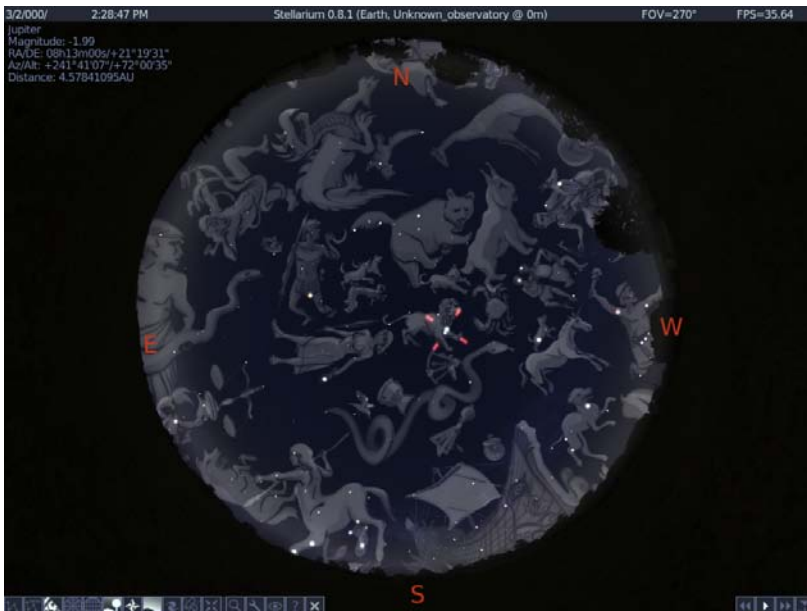


St. Matthew Lutheran Church Newsletter December, 2011

The Lutherans: Posting Vital Information Since 1517



The Census and the Star

Bible Alive Galena announces the Christmas season showings of its well-known program, The Census and the Star, revised and up-dated for 2011. Come, hear the full story of the birth of Jesus. When did it happen? What was the real census? What can we say of the players on the stage of history—King Herod the Great, Syria's Governor Quirinius, the Shepherds, the Magi? Can we discover the star of Matthew's Gospel, and even see it again through computer technology? The program is free,

and all are welcome. Showings: **Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 P.M., Thursday, December 8, 7:00 P.M., Sunday, December 11, 1:00 P.M., and Thursday, December 15, at 7:00 P.M.** The Census and the Star will be shown at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 127 South High Street, Galena.

From the Pastor

It is Advent now. I always encourage our members and friends to place a wreath in their homes for this season. It is a visible reminder that there is more to this season than the world's commercial interests. There are people who need our help. People need the Word, and people need food, clothing, and shelter as well. Stay focused. Listen to Jesus' call to be awake, to watch. Faithfulness happens moment by moment, one day at a time.

Advent also means Christmas stands in view. A lesser-known carol goes like this: "The happy Christmas comes once more; the heavenly guest is at the door..." Ethel McCaskey always speaks

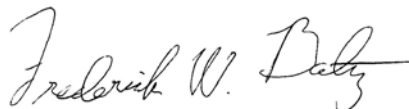
of Jesus' birthday cake, a family tradition in her home going back over the years. That's a great reminder that Jesus' birth is to be celebrated, not just noticed. Next time you see an infant, remember that the God who created the universe came to be among us as a vulnerable, fragile child. It is finally incomprehensible, but also unforgettable. The greatest theologians have tried to understand it fully and struggled. But a child like Grace McIntyre can speak with fascination about "baby Jesus." This baby belongs to us all. This baby came for us all. If you will be in Galena for Christmas, please join us for our worship times:

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7:00 P.M. (no 5:30 service)
Christmas Day Holy Communion 10:00 A.M.

Our stewardship program is under way. I can tell you already that we are ending the year strong. We are on track to meet all our expenses for the year as budgeted. Much of what this church received in 2011 has gone to causes that benefit people here and abroad. Our small groups: women's Bible study, men's Bible study, youth group, LWR quilters are holding strong. Sunday School and Confirmation meet each Sunday.

Lessons learned in 2011... As I write this December message to you, I am thinking back over this momentous year for us. A lot has happened; we have changed. Yet, in another way we have not changed at all. We stand for the Word, like we always did, but our stand has taken us into a new affiliation. This has been true for about a thousand churches in this country now. As for the ELCA, let's continue to pray for it, that God may still use that church body and help it see and address whatever is holding it back. The figures for 2010 have just been released, and the ELCA lost 270,000 members in that year. Overall it has lost a million of its original 5.3 million members. 2011's numbers will be unknown for some time yet. Will LCMC be God's instrument to reverse such losses to the Kingdom? Let us hope so, and let us strive to represent the Lord to the world in positive, soul-winning ways as we go forward.

Now, here is exciting news. The Council has begun discussions of bringing someone to help us in the year ahead, most likely an intern. We have the resources to do this, and we have new connections through the Institute of Lutheran Theology. This proposal will be decided at the Annual Meeting in January. The Council is hoping, planning, and praying for 2012 to be a year of growth for St. Matthew Lutheran Church. Let's work together as God's instruments to make it happen.



Message from the Church Council

The Church Council thanks everyone for their on-going support of the church programs. In the future we look forward to continued strong support of our Special Focus Ministries, Sunday School, Pre-School, Bible Alive, Men's Breakfast Bible Study Group, Women's Bible Study Group, Youth Group, Monday Quilters, Choir, and the Praise Band.

Improvements we see in the near future include:

- New candle lighters with stand for the Acolytes
- New robes for the Communion Servers and Acolytes

We wish everyone a Blessed Christmas Season.

Youth Group News

First off, both of us feel blessed to have the opportunity to work with the youth of our church. Over the past several months, the youth group has participated in Bible study sessions, volunteered to help in the community, and just had fun spending time together. It has been a wonderful experience getting to know the young people who have such an important role in the church both presently and in the future. The young adults have shown a commitment to Christ through both their words and actions. It is impressive and we hope God will help the youth group to be a place where these young people can develop their relationship with Christ and be supported by fellow believers. We encourage any young people who may not have yet participated to feel welcome to join us any time we meet.

The holidays are a busy time for everyone, but we would like to get together on the following days over the next several months:

- 1.) Wednesday, December 7th from 7-8pm
- 2.) Sunday, January 15th from 4-5pm
- 3.) Sunday, January 29th from 4-5pm.

If any parents or church youth have questions, please feel free to contact either of us. Thanks and God bless!

Neal Sauerberg - neal.sauerberg@gmail.com or (319) 331-6130
Anne-Marie Sauerberg - annemarie.cannon@gmail.com or (319) 321-8532

Womens Bible Study Group News

The women's prayer group will meet December 1 at 12:30. We will meet in fellowship hall at St. Matthew. Our sessions are well attended, but there is always room for more. We are studying the letters of Paul, if you don't have a book we will share.

It's a wonderful way to learn and share in the fellowship of others. If you can't commit to coming every month, come when you can.

Have a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Pancake Supper, Another Success

Thank you to all volunteers who helped make this October's Pancake Supper another success. We served over 200 people and raised over \$1000. A special thanks to our super-salesman Ken Muchow who once again put up posters and sold tickets throughout the community. Thanks to all volunteers who helped on the day of the supper, and there were a lot of them. Thanks to the girl scouts who did a super job of helping serve dinners. All in all, a great event, and for those of you looking forward to next year's 56th annual supper, it will be on October 18, 2012.

From John Klinkner and Chuck Stork Co-chairmen

Special Focus Ministry:

For those who may not know, we continually hold up a special ministry in addition to the regular work we support. We call this our Special Focus Ministry. We formerly called this our Ministry of the Month, but many times the focus lasted more than four weeks, so we chose this new name.

In the weeks ahead we are focusing on the United Churches of Galena Food Pantry. The winter months are when the Food Pantry is needed most, and in general the use of the pantry is on the increase. You will find information in the Welcome Center.

CELEBRATION CORNER

December

Birthday

7	Dan Consedine
8	Dorothy Anger
11	Tracy Pleau
18	Mike Hyland
31	Marilyn Holland

THOSE WHO SERVE IN DECEMBER 2011

Ushers

12/ 3 Jim Moser/Bob Kempert
4 Pam & Roger Johnson
10 John & Jean Prellberg
11 Chuck & Carolyn Stork
17 Norm Muehleip/Jerry Wachter
18 Dick & Edie Jones
24 John & Jane Klinkner
25 Bruce Etzel/Vic Peters
31 Colleen Stephens/Jeff Miller
1/1 Dale & Maureen Knipschild

Lectors

Jan Etzel
Velda Schoenfeld
John Prellberg
Carolyn Stork
John Prellberg
Edie Jones
John Klinkner
Jan Etzel
Colleen Stephen
Marilyn Holland

Acolytes

4 Erica Pleau
11 Megan Harris
18 Ethan Baltz
25 Emily & Chris White

Communion servers

12/10 Bill Fitch
11 Dale & Rita Wohlers
25 Fran Rogers
31 Jim Moser
1/1 Ken & Fabi Voigt

Counters

4 Pam & Ruth
11 Marion/Ruth
18 Connie/Ruth
25 Ruth/Colleen
31 Ruth/Colleen