

## From the Pasture: *Waiting and Welcoming*

Waiting at the top of the stairs always drove me crazy. Santa had come and we had to wait! Most often it was my older brothers and sisters who we had to wait for. Don't they get it that Santa had come? The family rule was that everyone had to be there before anyone could go down.

Waiting is part of Christmas. Waiting to open the presents. Waiting to light that last candle. Waiting in lines for travel and shopping. Waiting is work. You have to get a handle on anticipation, hope and not knowing. You can try to speed it up and that does not seem to work so well.

But it has been this way from the beginning. Mary and Joseph waiting for the birth of their child. Waiting to find if this inn or extended kin had room. Waiting to understand what this "miracle" might mean. Imagine waiting for generations for the Messiah. Waiting, wondering and hoping that God would send the Anointed to save, heal and change God's people.

When my older siblings were in college an unstated rule existed around the holidays: If someone did not have a place to go, they are always welcome with us. This meant that on more than one occasion my older siblings, or later myself, would show up with someone else on Christmas eve. Finding a bed was often a challenge (which meant that more than once I ended up sleeping in the basement). But come morning there was always a gift under the tree and Santa seemed to know where people were staying at the very last moment. This kind of welcome was standard operating procedure around the holidays.

Waiting and welcoming are what the Christmas season is about. We can ask ourselves: What are we waiting for this year? What do we hope for? What do we want to be different this Christmas or this next year? Waiting to see how God will be working in our lives. Waiting for something new, some miracle. Yet, the waiting does not last forever (though sometimes it feels that way). Christmas is also about welcoming. The innkeeper giving shelter to a young family. Shepherds and Wise Ones welcoming a king laying in a feeding trough. Angels singing the welcome of Gloria in Excelsis Deo. What will you welcome into your life this Christmas season? Who will you welcome into your home? Is there room in your heart to welcome Christ? Not just the child born two thousand years ago, but the Living Messiah who comes now.

Christmas...A season of waiting for our Savior to come?

Christmas...A season of welcoming the Savior of the World!

Pastor Michael Keys





*A note from our fearless leader, Jim van Dyke:*



As the Season of Gratitude rolls on into the season of Advent and Christmas, and everything kinda mashes together so compactly that even the largest storage capable Blackberry would shrivel in fright, let's face reality. None of us can do it all. Between church, family, work, and friends it is impossible to meet and make every commitment (whether a pleasure or duty) during this time of year. But as things go into a frenzy, and you're being pulled this way and that way by obligations or responsibilities, take a moment share some breathing time for you and God. First off, it's a private moment between you and your Creator to decompress---share all your angst and joys during this holiday season. Secondly, you don't have to listen to any feedback, because God listens unconditionally, can release all the frustrations, and continue to love you for who you are. Is there a better gift to receive at this time of year?? And that ties back into being a Season of Gratitude.

As we head into the new year, the expectations for Bethel and the Bethel community are pretty grandiose. More or less, it's the same story as years before. The church building needs to be examined from top to bottom, and physical repairs need to be addressed. The financial picture is another issue---mind you, we are not 'drowning in a sea of red ink', but we need to review our monetary intent individually as the church moves forward. So, now you have the good news / bad news situations. Outside of the dinner theater, we need to develop other resources (identifying new members, fund raising, personal commitment and talents) to continue making Bethel Lutheran a beacon for the North Portland area and an example for the ELCA Oregon Synod to point to as a successful church. Bethel Lutheran did not continue here by Gods' grace alone, we reciprocated to the invitation to keep this community alive (continually!). With gratitude toward building our relationship with God and each other, let's reach out and reach deep toward our continued ministry here at the corner of N. Denver and Jessup Avenues.

Best of the Blessed Holidays to all, Jim

## *The 2011 Angel Project*

**It's that time of year again...** The 2011 Angel Project is in need of an army of elves to help make magic for families and homeless Portlanders and families in need this Christmas season. Last year we provided 12 families, including more than 50 children, with all the fixins' for Christmas dinner, warm clothing, and a few fun presents. This year we plan on helping at least 12 families and creating care packages for many homeless North Portlanders. Please help us make magic again this year. **There are many ways to participate!**



They include:

- \*\* Encouraging your family, work, or a business you frequent often to sponsor a child, family or homeless person.
- \*\* Donating non-perishable food items.
- \*\* Making a monetary donation to the project.
- \*\* Donating new or gently used warm blankets.
- \*\* Volunteering at the wrapping party

**Please see page 4 for wish items**

Each year the items our families request the most are food, warm blankets, and toilet paper. Consider hosting a drive at your office or place of business for one or some of the items on our food and non-food wish lists.

**Our wrapping party will be held on Thursday Dec. 15th from 6-9pm.** All are welcome and encouraged to attend! Angel Family distribution Dec. 17, 12:30 after the Birthday Party for Jesus at 11:30.

If you are interested in donating, adopting a person or family, coordinating a donation drive at your work or anything else related to the project, please contact Amanda Mayther-Sandberg for more information. [moogatroid@gmail.com](mailto:moogatroid@gmail.com). You may also call the office...503-285-4919

## December Birthdays

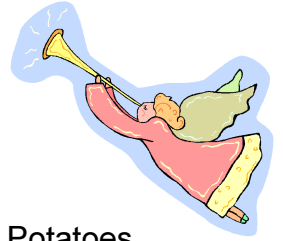
- 2 Julie Ann Edman
- 6 Steve Stevenson
- 14 Andrew Van Dyke
- 14 Jed Wilson
- 18 Morgan Olson
- 19 Donald Worthington
- 21 Jennifer Worthington
- 22 Micah Fletcher
- 27 Elaine Thompson
- 28 Sonja Bengston

Tammy Gover has a smallish 4 drawer dresser for give-away. See Tammy for info...

Fine print: bottom 2 drawers don't pull out easily.



## The 2011 Angel Project



### Our food wish list includes:

Bags of Potatoes or boxed Mashed Potatoes  
 Fresh or canned Sweet Potatoes  
 Boxes of Stove Top Stuffing  
 Canned Vegetables (Corn, Peas, and Green Beans are popular choices)  
 Boxes of Corn Muffin Mix  
 Envelopes of dry Gravy mix  
 Canned Pumpkin  
 Rice .....Dried Beans.....Pasta  
 Spaghetti Sauce  
 Canned Tuna....Canned Soup  
 Peanut Butter....Jam  
 Canned dinners such as Chili and Stew  
 Macaroni and Cheese  
 Vegetable Oil  
 Jello Pudding Mix

\$10-\$15 gift cards to Safeway or Fred Meyer

Non-food items we are in great need of include:  
 Warm new or gently used blankets  
 Gently used winter coats in adult sizes  
 Warm gloves, hats, scarves, and socks (new or gently used)  
 Toilet Paper...Shampoo....Bars of Soap  
 Family board games

*Thank You!*

## Prayer Concerns...praying for and with our community

The Anderson Family  
 Mark Bosworth  
 Julie Carter  
 Cathy Davis  
 Christine Downing  
 Bruce Edman  
 Maureen Gianetti  
 The Helzer Family  
 Hillary  
 Megan Keys  
 Margaret Keys

Brian Lehtinen  
 Betty Jane Miller  
 Tammy, Rodger Oviatt  
 Laurie Ross  
 Carol Steenerson  
 Skye  
 Sylvia Van Slyke, Family

Bethel Spiritual Directors  
 The 41st Infantry Brigade of the US National Guard  
 Family and Friends of Bethel in harms way



# December 2011



Sun

Mon


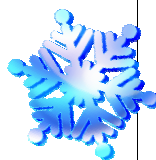
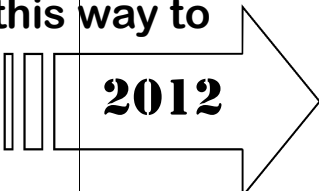
Tue

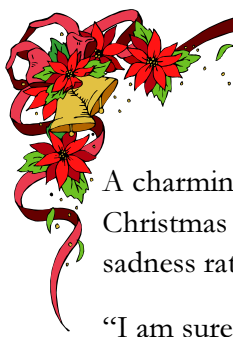
Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

				1	2	3
						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:00 Breakfast 10:00 Worship						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:00 Breakfast 10:00 Worship			Supper 6:30 Vespers 7:15	Angel Project Wrapping 6-9 pm		Dress rehearsal Christmas Program 10am Birthday party for Jesus 11:30 Angel Project Families 12:30
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:00 Breakfast 10:00 Worship Christmas Program			No Supper No Vespers Caroling and Party...meet at church 6:30pm			Christmas Eve: Special service 5pm Caroling 9:30 pm Service 10:00 pm
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9:00 Breakfast 10:00 Worship			No Supper No Vespers		this way to  <b>2012</b>	



## *The Legend of the Poinsettia*

A charming story is told of Pepita, a poor Mexican girl who had no gift to present the Christ Child at Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked slowly to the chapel with her cousin Pedro, her heart was filled with sadness rather than joy.

“I am sure, Pepita, that even the most humble gift, if given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes,” said Pedro consolingly.

Not knowing what else to do, Pepita knelt by the roadside and gathered a handful of common weeds, fashioning them into a small bouquet. Looking at the scraggly bunch of weeds, she felt more saddened and embarrassed than ever by the humbleness of her offering. She fought back a tear as she entered the small village chapel.

As she approached the altar, she remembered Pedro’s kind words: “Even the most humble gift, if given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes.” She felt her spirit lift as she knelt to lay the bouquet at the foot of the nativity scene.

Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into looms of brilliant red, and all who saw them were certain that they had witnessed a Christmas miracle right before their eyes.

From that day on, the bright red flowers ere known as the Flores de Noche Buena, or Flowers of the Holy Night, for they bloomed each year during the Christmas season. Today, the common name for this plant is the poinsettia!

