



The Spirit of Central

News about the mission of Central Lutheran Church
Downtown Minneapolis

December 18/19, 2010

In mystery we wait with the whole community

by Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer
Fifth in a Series

“Hope cannot be achieved alone. It must in some way or another be an act of community.” –William Lynch

At home:

Each night my wife, Liv, and I sing “Silent Night” to our not-yet-born child, who is due in early January. We sing and we wait. We sing and we anticipate the arrival of this child. Usually we wait until Christmas Eve to sing “Silent Night,” but this year we felt it was worth singing

early for the child who will be born into the darkest time of year in this Northern climate.

At church:

Every year on Christmas Eve when the sanctuary is filled, when the candles are lit, and we sing Silent Night together the little hairs on my arms stand up.

Silent night, holy night.
All is calm, all is bright.

At that moment I have an almost indescribable feeling of joy, peace, mystery, hope, and wonder—a feeling shared by many. I’m certain. It’s transcendent! My hope is



that the baby will leap for joy in the womb upon hearing hundreds of voices in unison singing the one song he or she knows.

In the Restoration Center:

Last week a six month old baby appeared in my office with one of the Augsburg Nurses. The little girl had been abandoned at the Drake Hotel some days before. The Drake is used as overflow shelter for Hennepin County. Shortly after the child was left, by the grace of God, her great aunt heard what was going on, found her, and began the adoption process.

When I thought about this situation later that day I had to sit down and collect myself. This child’s story represents the harsh realities of so many of our neighbors in need; this story represents some of the darkness of the world. Our neighbors are struggling, many are suffering.

This story also represents the saving power and grace of our Lord. An abandoned child is taken in and given an opportunity for a far better life. There is hope for a better life, for all of us!

My worldly hope, for our baby and for the child at the Drake, is that they would have happy, healthy, and faithful lives filled with purpose and meaning, with access to opportunities in loving and supportive families and communities. The two children are already connected because they live in the same community. Indeed, we are all parts of a whole community, we are all connected and we are all children of God. The reality is that the world is a challenging place full of hardships, barriers, and fear. However, the world is not yet all it can be. Be not afraid!

In this mystery lies opportunity — to serve, contemplate, reflect, engage, give, listen to, walk with, be present with, and love our neighbors — opportunity to be disciples!

Our ultimate hope is that our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, is coming to make all things new for all the children, families, communities, and world. The baby, who came to us in a manger many years ago, became a man, brought hope into the world, and died for our salvation. He has promised to return to shine light into the darkness. Our hope is grounded in our God who is love and light. In mystery we wait during this Advent season.

The child at the Drake needs us and we need the child at the Drake because we are connected and we are all God’s children. We are all in need of a savior! All of our hope lies in Him, may we perceive a future filled with hope; may we all find restoration,

healing, justice, and wholeness through Christ. As we sing Silent Night this Christmas Eve with the children of the world, born and not yet born, may we be filled with the light of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Together we hope. In mystery we wait with the whole community.

Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer is Central’s Director of Community Ministries



Inside: Restoration Center Christmas Appeal funds are alleviating suffering and preventing homelessness! STORY ON PAGE THREE

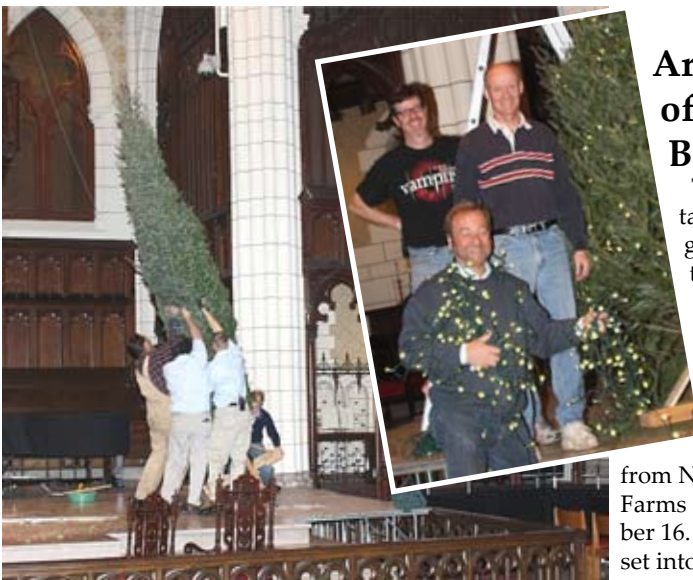


Food, fellowship and fun at the Christmas Tea

Delayed one day because of the blizzard, the 8th Annual Central Christmas Tea was, by all accounts, a smashing success. As it has been from the beginning all the food was prepared by the "Tea Ladies," two of which, Cheryl Erickson and Joan Threet, are pictured at left. This year's waiters included Franklin Dietrich and George Holtan. After the "tea course," the guests were entertained by the nationally-known vocalist Connie Evingson.

The Tea is produced by Muriel Olsen, Janet Freitag, Cheryl Erickson, Joan Threet, Eunice Dietrich and Judy Berge.

Photos by Joe Bjordal



Arrival of the Balsams

The three tall evergreen trees that will adorn Central's sanctuary this season arrived

from Nistler Farms on December 16. After being set into place by Jeff Nistler and

members of Central's building staff, the trees were lighted by a group that included (clockwise from top left) Karl Evert, Paul Troselius and Dave Nelson.

Hats, mittens and scarves for the Restoration Center



On December 16, Centralite Rebecca Jorgenson Sundquist, founder of Hats and Mittens, dropped off 500 winter items for the Restoration Center. Each year Hats and Mittens collects and distributes more than 35,000 winter clothing items in addition to raising more than \$25,000

which is given to social service organizations. Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer, Central's Director of Community Ministries gladly accepted the huge donation!

Daily Bible Readings Monday, December 20 — 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Genesis 17:15-22; Galatians 4:8-20 Tuesday, December 21 — 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Genesis 21:1-21; Galatians 4:21—5:1 Wednesday, December 22 — Luke 1:46b-55; Isaiah 33:17-22; Revelation 22:6-7, 18-20 Thursday, December 23 — Luke 1:46b-55; 2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29; Galatians 3:6-14 Friday, December 24 — Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 Saturday, December 25 — Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20 Sunday, December 26 — Psalm 148; Wisdom 4:7-15; Acts 7:59—8:8

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EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA www.ELCA.ORG

The Spirit is published weekly and distributed at worship services, as a companion publication to our website and electronic newsletter



FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS NEWS@CENTRALMPLS.ORG

Restoration Center Christmas Appeal funds are benefiting our immediate neighborhood

Already homelessness has been prevented for ten families

Word has spread through the community that incredible generosity by people at Central Lutheran Church is making possible some lifesaving gifts this month through the Restoration Center. As of December 12 over \$17,800 has been donated to the Restoration Center, including over \$500 in gift cards from the Circle of Hope and Group Travel Directors, where Annette Nelson is employed.

Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer, Central's Director of Community Ministries, reports a huge increase in the number of requests for financial assistance this month—far and away more what could typically be granted. The nice thing in this month of extra need is that there are extra funds, thanks to the Christmas Appeal donors. Rolf may well be developing a cramp writing all those checks!

Financial assistance has already been given to dozens of individuals and families to help pay utility bills, urgent medical expenses, transportation needs and for rental assistance. Rolf reported that ten families were literally on the verge of being evicted because of the inability to pay required bills, let alone think about gifts for Christmas. Those ten families are now safe for this month—homelessness prevented! And, in each case there is a sustainable plan in place beginning in January making it possible for them to stay in their homes.

Rolf anticipates that the funds from this year's appeal will directly help about 40 families or individuals by providing money for needed living expenses and even some Christmas gifts.

A case in point: meet Tim and little Tim

Tim was living in Chicago earlier this year when hard times hit. He ended up becoming homeless despite being employed and living in his car—a situation that was featured in a photo in the Chicago

Tribune. Then, needing to take custody of his son, Tim set off for Minneapolis in search of a better life. At first life here was not that much better. Tim and his son, Tim, Jr., lived at the Drake Hotel Homeless Shelter for three months while he was looking for work. Tim was directed to Central's Restoration Center early on as a place where there were resources for many things from free clothing to job search assistance. The Restoration Center provided financial assistance for transportation to job interviews and some other special needs related to being the single father of a three-year-old son, including child care expenses.



Fast forward to this Christmas season: Tim is employed as a security guard at Century Plaza across 12th Avenue from Central; father and son have a new home with the help of Simpson Housing; little Tim is in day care and sporting a winter parka and boots provided by the Restoration Center.

Tim said the help of Central Lutheran Church has "literally saved us" and he is ready to "give back." Tim, a person of deep faith, said he felt a warm welcome the first time he stepped into the Restoration Center. "I felt at home," he said.

Rolf says Tim and little Tim (at left) are just one of dozens of examples of the way that funds from the Christmas Appeal have alleviated suffering and brought hope to many this Christmas season. "This is exactly how it's supposed to work," said Rolf.

The appeal funds will also pay for the annual Community Christmas Meal on December 20—the day when the regular Monday community meal takes on a holiday flavor with turkey and all the fixings. There will be linen table cloths and napkins. And, there will be mashed potatoes—in sufficient quantity! Early on December 20 Restoration Center volunteers will begin peeling and slicing 200 pounds of potatoes for this special Christmas gift to the community—all thanks to the generosity of the appeal donors!



Will you extend an invitation to Christmas at Central?

Imagery of light and an invitation to "come, meet the One who is called the Light" is the theme of Central's public advertising for Christmas 2010—appearing in a number of ads this coming week.

The promotional theme and the Christmas worship schedule also appear on bookmarks mailed to every Central household this week

with an encouragement by Pastor Rick Nelson to extend an invitation to family and friends to participate in one of Central's Christmas worship services. The bookmarks are also available in the pew racks and at other locations. Please take them and use them and extend a warm invitation to many! There are also postcards suitable for posting on bulletin boards at the office, in apartment buildings or your favorite coffee shop.

Central's Christmas Poinsettias

Be part of the tradition!

A Central tradition of offering members and friends the opportunity to honor or remember loved ones by contributing to our sanctuary decorations continues this year. To purchase a Christmas poinsettia, visit the Floral Guild table outside Fellowship Hall after both worship services on Sunday, December 19—the last day to order.

Help is needed to deliver the plants to homebound members following worship on December 25 and 26. Please contact Karen Knox to learn how you can help at kknox@centralmpls.org or 612-767-9211.

— events/opportunities —

This Weekend

Saturday Worship — 5:30 p.m.

Sunday Worship — 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

*Children, youth and adult education,
9:45 to 10:45 a.m.*

Sunday fellowship/coffee times:

8:00, 9:30 and 10:30 a.m.;

12:00 Noon

(Various locations—

check welcome monitor)

This Sunday's radio broadcast is sponsored by Roger and Kristine Ruckert in honor of their 30th wedding anniversary.

“Discover the Promises of God in the Psalms”

Adult Education

Sunday, 9:45 a.m.

Pastor Kristen Jacobson will present the **last in a four-part Advent series**. The Psalms make up the “book of praises” within our Book of Faith. Come and discover the hope of this season through the ancient words of the followers who have led us to faith and lead us to Christ.

—9:45 to 10:45 a.m. **in Room 222**

Peace with Justice Forum

Sunday, 12:30 p.m.

“Why Minnesota Should Sell its Israel Bonds: a Matter of Politics” is the title of a presentation by Sylvia Schwarz and Susanne Waldorf, leaders in the “Minnesota Break the Bonds Campaign.”

Ms. Schwarz, a daughter of Holocaust survivors and victims, works actively as an anti-Zionist Jew. Ms. Waldorf has worked at the Lutheran Center in Bethlehem and has done Palestinian rights advocacy in Washington, D.C.

The Forum is sponsored by the Joint Peace with Justice Committee of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Area Synods of the ELCA. Lunch is available for \$7.00. No reservations necessary. All are welcome!

Children's Christmas Pageant — “Camel Tales”

Sunday, December 19, 4:00 p.m.

It's the story of Jesus' birth as told from the perspective of the Wise Men's camels—a comical tale about the adventure the Magi have following the star to the stable. Directed, staged and costumed by Sara Gunsch. Original music composed and led by Simon Husbands. Whether you have children or not, please come and support Central's children!

Family Christmas Dinner

Sunday, December 19, 5:00 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to enjoy this meal as a family together following the Christmas Pageant. Free tickets are available at the Church Office through the morning of Sunday, December 19.

Tuesday, December 21

General Staff Meeting, 10:15 a.m.

Wednesday, December 22

Heritage Ministry Team, 9:00 a.m.

Clothes Closet Opens, 10:00 a.m.

Bell Choir Rehearsal, 6:00 p.m.

Central Choir Rehearsal, 7:15 p.m.

Thursday, December 23

Open AA Meeting, 9:00 a.m.

**Nursing Center Women's Group,
10:30 a.m.**

Clothes Closet Opens, 1:00 p.m.

Looking Ahead

**Men's Fellowship to Discover Early History of Minneapolis
Saturday, January 8, 8:00 a.m.**

Central member Rod Richter, a 17-year staff member of the Minnesota Historical Society, stationed at the Mill City Museum since its opening in 2003, will speak on “Minneapolis: the City Built by a River.” All Central men are invited to participate in the monthly meetings of the Men's Fellowship (typically the first Saturday of the month—delayed in January because of the New Year's Day holiday.) Breakfast available for \$6.00. No reservations necessary.

A Renaissance Evensong for the Baptism of Our Lord

Sunday, January 9, 4:00 p.m.

Spend an hour on a frosty afternoon at this contemplative service featuring music by Renaissance groups Terpsichore (viola da gamba, recorder and lute) and the Early Lutheran Music Vocal Ensemble. Part of the 2010-2011 Central Crossings season—offering an “urban sampler of Christian spirituality” as a gift to the city.

OWLS to Visit

Plymouth Playhouse

Thursday, January 13

Join Central's Older Wiser Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) for a performance of “Away in the Basement—A Church Basement Ladies Christmas” at the Plymouth Playhouse. Cost: \$34.00, includes buffet lunch. Learn more and make reservations at the OWLS Table this Sunday.

A Different Kind of Book Club

Thursday, January 13

Our study of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues on Thursday, January 13 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. Charles P. Lutz, co-author of *Christians and a Land Called Holy: How We Can Foster Justice, Peace and Hope*, will be present as we discuss the book *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, by Thomas Friedman. For more information contact Joyce Anderson at 952-440-4928.



Welcome to Central this Christmas!

Christmas Eve - Friday, December 24

Twilight Service of Blessing

4:00 p.m.

A unique service offering individual blessings for families of all types; a live Nativity; carols and bells; concluding with the singing of “Silent Night” in candlelight.

NURSERY AVAILABLE

Candlelight Service of Holy Communion

10:30 p.m.

A Christmas Eve tradition for generations; a stirring service of Holy Communion with organ and choir; concluding with the singing of “Silent Night” in candlelight.

Christmas Day - Saturday, December 25

A Service of Carols and Holy Communion

10:00 a.m.

NURSERY AVAILABLE

NO SATURDAY EVENING SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS DAY

OUR REGULAR SCHEDULE CONTINUES ON

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26 WITH

SERVICES AT 8:30 AND 11:00 A.M.

The Coming Week

Central Meetings, Events and Community Service

Monday, December 20

Community Worship, 10:00 a.m.

Clothes Closet Opens, 11:00 a.m.

**Community Christmas Meal,
11:30 a.m.**

Women's Bible Study, 12:00 Noon