca.org for more details.

The apostle Paul wrote that where the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us, hope abounds and hope does not disappoint us (Romans 5:4-5). What a wonderful promise this is as we now enter the season of Advent! With our hope in Christ, we face the future together as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, serving the world that God so loves. Amen. Come Lord Jesus!

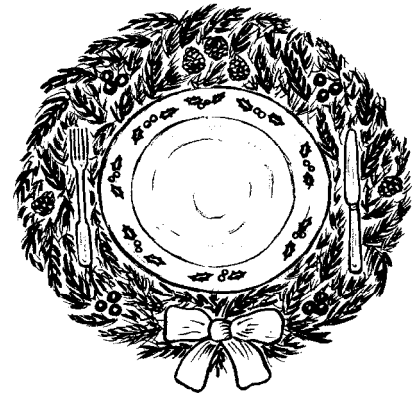
Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America





Last Year We Enjoyed a Festive Dinner with our Church Family. This year?

On Christmas Eve we will gather together for worship to welcome the newborn Christ-Child. Prior to that, we've scheduled a time of fellowship that will begin at 4:00 pm. This could be a full meal, or lite snacks, or coffee and hot cocoa and cider. Is there anyone who would like to coordinate this fellowship event? Speak to Charlie or Pastor Tim.



Christmas Eve Fellowship

4:00 p.m.

Worship to Follow at 5:00 p.m.



Wednesday, December 16th

12:00 Noon at a Local Establishment



We are so blessed to have such a wonderful office staff —every single one of whom is a volunteer. Week after week, they offer their time in service to God and to the needs of ministry by keeping our office running and lively. We are also blessed to have KJ as our choir director. We'll be celebrating as a staff with a festive lunch. Any suggestions as to where we should go?



If you have not already done so, please return your pledge card to the church office. This is vitally important to the leadership of this congregation as they prepare plans for our ministry in 2010. If you need another pledge card, please call the church office.

Remember, no one except our financial secretary sees the pledge. Pledges are totaled and the total is given to the Church Council as they prepare a spending plan for the next year.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord and to the ministry of this congregation!



Congregational Meeting



Congregational Annual Meeting Sunday, January 31st, 2010

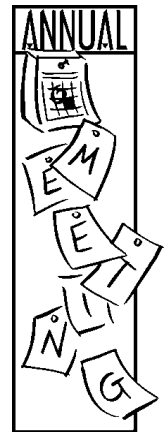
Immediately following Worship
Agenda to include:

Annual Reports

Election of Council Members/Nominating
Committee and Audit Committee

2010 Budget

And a Look at Plans for 2010



Annual Reports Due by January 17th

If you serve as a Church Council officer or are a member of Church Council that leads a particular ministry, or if you lead any other ministry at Spirit of Peace, you are asked to submit a written report for the congregational meeting in January. The report need not be long and should include names of those who participated and what was accomplished in the year 2009. Plans for 2010 can also be included in your report. Please submit your reports to the church office by Sunday, January 17th. Thank you and thanks for the way you serve as a leader of this congregation!

Mystery Minister. . .

Here's something new and fun and it comes to us from our very own little Church Mouse (bet you didn't know we even had one!). Each month, the newsletter will feature a biographical sketch of one of members/associate members. Your job is to try to guess who it is. . .

Maybe you've seen my common sense? I seem to have lost it; I've checked and searched everywhere!

Here's the deal: I am in the interviewing business. I visit a perfectly lovely couple every other week, barring those weeks when the old jalopy breaks down. I'm looking for an interview and never notice my captive audience. Where's my common sense? And poor Pastor. . .he's tapping his foot, wearing out shoe leather, wondering where's the next mystery?!

Well, here it is! You think Wisconsin is known for its cheese? Hey, I'm a mouse; I follow the cheese route. I've discovered Wisconsinites and Minnesotans —much better than cheese. . .delightful company. This particular couple is from St. Paul, Minnesota and Twin Bluffs, Wisconsin. They met in college, Stout Institute, Wisconsin (total number of students: 500) and were married in Sexton Ville, Wisconsin. The fella did a stint in Korea. She taught Home Economics and he taught Vocational Studies. What a perfect match! Eventually they meandered from Ellsworth, Wisconsin to La Mirada, California, and finally to Big Bear.

In between times they traveled throughout the USA and Canada in their RV. They had 2 children—a boy and a girl. She became a Lutheran.

She has 4 younger sisters back home, and he has a sister in Ohio and a brother in the state of Washington. But they agreed after all their traveling, Big Bear is as nice as any place to live! We've swapped stories, etc. I can honestly say they are amusing, full of wit and charm.

(editorial note: Thanks Pastor, I've enjoyed this assignment.) Now. . .where did I leave my cheese??

**“Who do you think these persons are?” asks the Church Mouse.
(see p. 7 for the correct answer)**





ELCA Grant Comes Through

Our three year grant from the ELCA ends as of 2009. This generous funding that we have received accounts for \$55,000 of income over the past three years. We reapplied for another grant and have received word that we will again be the recipient of a grant in 2010 for the amount of \$10,000. This is a one year grant. With the economy as tight as it is, we are thrilled with this amount and grateful to our larger church for its generous support of its mission congregations! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!



Women's Bible Study and Prayer Group

Our women's Bible Study and Prayer Group is going strong. Meetings are held on Mondays from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. This small group has begun a new study on the book of Romans. All women are welcome to come and join in this spiritual fellowship time. Bring a friend. Due to individuals' personal schedules we meet in various homes. Be sure to call Linda Griffith to check on the location (909) 585-6026 or (562) 884-4477.

Special Thanks to the Elbert's . . .

. . .for hosting our wonderful Thanksgiving Eve celebration. They graciously opened up their home and provided the meal. Others too provided the food which was excellent. After the meal, we gathered in the family room to hear the story of "Babette's Feast" and to share the Eucharist (which means 'thanksgiving').

Simple Suppers . . .

A very special thanks to all who provided pies and desserts for the Thanksgiving meal. A large group was well fed and thankful for your kindness!

"Simple Suppers" is a program that offers a hot nutritious meal on the 2nd and 4th Thursday evenings of every month for those in need. The Methodists handle the 4th Thursday; we take care of the 2nd. Anywhere from 20 to 60 people show up to eat and it is anticipated that this ministry will grow as word spreads in the valley. Sandy Groon chairs this project for us and is always looking for more helpers to set-up, cook, serve, and clean-up. Give her a call and let her know you would like to serve the Lord and His people in this way. (909) 584-8023.



Sunday School Corner

Nancy McCormick and her crew of helpers continue to offer Sunday School on Sunday mornings from 10:45 to 11:45. Using a wonderful curriculum called "Spark" the faith of kids is ignited through Biblical exploration and creative play.

Adult Forum on "Interpreting the Scripture" Continues

Lately, so much discussion in the larger church and in our own congregation, has centered on how Scripture is interpreted. With what sort of lens do we go to the Bible? Do we bring any biases that affect our understanding of what a particular verse means? Does our cultural perspective have anything to do with how we interpret ideas we find in Scripture? Is what the Bible says and what we interpret it to say always the same thing? Have differences between languages caused variations of interpretations as the Bible is translated? Are there different types of literature in Scripture that cause us to approach certain sections of it differently than others? Is the Bible simply an answer book or does it help us define what life's biggest questions are? This class is takes place each Sunday after the fellowship time. This is a Bible study about Bible study. . .be sure to bring your textbook!



**This month's
Mystery Minis-
ters are . . .**

Tom and Char Williams, charter members of Spirit of Peace. Tom has served in numerous church council positions and has ushered for years. Char has done everything at SOP and has a huge heart for praying for those in need. Tom and Char don't get to worship very often due to Char's health, but they continue to be an important part of our community!



Healing

- Jim (Warren Wasson's son) —stroke relapse
- Guido —relapse of nerve condition
- Bob Mraz —heart and lung condition
- Tammy (Karen Dennison's daughter) —swine flu/lung condition
- Christian —11 year old with epilepsy, kidney failure
- Devin —for proper diagnosis and treatment
- Gavin Doll (friend of Sandra Mullins) —newborn awaiting heart transplant
- Pastor Marcia Hartsock —undergoing chemo for lung cancer
- Linda Ward (friend of Kathy Kerr's) —breast cancer
- Louise Walker (friend of Kathy Kerr's) —breast cancer
- Davin —back injury
- Gaelin —cancer
- Germaine (Anna's daughter) —diagnosed with cancer
- Virginia Mitchell (Linda Wilson's Mom) —osteoporosis
- Roger Frost (friend of Adams') —cancer
- Fran Palmer (friend of Clarks) —cancer
- Marilyn Vecchio —Leukemia
- Renee Marquez (friend of Cyndi Bauer) —Leukemia
- Char Williams
- Betty Owens (friend of Warren's) —Alzheimer's/cancer
- Danny (son of Doris Angerhofer's friend) —Parkinson's
- Marian Bacon (friend of Linda Wilson's) —brain cancer
- Andy Mearse (friend of Bartos) —chronic pain
- Candy Seimers (family member of Sandy Groon) —cancer
- Lori Baltus (Linda Wilson's friend) —blood cancer
- Alma Bauer (Paul's mom)
- Glenn Beyer
- Betty Adams —cancer & Alzheimers
- Sierra Meadows —Crohn's disease
- Joe LaMura (friend of Judy Hollander) —cancer
- Anni Ruther (Doris Angerhofer's mother) —chronic pain
- Sue Griffith ("Totsy") (Bill's mother) —Alzheimers; in assisted living

Strength, Comfort, Guidance, Peace, Direction—

- Ken (Linda Wilson's son) —employment
- Chris (Betty Cummin's daughters)
- Caregivers
- Christine/Anthony (Janet Webber's daughter/grandson)
- Mary & sons (sister of Sandra Mullins)
- Rob, Jacquie, Emily Hall (KJ's brother and family)
- Danessa Barto

Safety & Protection —Those who travel

Those in the military: Nick Caretto (Army); Peter Caretto (Marines); Sam McCullar (Navy); Tim Lauer (Navy Submarine); Scott (Rick Coehlo's friend), LCpl Tyler Craig (Wendy Craig's son in Angola, Africa), Cory Amelsberg (Army), Austin Amelsberg (Army), Sean Parrish; Sgt. William VanSickle (Iraq), Marc Di-Conti and Son; Jeff Taylor (Keyson's Son serving in Iraq), 2nd Lt. Michael Nguyen (Air Force); Prvt 1st Class Devin Barto (Colorado Springs); Prvt 2nd Class Davin Barto (Colorado Springs), Brian McCoy (basic training/Texas); Tom Hastin (Jr Navy Seal); Travis Hastin (Army Ranger)



Prayer and Praise Page

*"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."
Matthew 21:22*

- 12/7 Joanne Deacon
- 12/12 Marianne Hamilton
- 12/17 Joe Hammond
- 12/22 Charles Gehrke
- 12/23 Lorene Carlson
- 12/23 Alan Leutloff
- 12/25 Pastor David Babcock
- 12/25 Jesus

*Prayer concerns are usually submitted through the prayer cards in the pew notebook on Sunday morning. You may also call the church office as well.
Prayer is powerful!*

We are currently updating our birthday/ anniversary list. Should we inadvertently omit someone important, please bring it to our attention! Thank you.

Spirit of Peace Lutheran Church
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Office Location and Hours:
41619 Big Bear Blvd. Suite 1A
Big Bear Lake
9 am—12 Noon Mon.—Wed.
9 am—12 pm Fri.

Worship Location:
349 E. North Shore Dr.
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(The Seventh Day Adventist Church)

Christmas Eve Worship
At 5:00 p.m.
With Fellowship Preceding
At 4:00 p.m.

A Little About Us:

We are a Christ-centered, Bible-based community of faith that welcomes all people and serves God by serving the needs of those in the Bear Valley.

We are part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"The Call" is published monthly by

**Spirit of Peace Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 2997
Big Bear City, California 92314**

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**

**Mailed on
December 7th**

**A Blessed Christmas
to all Mail Carriers
who will deliver
these newsletters!**