

The St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church Newsletter

December 2009

“The Witness”

Issue 6

Schedule of Events at a Glance

Sunday, December 20

Worship 8:00 & 10:45 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Sunday School Christmas Program
10:45 Service
Celebration Sunday

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 and
10:30 pm

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 27

Worship 10:00 am

Prayers for Healing

No Sunday school classes

Pastor's Words

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Here we are again, in mid December, realizing how quickly the Christmas celebration will be upon us. Things are shifting into high gear around the church. As I write this, Jim Miller is putting up the Christmas tree. Within the next few days, volunteers will be placing the Chrismons on the tree, setting up the nativity display, hanging wreaths and garlands, and “decking the halls” with the traditional decorations of the season. All of these things are the external signs that Christmas will soon be here, and we rely on them to put us in the Christmas “spirit” and to make our celebration what it always has been. A great deal of

time and effort are given to these holiday preparations, but without them, the season would seem empty and incomplete.

For weeks now, the children of the Sunday School have been preparing this year's Christmas play, “Three Wee Kings.” For the adult leaders, there have been moments of frustration in trying to assign roles, prepare the materials, hold practices while missing characters, and keep a gang of excited children focused. Even so, in the end, we know it will all be worth the effort, for it clearly promises to be both entertaining and inspiring.

Since early November we have been once again working on our annual “gifts” projects. Wish lists were ordered from the local Salvation Army, and from Trinity Lutheran Church on the North Side of Pittsburgh, so that children in needy families might have gifts this Christmas. The Sunday School children gathered items to be packed into shoe boxes that are sent to children around the world as a part of Operation Christmas Child, and those were delivered to a church in Greensburg before Thanksgiving. Church members brought in a small mountain of treats that were packed in boxes and mailed to college students and members of the military, so that they would know that they are in our thoughts. Last week I delivered a car load of

packages, bags, and boxes of gift items to the Bethlen Home – all of these items donated by the people of St. James so that the residents of the home will have gifts to open on Christmas morning.

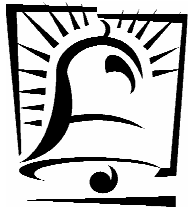
During the children's sermon at worship on December 13, the kids and I gathered in the back corner of the sanctuary, where two tables overflowed with the toys, bicycles, and clothing that our members have been bringing to the church for several weeks. We prayed over the gifts, asking that God would bless them and the children who will receive them. Those presents will make Christmas more joyful for over 50 youngsters -- 15 of them through the local Salvation Army, and 35 through Trinity, North Side. Represented in those piles of gifts are many dozens of hours of shopping and wrapping, and thousands of dollars of generous sharing. My pickup truck will surely be overflowing when I head out to Pittsburgh later this week!

So, why do we do it all? The decorating, the rehearsing, the shopping and giving – the many hours and thousands of dollars? We do it because it is Christmas! It is the time when we celebrate that God loved us so deeply that he sent his son to become incarnate – the Word made flesh! When we give our all, so that our places of worship will be beautiful, so

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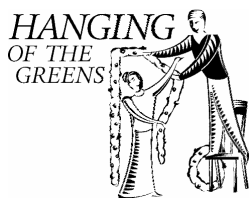
that our children will learn and tell the great story of Jesus, and so that strangers will receive gifts and know that they are loved, we are responding to God's great gift to us. We are telling the world that God's love came into the world in the person of the child born to Mary, our Savior, Jesus Christ and that this means more to us than anything else ever could.

Blessed Christmas!
Pastor Paul



Salvation Army Bell Ringers

Members of St. James again rang the bell at the Giant Eagle store this year, on Monday & Tuesday, December 14 & 15. Thanks to all who have given their gift of time in this busy season!



Church Decorating

All are welcome to hang garland and tree trimming Wednesday, December 16th at 9:00 am. The final decorating (candles, holly & poinsettias) will be completed on Tuesday, December 22 at 9:00 am. Join us for this wonderful holiday tradition.



Sunday School Christmas Program

The Sunday School children, under the direction of Polly Benning, will present the Christmas musical *Three Wee Kings*, Sunday, December 20 for the 10:45 am worship service. Three Wee Kings is an adaptation of the well-loved story of the Magi who followed the Star to find the King. This musical fantasy brings together all the human and animal characters from the Christmas story (plus a few heretofore "unknown" characters!): kings, shepherds, angels, camels, donkeys, goats, lambs, lions and even talking stars. As the story unfolds, each group discusses who is to be *THE* King, wondering if one from their group will be chosen. The journey of the kings and the animals end at the manger, where the angels show them all that the King is a human baby who will be called The Good Shepherd, Lamb of God, King of kings and Bright and Morning Star. What a wonderful opportunity to pause during busy December to hear from the children what Christmas is really all about.



Sign Up!

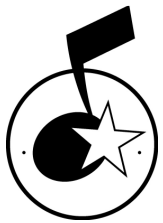
The 2010 sign up sheets for altar flowers, bulletins and Celebration Sunday cake are now posted at the back of the church. The cost of altar flowers is \$35/week, bulletins are \$10/week, and the cake is \$26.00. Volunteers are also needed to sign up for the ministries of usher, lector and altar care. If you have any questions, please call the church office.

Welcome To Our 2009 Confirmation Class

On Sunday morning, November 22, the Festival of Christ the King, we had special cause for giving thanks as five young members of our St. James family entered a new chapter in their faith journey. At our 10:45 am worship service that day, H. Kappel, C. Maust, K. Pritts, J. Smith, and R. Torrance stood before the congregation to confirm their baptismal faith through the rite of Affirmation of Baptism. Prior to the service, the traditional Confirmation Breakfast event was held in the Fellowship Hall, with congregational leaders and the families of the confirmands gathering to share the laughter and tears of celebration. We pray for the ongoing involvement of these five young people in the Church, and for God's constant blessing in their lives.

Congregational Meeting

On November 15, the 2010 budget was approved and Congregation Council members were elected. Beginning a three-year term will be C. Carnahan, R. Flickinger, J. Shawley, and J. Springer. Special thanks to C. Lynn, L. Luptak, and S. Pollock, our “retiring” Council members!



New Keyboard for St. James

The Memorial Committee is pleased to have made a special purchase of an Orla digital piano for use at St. James. This purchase was made possible through the money given to the memorial fund in memory of Nan Ferry, Chris Cardy, Pastor Oesterlin, Kirk Lynn and Glenn Lynn. The instrument has the sound of a grand piano, in addition to a huge selection of orchestral sounds. The lightweight keyboard makes it mobile and will be available for a variety of uses within the church. Special thanks to all those who contributed to this addition to the church. Our appreciation is extended to A. Salay and M. Davies who assisted in the selection. Memorial Committee members: L. Greene, H. Thorne, and C. Carnahan, and G. Wolfe, Chairperson.



Thank You From D.

St. James Lutheran Church, Thank you for all that you do for me. Thank you for the prayers, thoughts, encouragement, and financial support. Seminary has been an amazing experience so far. Through this experience I have learned of the importance of relationships. I would like to thank the members of St. James for being a part of my life. God Bless,
D. Clark

A CROP WALK Thank You

Thank you to your church for its participation in this year's CROP WALK for World Hunger. The total amount turned into Church World Service was \$4,951.00. We had 13 churches participating with 80 registered walkers. Your portion was \$105.00 with 1 walker participating. A special thanks to your recruiter, E. Poerschke. Thanks also to Pr. and Mrs. Poerschke for their help and to the congregation for allowing us to use our beautiful dining area. A quarter of the amount collected will be returned to our community to be divided between the Salvation Army and The Ligonier Food Pantry. Thanks again for your participation in this great community endeavor to help the less fortunate, as Jesus has instructed us to do.
R. Horrell,
2009 CROP WALK coordinator

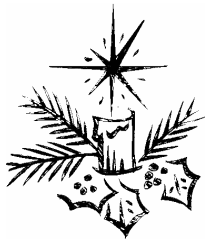
St. James Festival Update

Now that all of the paperwork has been completed and the checks have been received, we are pleased to share this final update on another very successful St. James Festival! Held each year on a Saturday in late August, timed to coincide with the annual Antiques on the Diamond event sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, our “Peach Festival” has grown into quite a happening! The addition of the large Yard Sale in recent years has greatly increased our visibility, and draws quite a crowd! And, it affords our members and friends the opportunity to turn their extra household items into some needed cash for the ministry of St. James. Many thanks are due to D. Kowatch, who during the summer months spends many hours sorting, pricing, and otherwise preparing the yard sale donations. We are grateful to everyone who gave to this year's St. James Festival, donating “treasures” for the sale, needed food items for the Peach Festival part, and labor for the large variety of tasks at hand. J. Miller, in taking a count of volunteers and hours for our Thrivent Financial for Lutherans “*Care In Congregations*” grant application, tallied up at least 40 members who gave a total in excess of 300 volunteer hours! The total income for the Festival was \$1,957.87. Expenses paid out were only \$29.02, thanks to the generous donations of our members. That left a net profit of \$1,928.85, making us eligible to
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apply for the maximum available congregational matching funds of \$1,250.00 from Thrivent. Now that the Thrivent money has arrived, we can report that the grand total from the St. James Festival is \$3,178.85. Many thanks to everyone who helped!

Blanket Drive

In order to help our friends and neighbors in the community stay a little warmer this winter, Smith Oil holds an annual blanket drive. They are collecting new and gently used blankets (no holes or frays) for distribution. A basket for donations is in the side room of the church, and blankets will be collected until the end of March. Be sure to find it in your warm heart to help with this wonderful cause!



A Special Service Of Lessons And Carols

Is being planned for December 27, the first Sunday after Christmas. This opportunity to sing a wide selection of Christmas music was very well received last year. There will be **only one service** that Sunday, held at 10:00 am. Be sure to come out and enjoy this chance for some congregational “togetherness”.

Fort Ligonier Days 2009

Well, Fort Ligonier Days 2009 didn't quite live up to our hopes and expectations... But, it certainly wasn't for the lack of effort! After a very successful year at the special 250th anniversary celebration of 2008, we had high hopes for our Fort Days food sales fundraising event this year. With new leadership and energy it was decided to bring back the “Red Door Café” in the fellowship hall on Friday, October 9. Thanks to the creativity and hard work of K. George and K. Smith, we offered an updated menu which included delicious ham barbeque sandwiches, and added a free parcel check service, so that patrons could leave their purchases in a safe, secure location as they continued their shopping.

Unfortunately, the weather did not share our enthusiasm, and rain and cold temperatures kept many potential visitors from coming to Ligonier. The crowds were diminished significantly on Friday, and even the Saturday parade was not as well attended as in past years. The obvious effect was felt at St. James, as well as by many organizations throughout the community. Sales did not meet expectations, and most groups had ample “leftovers” when all was said and done. Thankfully, many of our church members helped out by purchasing leftover ham barbeque and buns on Sunday morning. What was not sold, along with the extra hot dogs, was used to feed the hungry walkers following the CROP Walk at St. James on Sunday, October 18. Following that event, the extra hot dogs and

sauerkraut were given to the Union Mission men's shelter in Latrobe.

In the end, our Fort Days efforts this year were moderately successful. Thanks to the generosity of our church members, who donated mountains of home-baked treats and many cases of beverages for sale, the net profit for our congregation's efforts was \$2,276.00. This included \$835.00 in donations from those who took advantage of the convenience of parking in our church yard and parking lot. Our thanks go out to so many people who donated food and beverages, and to everyone who gave their all-important time and energy to the effort. We will look forward to good weather and an even more successful Fort Days next year!

Hurricane Katrina Work Teams

From congregations of our Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod will be going to Mississippi again in January and February of 2010. C. Cardy, from our St. James congregation, is making plans to go during the week of January 31 – February 6, and is encouraging others from St. James to consider participating too. Contact C. if you have an interest, or call the church office for more information.