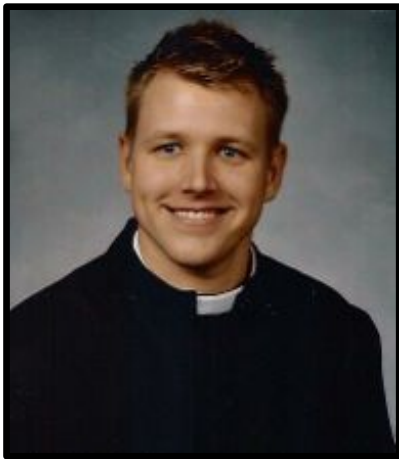

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

600 EAST NORTHLINE ROAD, TUSCOLA, ILLINOIS, 61953 ✉ (217) 253-4341 ✉ WWW.IMMANUELTUSCOLA.ORG

Volume 1, Issue 4

December 2010



From Pastor's Desk

The world gets ready for its ironic Christmas (for it has neither Christ nor the Mass—the Latin word for the Lord's Supper) by feasting. 'Tis the season of office parties, secret santas, and credit card charging. The world whips itself, as best it can, into a nostalgic euphoria of imaginary goodwill toward all men and consciences are subdued with change dropped in the red bucket on the way out the

door.

Our Christmas is precisely that, Christ's-Mass, Christ in the Lord's Supper. On Christmas Eve we gather to receive the Body and Blood once laid into a manger. We sing *Gloria in Excelsis* with angels in the night. On Christmas morning there is nothing more joyous, more celebratory, or more wonderful and important than being with our heavenly family and joining with the angels and archangels in receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our joy is not that of rum-laced eggnog and mistletoe lust. Our joy is that of God Incarnate, of sins forgiven, of grace upon grace for our Immanuel is with us to save us.



To prepare for this fore-Feast we make ourselves hungry. We fast. We deny ourselves some things (the *Gloria in Excelsis*) and we add a few disciplines (such as attending midweek services.) Our preparation serves to add depth and nuance to Christmas. As the French say, "Hunger is the best sauce." Our hunger for righteousness is stirred not by denial but by the Word of God. We never fast from grace! Thus throughout these Advent days in the end of time, the Church provides additional opportunities to receive God's gifts and you are urged to make use of them as able.

Pastor Braaten

GREETERS LIST

- Dec. 5 Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- Dec. 12 Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich – East
- Dec. 19 Becky Kappes – West
Geof & Sue Danielson – East
- Dec. 26 Tim & Tresa Pollock – West
Harold & Irene Wattjes – East
- Jan. 2 Donna & Gunnar Campbell – West
Jim Dyer – East
- Jan. 9 Joan Vukelich – West
Becky Kappes – East
- Jan. 16 Geof & Sue Danielson – West
Tim & Tresa Pollock – East
- Jan. 23 Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- Jan. 30 Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich - East

GREETERS NEEDED

Please contact the church office

COFFEE COMMITTEE

- Dec. NEED A VOLUNTEER
- Jan. Harold & Irene Wattjes
- Feb. Ann Carroll

If you would be willing to volunteer for coffee and donuts, please contact the church office.

ALTAR COMMITTEE

- Dec. Joan Vukelich, Delores Ford & Margaret Stilwell
- Jan. Ruth Bretz & Joan Vukelich
- Feb. Sue Danielson & Becky Kappes

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

- Wednesday, December 1
Advent Midweek Service - 7:00pm
- Saturday, December 4
Divine Worship - 5:30pm
- Sunday, December 5
Divine Worship - 9:00am
- Wednesday, December 8
Advent Midweek Service - 7:00pm
- Saturday, December 11
Divine Service - 5:30pm
- Sunday, December 12
Divine Worship - 9:00am
Children's Christmas Program - 6:00pm
- Wednesday, December 15
Advent Midweek Service - 7:00pm
- Saturday, December 18
Divine Service - 5:30pm
- Sunday, December 19
Divine Service - 9:00am
- Wednesday, December 22
Advent Midweek Service - 7:00pm
- Friday, December 24
Christmas Eve Service - 7:00pm
- Saturday, December 25
Christmas Day Service - 9:00am
- Sunday, December 26
Divine Worship - 9:00am
- Friday, December 31
New Year's Eve Service - 7:00pm

ATTENDANCE		OFFERINGS		
Saturday	Sunday	General	Missions	Building
11/6 25	11/3 84	2892.00		
11/13 26	11/14 79	2106.72		165.00
11/20 24	11/21 78	1671.00	100.00	
11/27	11/28			
75	241	8901.54		175.00

Average Attendance 105

L.W.M.L. NEWS

THANK YOU to all who donated in the collection on L.W.M.L. Sunday. It is appreciated! If anyone has suggestions for mission projects for our group to support, please contact Irene Wattjes, Theresa Fields, or Joyce Alexander.

PLANS are being made to host our annual cookie walk. It will be after church on December 19th. This is the L.W.M.L.'s main fund raising project and thanks to all the cookie and candy donations and participation, it has been very successful the past eight years. Thrivent will provide matching funds up to \$300.00, again this year.

Watch for further information in the bulletin and on the bulletin boards.

THE 2011 NATIONAL LWML CONVENTION is being held in Peoria, IL in June. What a wonderful opportunity to share in this experience so close to home!

There are going to be a number of service event activities at the convention. One that our district is concentrating on at present is donation fleece pieces for tying fleece blankets. If anyone wishes to donate to this project, the fleece blankets will consist of 2 pieces of fleece material 42" x 58". This will be places one on top of the other and the edges will be cut (or fringed) and tied at the convention. You don't have to worry about anything except purchasing the fleece pieces. Whatever our group is able to collect will be taken to the next district convention in April 2011 and organized to be ready for the national event. Please bring any purchased to the church.

WE INVITE any women of the congregation who would like to join our group, to come to a meeting which are held quarterly: the 4th Tuesday of February, May, August and November at 7:00 p.m. Our next meeting will be February 22, 2011.

SAM Food Pantry Needs

We have some great news to share: John Hausman will be donating a huge amount of food to the SAM Pantry again this year. It will arrive in early December. This is an enormous relief as the Rotary food drive collection was waning, and the shelves were getting bare again, already!

Due to the Hausman donation, food items will be in good supply for awhile, although such donations are always welcome. It might be good to focus on paper products (toilet paper, paper towels, facial tissue), as well as cash donations for a few months. Thank you for your faithful support!



IN THE NEWS

***Christianity Today* offers a review of the interesting new book *America's Four Gods: What We Say about God—and What That Says about Us*. So what do we have to say about what the review says about what the book says about what we say and what that says about us? (Whew!)**

The books' authors, Baylor University sociologists Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, rely on survey data to construct a new model of where the religious fault lines lie in the U.S. The model stipulates that most Americans believe in one of four "gods," i.e., one out of four different conceptions of God.

The four conceptions of God in Froese and Bader's model are the result of combining the possible answers to two straightforward questions. First, to what extent does God interact with the world? And second, to what extent does God judge the world? The four broad results are:

- Those who believe God is both involved in and judging of the world believe in the "authoritative God."
- Those who believe God is involved in the world but does not judge it believe in the "benevolent God."
- Those who believe God is not generally involved in the world but still judges it believe in the "critical God."
- Those who believe God is neither engaged in the world nor judgmental believe in the "distant God."

Christianity Today points out that the model helps move away from liberal/conservative views of religion that may oversimplify differences across worldviews. It also may show where general similarities in worldview emerge despite doctrinal differences.

Most interestingly (to us), Froese and Bader apply their model to explain religious views about science. In what *Christianity Today* calls "probably the strongest section of the book,"

Froese and Bader point out that the basic question for Christians is not whether the Bible and science are ultimately reconciled, but how. For the most part, only atheists think an intrinsic conflict exists between science and religion. Everyone else is working to make sure their worldview fits with science. This includes the dissenters from Darwinian orthodoxy. They want to teach competing accounts of human origins in science classes, the authors claim, to show a firm commitment to remaining properly scientific.

Nevertheless (and not surprisingly), individuals who believe God is engaged in the world—i.e., those who believe in the "authoritative God" or "benevolent God" (according to the Froese/Bader convention)—were much more likely to say that we rely too much on science and not enough on faith. Believers in the critical or distant God, by contrast, think science will eventually solve most of society's problems. Of course, that latter view is ultimately "faith" in science as savior.

The Bible is quite clear that God is both engaged in and judging of the world, although not always in the ways we might expect. Even just a single verse like [John 3:16](#) makes both of these points clear. God is involved in the world: he sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become a baby and then a man. And He loves all people and will save all who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, who will save them from God's judgment to come.

"...that most Americans believe in one of four "gods," i.e., one out of four different conceptions of God."

MERCY: Regarded by God . . . and Others



ME

RCY: Regarded by God . . . and Others.

I thank God and Jesus Christ that someone has regarded us as human beings." I've never heard anything so profound, and this from the lips of a young boy in Kenya. LCMS World Relief and Human Care had built an orphanage where he and his fellow AID S orphans were now to be cared for. Amidst the tears, his word *regarded* caught my attention.

Regarded is at the heart of the Lutheran confession of the faith, as confessed in the Augsburg Confession, Article IV on justification. It is the door to eternity. And it is also the most powerful, freeing, compelling force for a joyous life in God's mercy, driving us to act mercifully to our neighbor in need. In Christ, God "regards us as human beings."

Our churches also teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works but are freely justified for Christ's sake through

faith when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes [i.e. regards, reckons] for righteousness in his sight (Rom. 3–4).

Note that little word *impute*. In the Gospel, God *imputes, reckons, regards, credits, accounts* faith in Jesus as righteousness. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your doing; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Thus I am *reckoned*, justified, sinless, not guilty on account of Jesus. Faith merely grabs hold of Jesus. The good boasting in the Bible is about Jesus! (Gal. 6:14). In Jesus, God recognizes me as somebody. In fact, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). There is not a living soul in this world who is not worth the very blood of Jesus. God accounts each individual as just that precious.

Is this justification stuff all ethereal mumbo-jumbo, having nothing to do with real life? Not so. Oswald Bayer points out that justification is fundamental to all human existence.

There is no such thing as an autocratic individual, totally independent of the surrounding world and its recognition. . . . Striving to find approval in the

eyes of others, being noticed and not being dismissed as nothing by others, demonstrates that I cannot relate to myself without relating to the world. It applies to our social birth as well as our physical birth. I constantly vacillate even to the very end of life, between the judgment others make about me and my own judgment of myself. . . . I arrive at some point of calm, and then become unsure of myself again (*Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, Eerdmans, 2003, p. 3).

God's solution for our sin, and for our deepest need in time and eternity, has been to *regard* us as valuable as "His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death." And this frees us to *regard* those around us in the same way—to acknowledge, to recognize, to value, to listen, to forgive, to have compassion, to speak up for, to act in mercy. Then we shall soon find them saying, "I thank God and Jesus Christ that you have regarded me as a human being."



CHILDREN'S PAGE

NATIVITY SCENE POTS

Celebrate the joy of Christmas — and remember Jesus' birth — by making this craft to decorate your home or to give as a gift.

What you need:

- 3 terra cotta pots (any size)
- Acrylic paints (including one for skin color)
- Paintbrush
- Craft glue (or a glue gun, with an adult to help)
- Brown yarn
- Material swatches
- Straw-colored raffia

What you do:

1. Decide which pot will be Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus. Turn each pot upside-down and paint a face on each one.
2. Decorate the pots by painting hair and clothes or by using yarn and material as hair and head coverings.
3. For baby Jesus, glue raffia along the bottom to look like straw in a manger.






The angel's message

On the first Christmas Eve, shepherds were watching over their flocks when an angel suddenly appeared.

Use the picture clues below to find out what the angels said to the terrified shepherds.



1 - k



2 - (t) e



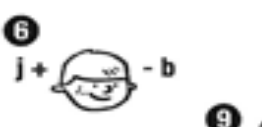
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4 g + - h



5 - paper



6 j + - b



7 - b



8 t + - d



9 b + - h

"Do _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3. I bring you _____ 4
_____ 5 of great _____ 6 that will be for _____ 7 the people.
Today in the _____ 8 of David a Savior has been _____ 9
to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11, NIV

Answers: 1. knot-k=no; 2. bee-(t)e=afraid; 3. afr+maid-m=afraid; 4. g+hood-h=good; 5. newspaper-paper=news; 6. j+boy-b=joy; 7. ball-b=all; 8. t+down-d=town; 9. b+horn-h=born

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11, NIV

December 2010 Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																										
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