



HIGHLIGHTS

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Annual Soup Dinner Sunday, January 15, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Come one and all for some great food and fellowship. Free will donation.

Dear Friends,



Far be it from me to suggest that fulfilling those New Year's resolutions are a walk in the park, a piece of cake, or in any way easy! Change is discomforting, even if we want it or need it.

The only way we change, I hear, is if the discomfort of our present situation is worse than the change we want/need to make. It's also dependent on our ability to delay gratification. Is my urge to comfort myself with that cigarette or cookie now greater or less than my desire to see my grandchildren graduate? In the midst of our present desires, our future seems fuzzy, at best.

As God's beloved children, a deep irony lives within our desires to change: Self-love is needed. That is, we need to love ourselves just as we are in order to effect lasting transformation. For example, if I want to lose weight or get fit, I first need to love my body just as it is, flab and all.

How in the world does THAT work? I mean, if I love my body the way it is, flab and all, I surely won't have any reason to stick to a diet and exercise plan...right?

The message is this: Let's be really honest about our reasons for change before we go down that road. If we look in the mirror or our cigarette-stained fingers and hate what we see, it becomes just another way we disparage the temple of God that is our body. The truth is, if anyone talked to us the way we talk to ourselves we would never want to see them again. We can be simply ruthless and mean to ourselves in ways we would never be to another human being.

The older I get the more I understand the deep need for self-love. Women have been taught to hate their bodies, men have been brainwashed to believe that their manliness depends on their physical prowess. Aren't we tired of it? Wouldn't it be grand if we could sit with ourselves and just be content with who we are? To finally grasp that, if we're loved by the author of the cosmos, we can love ourselves, too?

Self-condemnation leads to judgment of others. Self-love, when practiced correctly, leads to love of others...so it is sorely needed if we want to be messengers of love on Christ's behalf.

So, from this perspective, I hope the first change you make this year has nothing to do with weight, bad habits or exercise. I pray that we will all learn a self-love that changes not only you and me, but eventually will impact every corner of our lives.

Blessings for the New Year!

Pastor Jackie



Leader's Spotlight

Board of Education

By Renee Nolte

Are You Getting Hard of Hearing?



I sure am. Can anyone recommend a good hearing aid? Oh wait, that's not what the book of Hebrews is talking about in chapter 5, verse 11 when he writes, "You have become dull of hearing?" He's really referring to

our growth in our faith, or lack of it. When you think about Christian Education, what comes to mind? Sunday school children, starting at age three and working their way through to confirmation. That's all extremely important. But don't forget about post-elementary education!

Spiritual growth is a life-long process. Adults can start by dusting off that bible that's been sitting on the bookshelf. Or check out a book from our library for additional study and inspiration. If you have trouble staying motivated, join a bible study to keep you on track. Did you know the women of our church have two bible study circles? Our church also offers a bible study on Monday nights at 7:00. Go to our website, www.firstlutheranavoca.org, for new times and opportunities. While you're there, read the Monday Meditations.

If the bible study times aren't going to work for you, start up a study group with your friends who have similar schedules. A group of friends and I just finished a study of Hebrews. In it, we learned how important it is to God that we have faith and that we continue to nurture and grow in our faith. God says, "...if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." (Hebrews 10:38) "We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." (Hebrews 2:1)

So sharpen your hearing and tune in to Christ. Make plans to strengthen your faith and sign up for continuing Christian education in 2012!

Council Notes

November 9, 2011 Reports

- 2012 Budget will be approved at the December meeting.
- Youth Rep.: Seven students and three adults have signed up for New Orleans (July 18-22, 2012).
- Property: Met at the end of October; several things planned for next year.
- Approved Pastor's vacation December 6 –11.

First Lutheran's Annual Meeting just around the corner

All people of First Lutheran are encouraged to gather after second service on January 15 for our annual meeting. We'll look back on 2011 and plan for 2012, as well as say thank you to those who are leaving positions of service and cheering on those who will begin or continue on committees.

We'll be fortified by a SOUPER BOWL lunch, sponsored by our youth who are raising funds to go to the 2012 National Youth Convention of the ELCA. Your free will donation will go to a great cause!

Thanks to all our out-going committee members! You've truly been God's hands.

Please note— One Worship Service Sunday, January 15 at 10:30 a.m.

2012 Ballot

Vice President: Hank Huntzman

Deacons: Dennis Knake

Witness & Fellowship: Paula Wohlers

Youth Representative: Mitchell Wachter

Youth & Family: Juli Liesemeyer

Worship & Music: Beth Jacobson

Endowment Fund: Gerry Chapman, Amy Knake,
Connie Eidenmiller

Nominating Committee: Ruth Lamb, Amy Knake

Delegates to assembly:

Sandy Smith

Jim & Jan Niebuhr

Garry & Barb Hillman



Giving Opportunities

Second Mile Giving

Project	Estimated Cost	Funds received to date
Paving—Church		\$10,724.70
Kiruweny Dispensary		\$ 1,603.00

Stephen Ministry continues its learning curve in the New Year

Training for our four Stephen Ministers continues on Thursday evenings, 6:30-8:30, beginning January 5. AND our team will be having another retreat on Saturday, January 21, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the parsonage. First Lutheran has wonderful trainees, and we ask that you pray for them as they grow in knowledge and service.

Fill the Little Red Wagon

The food donations for January will go to the Syracuse Food Pantry. As always if you don't have the highlighted items available, please bring whatever good and useful product you have on hand, and bring it to church anytime before the children bring it forward for blessing on

January 29. Needs this month:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Toothpaste | Shampoo |
| Kleenex | Cereal |
| Juice | Mac n Cheese |
| Pancake mix | Pancake syrup |
| Helpers | |

Free Trade Products for Sale

You can probably find cheaper coffee but when you purchase Free Trade products you help support small family farmers in developing countries.

Our church isn't selling these products to raise money. We are selling these products on behalf of the poor as an expression of our commitment to Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God.



Look for the Fair Trade products in the narthex.

A NOTE OF THANKS!

Thank you so much for the goodie box. I was surprised by how many good treats were inside! It was so nice to receive something from my church. Thank you for this nice expression of love and caring.

Thanks again,
Lauren Buchholz

Your continued support of the United Methodist Church Cass County Food Bank distribution is greatly appreciated beyond words. Thank you so much for helping with this local mission.

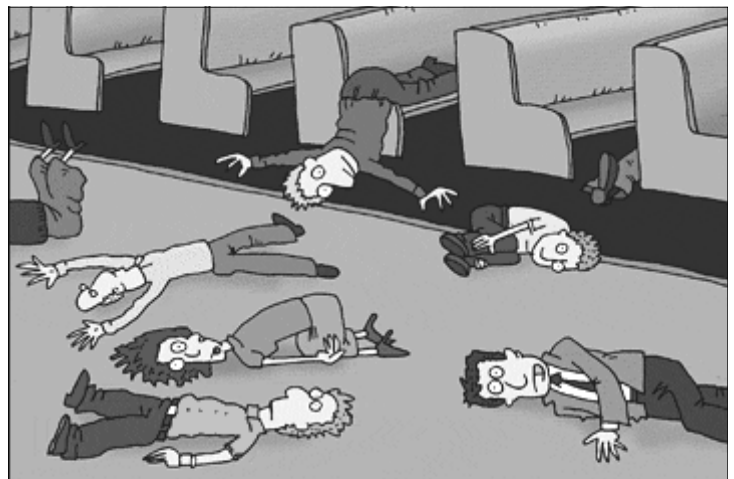
Sincerely,
Linda Blunt
Volunteer Coordinator

We would like to thank all for donations for the south courtesy drive of your cemetery. Your help is very much appreciated.

Cemetery Board

BAD WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

Just a reminder that in the event of bad weather which forces the canceling of Worship Services and Sunday School, announcements will be broadcast on KNCY (103.1 FM or 1600 AM) and KFAB (1110 AM).



LET'S START TODAY'S SERVICE OFF WITH OUR ANNUAL POST-HOLIDAY BREATHING EXERCISES

Baptism

Dalton Dean Gartner was baptized on Sunday, December 18, 2012. His sponsors are Cheryl Wibberley and Aaron Gartner. His parents are Justin & Marci.

C.H.O.W. and Confirmation come back from winter break

Wednesday, January 11, marks our first C.H.O.W. and Confirmation since we began our Advent/Christmas vacation. Our meal begins at 5:30 p.m., with confirmation classes following at 6:15 p.m.

On Sunday mornings, watch for the sign-up sheet for C.H.O.W. cooks. Remember, too, that EVERYONE is welcome to C.H.O.W. (not just confirmation students and families). North Branch has some of the best cooks anywhere...come, enjoy!

Good Times Group Plan Events for 2012

The group will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Sat., Jan. 21, at Mick & Margaret's to have soup, munchies, discuss activities for 2012 and play games as well. We will need to have people sign up to bring food, a sign up sheet will be posted on the Information Center. Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

Adult Education, Monday nights

Beginning January 9, 7:00 p.m., Adult Education will truly be a Bible study. We'll be working with "The Divine Drama," the short version of "Crossways" which some folks have studied in the past. This class would make a wonderful review for those who have done Bible study before, as well as a great introduction for those who have a hankering for understanding God's word. Everyone welcome!

Women's News

Mark your calendars:

Saturday, January 14, Winter Retreat at St. Paul, Grand Island. 9 a.m.— 3 p.m.

Theme: "Covered in the Spirit"

Featured speakers:

**Rev. Todd Burpo and his wife, Sonja, Imperial Nebraska, will tell the amazing story of their son, Colton's trip to heaven and back. The New York Times best selling book "*Heaven is for Real*" was written by them. The Burpo family has a passion for ministry and evangelism.

**Joan Naber, Waco, Ms. Wheelchair Nebraska 2010, will share her story of hope as she relates experiences as a woman who uses a wheelchair for her daily mobility. She serves as an advocate and educator on behalf of the disabled community.

Registration forms are available on the kiosk. Registration deadline: January 3, 2012.

THE LAST LAUGH

Angels Explained by Children

I only know the name of two angels, Hark and Harold.
Gregory, age 5

Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it.
Olive, age 9

Some angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it.

All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys don't go for it.
Antonio, age 9

What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them.
Sarah, age 7





Recycling Projects —

Church Recycling:

Pop tabs, batteries, plastic bags, cardboard (with no food residue), and printed paper (including magazines and newspapers). Collection bins are located in the parish hall.

Recycle 4 Green—Youth Fundraiser:

- Cell Phones
- Ink Jet Cartridges
- DVD Movies and DVD Video Games
- Laptops / Notebook Computers
- MP3 Music Player
- Digital Camcorders and Cameras
- GPS Devices
- Video Game Consoles

If you need us to pick up let us know or there will be a larger box with details in the Narthex! Proceeds to New Orleans Youth Gathering in July 2009.

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