

Vol. 67-1

THRU THE WINDOWS

St. John's Lutheran Church
Bennington, Nebraska
January 2007



January 28

**One Worship Service Only
at 9:30am followed by
Annual Congregational Meeting
at 10:30am**

**Forums: January 7: 9:15am and 10:45am
January 21 10:30am and 12noon**

Greetings Members and Friends of St. John's:

First, I hope all of you had a blessed Christmas this year with those you love and who love you! As I sat down to write this New Year newsletter article, I mentally looked back over the past year at some of the highlights that took place in 2006.

Beginning in January of 2006, Rev. Charles Lane came to St. John's as our representative from the Stewardship Key Leader program of the ELCA based out of Chicago. He came to lead us in our 2006 Stewardship Drive to support the mission and the ministries of this congregation. Because the members and friends of St. John's responded the way they did, it was a very successful stewardship campaign.

We then moved into our Lenten observances followed by Holy Week and Easter Sunday services, which were all very well attended. By May of last year our average attendance, which is the best indicator of our overall church health, was at an all time high as we went into summer.

In June, for part of our 2006 Bennington Daze celebrations, Jeremy Hansen, our Youth Director, organized a number of Community Youth Activities including something new, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament which turned out to be a big success.

Along with those youth activities, our Evangelism Committee once again handed out hundreds of bottles of water to thirsty parade goers for the Saturday parade along with a message that Jesus can give us "Living Water," and then inviting them to come and worship with us here at St. John's. The Evangelism Committee also rented an inflatable jumping game for small children to play on, which allowed the Evangelism committee volunteers to speak to some of the new younger families in our community and invite them to worship with us.

Last summer our Sunday School started a new and exciting Sunday School program called "Kingdom Quest," which we purchased and kicked off on Rally Sunday, September 10. Kingdom Quest is a fun and exciting approach to learning about Jesus that both students and teachers (who are known as shepherds) enjoy. And I couldn't be happier with the program and with all those involved in leading it.

In October we kicked off our 2007 Stewardship Drive with a program called "The New Consecration Sunday." And on October 30, Reformation Sunday, we confirmed 13 confirmation students, received them into full membership and as partners in the work of this church.

On November 19th we held our Consecration Sunday Service followed by a Celebration Dinner in the Fellowship Hall with a great turnout. The results are still coming in, and I can tell you we have received the most pledge cards and the higher pledged amount ever to support the mission and ministries of this church.

Way to go everyone who made a pledge! I know that the stewardship practices of the members of a congregation are an indicator of that congregation's spiritual health. As a result, I am very pleased at the growth in giving here at St. John's. I know the Lord will continue to bless us so that we can continue to be a blessing to our community. Those are some of the highlights for me looking back over 2006.

Now we are standing on the threshold of a whole new year of ministry here at St. John's Lutheran Church for 2007. Therefore it's time to once again turn to the Lord and ask, "**How are we to carry out our mission and ministry in 2007?**" To help answer that question I turn once again to our church's Mission Statement which reads:

"We welcome all to grow in faith through celebrating and serving Jesus Christ."

To help us understand what our mission statement means, we also have a Vision Statement. Our church Vision Statement reads:

"The vision of St. John's Lutheran Church is to be the heart of the Bennington faith community. We will be the "Welcome Place" where all are invited to grow in their faith, share the good news of Jesus Christ and to experience and celebrate His love. St. John's will serve the spiritual needs of everyone through prayer, dynamic worship, inspirational music, Christian Education and small group ministries. We will encourage all members to be active disciples of Jesus Christ furthering God's work in their homes, church, community and beyond."

Now after re-reading our Mission and Vision Statements I can see they are both still very relative to the task Christ has called us to do here at St. John's for the coming year. And one program that will help us fulfill our mission is a new program called "40 Days of Purpose," which is coming up during Lent. This program will help us continue to be the "heart of the Bennington faith community" because it will not only strengthen the members of St. John's, but it will also bring in people from our community who have heard about the "40 Days of Purpose" and will want to take part in it. You'll find out more about the program in our newsletter and in the days and weeks to come. I hope all of you reading this article will want to take part in it, and that you will reach out to your family members, neighbors and friends, and invite them to take part in it with you too.

May God continue to use you to be a blessing to others here in the Bennington area in the coming year, and may 2007 be a blessing for all of us here at St. John's Lutheran Church. See you in Church!

Blessings,

Pastor Jim Price



Lutherans helped build one home every 28 hours!

Through Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity, 313 families realized the dream of homeownership.

Thanks to Lutherans like you, 313 homes were built this year across the country with families in need of simple, decent, affordable housing. That's about one home every 28 hours made possible by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and other Lutheran volunteers!

You can help 355 Families in need of affordable housing in 2007-including 8 families in the Douglas/Sarpy County area.

From the first nail to the last, building a home through Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity is a profound experience. It's not just concrete and wood, it's tears and smiles born of hard work and faith. And it's the knowledge that you've helped change lives.

To get involved, contact Julie Ferri, Nebraska Region Thrivent Builds Specialist, at 888-763-5960 or julie.ferri@thrivent.com. Visit our website at www.thriventbuilds.com

Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity is a \$105 million financial, volunteer and advocacy alliance between Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and Habitat for Humanity International.

Anyone 60+ years old who would like to attend the Shrine Circus on Friday, February 23 from 1pm-3pm , please call 238-2659 for reservations. We will meet at the church and begin loading the bus at 11:30am.

-- Travel with us to Ukraine - May 2007

That's right! Kelly Baehr will be going to Artemivsk once again in May, 2007. We are currently looking for those who are interested in meeting the kids we work with, touring the hospitals and orphanages and seeing the needs first-hand. We are estimating the cost for the trip to be between \$2000 - 2200 (this includes ALL costs - airfare, in-country travel, all food, all transportation, etc etc. etc.) The trip will run between two and three weeks. We are still determining what dates, but it looks like we will go the last half of May, possibly even the third week of May and into June. We will also be working on a service project...read on!

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Did you Know

Special thanks to Larry Goertz for clearing snow from the church parking lots at no cost.

Can you help with snow removal of the church sidewalks on Sunday mornings before worship services? If so, please contact the church office at 238-2483 or check your "Sign-Up Opportunity" form enclosed in your Sunday bulletin.

If you are interested in being a candidate for the Church Council or Endowment Fund Committee, please call the church office.

Attn: Kingdom Quest Parents.

There will be no class on December 31st.

Classes will resume on January 7, 2007 at 9:30am.

New Year-New Time!!!

Starting January 7th, Kingdom Quest will run from **9:30-10:45am.**

By action of the Church Council, the undesignated funds in 2007 will be split 85% current, 10% Mission Share and 5% Property Improvement. This split will be re-evaluated in June.



Ray Johnsen's 95th birthday is January 8th. His family would like to honor him with a card shower. Birthday wishes can be sent to Ray Johnsen

Marquis Place-Room #204
20800 W. Maple Street
Elkhorn, NE 68022

FLOWERS/BULLETINS

Dec 3

Congratulations to Scott and Sheri (Steffes) Thelen who were united in marriage at St. John's Lutheran Church on Friday, December 1.

Altar flowers were given by Bill & Julie Dunn in honor of their December 1 anniversary. Congratulations!

The rose on the altar was given in honor of the birth of Jacob Samuel Cox by Grandpa Daryl and Grandma Carole Cox. Jacob was born on November 28 and his parents are Daryl Lynn and Viki Cox. Congratulations!

Avery Stewart Mohr was received into God's Holy Kingdom through the washing of Holy Baptism. His sponsors are Ashley Mohr and Joe Albright. Avery is the son of David & Jamie Mohr. Avery was born on September 13, 2006. Congratulations!

Dec 10

Flowers were given in honor of Pfc Jon Weberg on completion of his AIT training in the Army Infantry at Fort Benning, Georgia on Dec. 8th by his parents, Al & Marcia. Jon will be stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagles."

Bulletins were given in honor of Jon Weberg's completion of training by Kelly & Craig Stockhaus.

Dec 24

Rose on the altar was given in honor of the birth of April Elizabeth Roth on Monday, December 18, by Grandma Dee Micheel. April is the daughter of Doug and Sherri Roth. April weighed 6lbs. and was 21 inches long. Shel is welcomed home by her big sisters, Ashley-4 years old and Amber-2 years old. Congratulations!!

Roses on the altar were given in honor of the birth of twins Hope and Makayla Andersen on December 18 by their great-grandparents, Alvin & Lorene Andersen. The girls grandparents are Glen and Carleen Andersen. Hope and Makayla are the daughters of Darin and Dawn Andersen of Blair, NE. Hope and Makayla will be welcomed home by big brother Tyler-2 ½ years old. Congratulations!!

JANUARY PRAYER CIRCLE

Jan 07

The Rev. Jerry Gilbreath and First/South Sioux City
The Rev. Harold Gillaspie, retired in Omaha
The Rev. Henry Gittler, retired in Homestead, FL
The Rev. Jeffrey Glawe and Immanuel/Glenvil
And for those in their ministry who are contractors

Jan 14

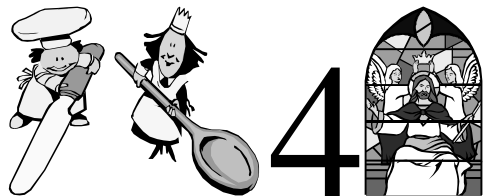
Parish Ministry Associate Jim Gonzales and Our Saviour/Broken Bow
The Rev. John Gosswein and Family of Christ/Kearney
Mrs. Lona Grabenstein and American/Gothenburg
The Rev. Heather Grell and First/Blair
And for those in their ministry who are medics
The Rev. Lee Griess, Assistant to the Bishop/Omaha
Associate in Ministry Cheryl Griess and Rejoice!/Omaha

Jan 21

The Rev. Donald Griffith, retired in Lincoln
Parish Ministry Associate Harold Grim/Dannebrog
And for those in their ministry who are dentists
The Rev. Arthur Grimm, Jr., retired in Beatrice
The Rev. Vitauts Grinvalds, retired in Lincoln
The Rev. Matthew Groenke and American/Gothenburg
The Rev. Harold Gronstal, retired in Kearney
And for those in their ministry who are farm implement dealers

Jan 28

The Rev. Mark Grorud, ELCA/Fremont
The Rev. LaVern Grosc, retired in Lincoln
The Rev. Mary Grundman and Hope/Burr
Parish Ministry Associate Mary Gundell and St. John's/Cozad
And for those in their ministry who are jewelers



Community Christmas Party a Success

Two large tables of food prepared and donated by the Cooks 4 Christ greeted over 50 people for our second Christmas party. There was plenty of great food and lots of warm friendship. Santa had gifts for everyone, but he insisted in playing the Right, Left game to insure that there was a surprise in every package. As with all of our events, we had great help with donations of food, decorations, clean up and participation. We celebrate our intergenerational group and praise God for the great weather. Tons of appreciation to Jodi and the Allen kids for all their help. Thousands of 'thank yous' to everyone who helped in any way. May God bless everyone touched by the Cooks 4 Christ.

Calendar: Jan: 3 WOW
10 WOW
11 Benn View Noon
15 Keenagers
17 WOW
20 Lion Lunch Noon
23 Benn View Noon
24 WOW
31 WOW
Feb 1 Benn View Noon
3 Cook-A-Thon
10 Frahm Party
11 Party 5 PM
April 20 Volunteer Recognition Dinner
May 4 Party

German Harvest Festival 2007 October 6

The complete 2007 calendar is available. Contact Julie or Jodi for a copy.



Prayers 2 Christ-Weekly Prayer Schedule

Jan 7: Pray for a communication leader & hosts for 40 Days of Purpose
Jan 14: Pray for our spiritual growth
Jan 21: Pray for our annual congregational meeting
Jan 28: Pray for congregational unity.

Prayer:

"Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. Amen."

This should probably be taped to your bathroom mirror where one could read it every day. You may not realize it, but it's 100% true.

1. There are at least two people in this world that you would die for.
2. At least 15 people in this world love you in some way.
3. The only reason anyone would ever hate you is because they want to be just like you.
4. A smile from you can bring happiness to anyone, even if they don't like you.
5. Every night, SOMEONE thinks about you before they go to sleep.
6. You mean the world to someone.
7. You are special and unique.
8. Someone that you don't even know exists loves you.
9. When you make the biggest mistake ever, something good comes from it.
10. When you think the world has turned its back on you, take another look.
11. Always remember the compliments you received. Forget about the rude remarks.

December
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES HIGHLIGHTS

The Church Council met on December 12, 2006. Members present: Mark Backhuus, Winston Anderson, Jim Peterson, Mark Sukraw, Caryn Stichler, Ted Kirby, Bill Dunn, Jan Braden, Heath Johnson, Jim Pinegar, Pastor Jim, Jeremy Hansen Absent: Jim Bonge, Janet Finken, Mert Opfer

Devotions given by Caryn Stichler. January devotions by Bill Dunn. Guests: Joyce Graybill-Negley-discussion on budget vs. pledges received and Angie Sukraw-pre-school presentation, Bill Dunn on behalf of Julie Dunn presented a short presentation on Purpose-Driven Life program for Lenten season. Jeremy Hansen on behalf of the Youth Ministry Board presented recommendations to the endowment scholarship criteria.

Unfinished Business: Website start-up time-frame January/February, Welcome table, committee sign ups for monthly focus, sanctuary cross lighting option, employee insurance

New Business: Discussed items for January Thru the Windows, Draft of proposed budget and budget letter, Christmas appeal letter, forums , Annual meeting scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 28 at 10:30am

Committee reports

Youth Ministry: Written report

Worship and Music: Written report

Christian Education: No report.

Evangelism: No report.

Finance:

November Current Fund Beginning Balance: -\$16,783.03

Ending Balance: -\$18,032.40, Mission Share for November \$2,281.90.

Property: No report.

Youth Ministry: Written report.

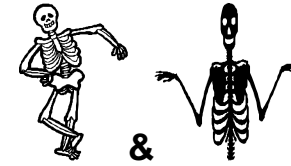
Pastor's report: Written report.

Complete Church Council Meeting Minutes are posted on the bulletin board.

The next church council meeting is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 8 at 7pm.

DECEMBER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	<u>8:00am</u>	<u>9:30am</u>	<u>11:00am</u>
Dec 3	46	78	90
Dec 10	26	70	226
Dec 17	45	89	45
Christmas Eve			
9:30am	219		
5:00pm	255		
11:00pm	145		

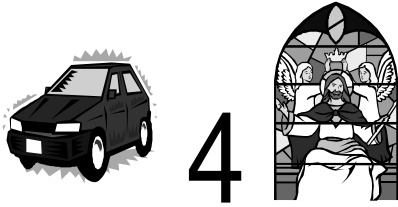


Eat too much for the holidays?
Benders & Stretchers
Tuesdays & Thursdays
9-9:30AM
Benn View Community Room

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National Health Observances

January Observances	2007
Activity Professionals Week, National (4th work week begin Sunday)	21-26
Blood Donor Month, National	1-31
Birth Defects Prevention Month	1-31
Cervical Cancer Screening Month	1-31
Folic Acid Awareness Week, National (2nd work week)	8-14
Glaucoma Awareness Month, National	1-31
Healthy Weight Week (3rd full week)	21-27
Medical Group Management Week, National (4th work week)	22-26
Nurse Anesthetist Week, National (last full work week)	21-27
Thyroid Awareness Month	1-31
Women's Healthy Weight Day (Thursday of 3rd full week)	25



Wheels For Christ

THANKS to all who are contributing to and supporting our ministry. A SPECIAL thanks to Joyce Montgomery for the memorial gift in excess of \$1,200 to honor her husband, Clyde. It is GREATLY appreciated and will be a big help in getting our first vehicle. We continue to search for that first vehicle (that will seat about 10 along with being wheel chair accessible) and hope to find it soon.

OUR MISSION is to provide transportation for our members and area residents.

If you need transportation to and from our church, to and from the doctor's office, to get a prescription or groceries, or to attend a function in the fellowship hall, please call Bill Dunn at 238-2659 or Debbie at the church



Benn Town Gals went to see gingerbread houses and got so hungry "7 Monkeys".

We weren't sure what to expect, but the sweet potato French fries were super delicious.

There was a unique gift exchange. The most practical gift was a flash light that doesn't need batteries. I won't tell who gave it, but she is often seen behind the wheel of the rescue squad. I also won't name the person who forgot her gift for the exchange, but she wants everyone to know that she is very grateful that Gene O brought an extra gift, "Just in case". She was delivering food baskets and just showed up for the food.

As of this date, the January planning meeting hasn't been scheduled. If you are a member a message will be arriving soon. If you would be interested in just having fun for a day or two each month,

contact Joyce Baldwin 238- 2802 or Emily Laaker 238- 2583

Women of all ages are welcome. We have members community wide. Our goal is to have events that are fun.

STEWARDSHIP 2007 UPDATE

CONGRATULATIONS !!!

OUR congregation is taking a STEP UP

Our estimate of giving cards that have come in so far equal an increase of over 15 % or in excess of \$30,000.00 over last year

"If God has been generous with you, He will expect you to serve Him well. And if He has been more than generous, he will expect you to serve Him even better." Luke 12:48



Beginning in January the Stephen Ministry Team will be offering some new and exciting additions to our confidential ministry. We are expanding our ministry to include shorter intercessions that are not like our one-on-one visits that require a weekly commitment. That means that YOU will be able to contact a Stephen Minister to vent about a life problem, with the assurance of confidentiality. Got a problem and would like to talk about it? Call 238-2659 for a willing, listening ear. New Stephen Ministry classes will begin in April for anyone interested in providing a listening ear.

Today...I wish you a day of ordinary miracles-
A fresh pot of coffee you didn't have to make yourself.
An unexpected phone call from an old friend.
Green stoplights on your way to work or shop.
I wish you a day of little things to rejoice in...
The fastest line at the grocery store.
A good sing-along song on the radio.
Your keys right where you look.
I wish you a day of happiness and little bite-size pieces of perfection that give you the funny feeling that the Lord is smiling on you, holding you so gently because you are someone special and rare. I wish You a day of Peace, Happiness and Joy.
They say it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but then an entire life to forget them.

Wishing you the very best for 2007

Volunteer Award Nominations accepted

To be eligible to receive the **PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD**, Applicants' service hours must be confirmed by a registered Certifying Organization. St John's Wellness Committee

There are three levels of the AWARD varying by hours of service completed within a 12-month period. If you would like to nominate a person to receive the President's Volunteer Service award, put a note in church Box 57 or call Julie at 238-2659. There are awards for individuals beginning at age 5 and there are also awards for families.

Here is a chance for you to thank someone publicly. You don't have to sign your name, but be sure that you have the correct spelling of your nomination and which group they are being nominated for.

HELP IS NEEDED

40 Days of Purpose needs a computer and/or graphics' person with a little time for the next three months. Please Contact Pastor Price, Jodi or Julie ASAP



St. John's Wellness Committee needs your help.

We are looking for a table & chair set for 6, some living room furniture, a bunk bed set and the linens to go with them. There is a family in town that has no furniture. A single mom with 3 children is in need our help. Perhaps you have an item in good shape that you could spare or a truck and some time to help us haul the items. We would surely appreciate anything that you could help us with. Let's give this family a great start to a new year!!!! Call Jodi, 238-2109, Julie 238-2659 or the church office 238-2483.



NEW AND EXCITING COLUMN

St. John's Wellness Committee Is looking for Homebound members who would be willing to share their history, family information, former career, and other interesting information with our Thru the Windows members. We will be including contact information to perhaps renew an old friendship or start new ones. We feel it is important to reacquaint homebound members with our current membership. If you would be willing to share, please contact Julie @ 238-2659 or Jodi @ 238-2109 Help benefit our whole church.



The 40 Days of Purpose

What is it? It is a 40-day Bible Study focused on providing insight for those who seek to answer the question, "What on Earth am I here for?"



Who's doing it? Starting February 18 and ending April 15, thousands of churches worldwide will participate together in the interdenominational study based on the best-selling book, "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. The

book is not a textbook, but a devotional with 40 days of individual meditations to help each participant develop a personal devotional life.

How does it all work? While each of us searches for the unique answer as to why God created us, we will learn that there are five major purposes for our existence according to the Word of God. The 40-day journey includes three opportunities of participation - individual, group, and weekend services. These three components are briefly defined as follows:

1) Lent Service

The Pastor and Adult Small Groups/ Youth/Sunday School will introduce a new topic each week during the course of several weeks throughout the campaign

2) Individually

each participant will have a personal devotional reading from "The Purpose Driven Life" book every day of the week

3) Groups

everyone will meet in a small group at some point during the week to watch a 40 Days of Purpose video and share in a discussion.

All ages in our church will be learning the same information. Kids and adults alike will have the opportunity to memorize a weekly Bible verse.

When do I get the book? The campaign begins at St John's Lutheran Church with a DVD of Rick Warren sharing a message. At the Kick-off Event, the *Purpose Driven Life* book will be handed out.

What else should I know? A Ministry/Mission Fair during the 5th week of the campaign will give people opportunity to get involved in a ministry/mission. The whole idea is to get people to look at their own lives and then what they can do in God's kingdom.

What are the Five Purposes?

The five purposes of a purpose driven life are:

- **Worship:** you were planned for God's pleasure
- **Fellowship:** were formed to be part of God's family
- **Discipleship:** you were created to become like Christ
- **Ministry:** you were shaped for God's service
- **Mission:** you were made to tell others about Christ

We're Looking for Hosts

Our church is planning a spiritual growth campaign called "40 Days of Purpose," from Feb 18-April 15. One of the most exciting aspects of this campaign is the opportunity to gather in small groups that will meet in homes or at the church on Wednesday evenings for the six weeks of the campaign. These groups will watch a weekly video teaching session that will explore each week's theme in a deeper way and provide a time to discuss together the truths of Scripture and how to apply them to our lives.

Right now, we are looking for hosts and host homes where groups can meet to go through this six-week Bible study together. Please check the signup opportunity sheet in your bulletin and either place it in the offering or take it to 40 Days table after the service.

