

A publication of



DIVINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

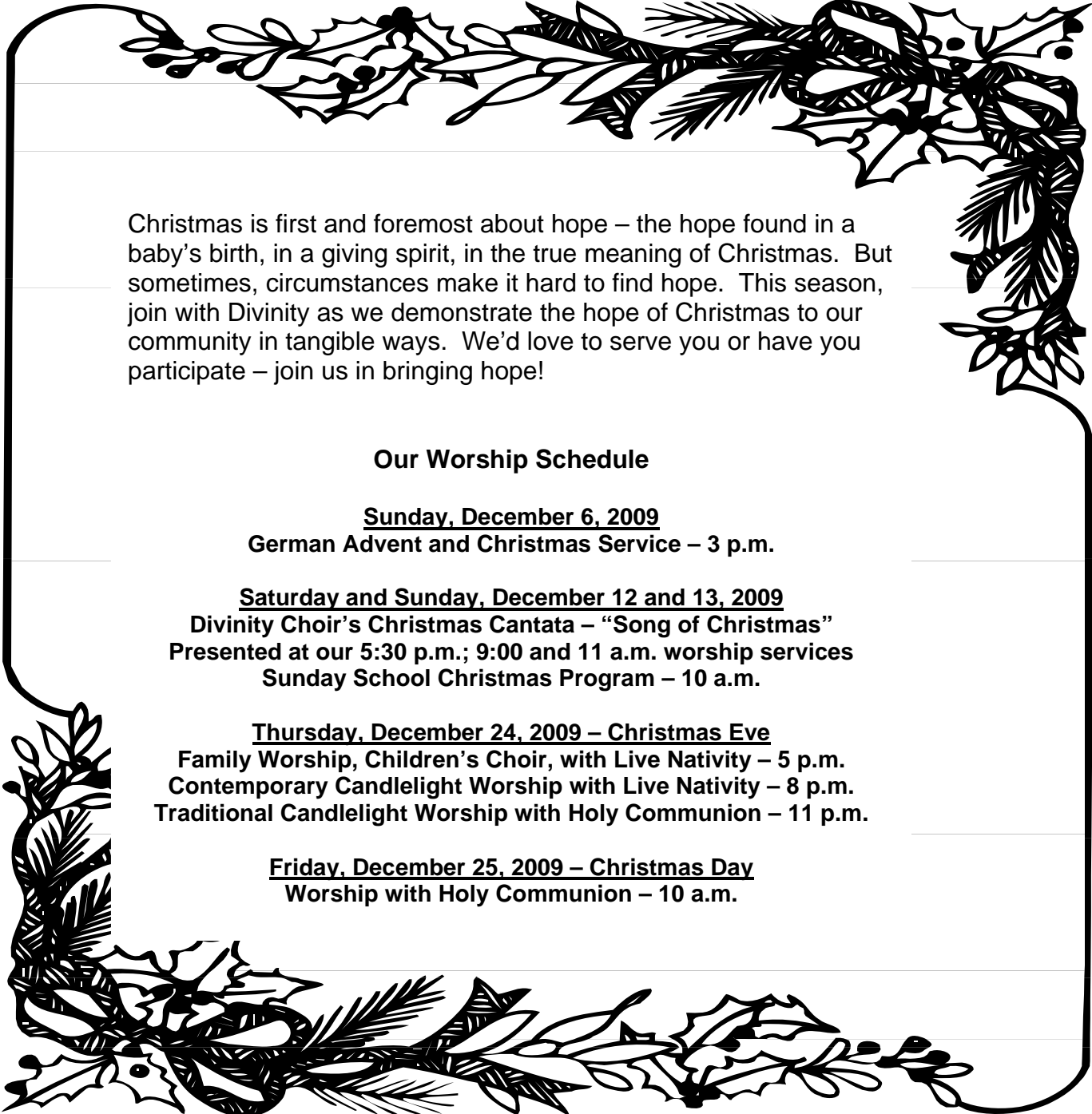
PARMA HEIGHTS, OHIO

Divinity Digest



A PEOPLE AND PLACE OF HOPE,
HEALING AND WELCOME

December, 2009



Christmas is first and foremost about hope – the hope found in a baby's birth, in a giving spirit, in the true meaning of Christmas. But sometimes, circumstances make it hard to find hope. This season, join with Divinity as we demonstrate the hope of Christmas to our community in tangible ways. We'd love to serve you or have you participate – join us in bringing hope!

Our Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 6, 2009

German Advent and Christmas Service – 3 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, December 12 and 13, 2009

Divinity Choir's Christmas Cantata – "Song of Christmas"

Presented at our 5:30 p.m.; 9:00 and 11 a.m. worship services

Sunday School Christmas Program – 10 a.m.

Thursday, December 24, 2009 – Christmas Eve

Family Worship, Children's Choir, with Live Nativity – 5 p.m.

Contemporary Candlelight Worship with Live Nativity – 8 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion – 11 p.m.

Friday, December 25, 2009 – Christmas Day

Worship with Holy Communion – 10 a.m.



Pray-er Thoughts

It's that time of year when we start answering...and asking questions. Questions like "Are you done with your shopping yet?" "Are you sending cards this year?" "Have you finished your baking?" "Are you ready for Christmas?" They are the type of questions that we really associate with a greeting... something like saying "hello". It just seems to add an expression to preparing for the holidays and all that the season means. But, there is one question among them that gives me pause....and maybe it does for you also. It is the question that asks "are you ready for Christmas?"

That is a question that really, when you think about it, means a lot....a lot more than a greeting type of question. It goes deeper than that. It's a thought that just stayed with me as I prepared to share some Christmas thoughts with you. And, as the end of November neared and I began putting my "to do" list on paper, I thought more about Advent, and the thought that would not leave me. Am I ready for Christmas?

Maybe it is because there have been a lot of the holidays when most of the children in the family were very young and the anticipation of the holiday seemed to be in the air we breathed. Do you remember those times? Were they like that for you too? It was the excitement of children and Christmas. They just seemed to go together.

The Child and Christmas still go together. That is one thing that will always be. And now when I ask myself "am I ready for Christmas" it isn't the things on the to do list that come to mind. Oh, of course there are those things that still need to be done, after all it is a celebration. But now when I hear the question "are you ready for Christmas", I have to take a deeper look inside my heart. It seems there are some times when I am more ready than others.

How do you feel when you think about being ready for Christmas? What comes to your mind? Are you singing along with all the

holiday songs and carols you hear? Are you making special plans to celebrate? I know there are more than a few of us who will spend some time during the holidays with special memories of years gone by. But then there is that question that just doesn't leave me and maybe you too.

Are you ready for Christmas?

Are we ready to receive this gift of great love? Are we ready to share that love?

Are our hearts seeking the love that God has given us? We know that at no time in our lives will we ever be blessed with a greater Christmas gift than that of the Christ child. Are we ready to embrace it with a soft open space in our hearts?

Are we ready for Christmas? I know one thing for sure, and that is, Jesus is ready for Christmas.

And so, as I again pause to reflect on that question...will you pause with me? How will our hearts respond the next time someone asks "are you ready for Christmas?"

May you feel the blessings of His love at this most beautiful timeit's Christmas!

Loretta

What Do Stephen Ministers Do?

Stephen Ministers are lay Christians selected, trained and supervised by their congregation's Stephen Leaders to provide effective, one-to-one Christian care to others. They typically make an initial two-year commitment to serve....they listen, they pray, they encourage, they care, they visit faithfully and they bring Christ's love and care to their Care Receivers. Stephen Ministers are well trained to provide effective Christian caring ministry to

people in need. They receive 50 hours of initial training and continuing education to further enhance their care giving skills.

What Impact Does Stephen Ministry Have on People and Congregations?

After her two sons were killed in an automobile accident, Marilyn found the most difficult part of grief was that friends avoided talking about her sons-for fear that they would upset her. "I had no one to talk to about them. It was as if they had never existed" Marilyn said. "Then I was matched with a Stephen Minister. She was patient, she was caring, and accepting. And when she rang my doorbell, I knew I could open up and talk about my sons and the overwhelming grief I was experiencing. My Stephen Minister was an angel on my doorstep, God worked through her to heal my pain".

When a tornado devastated the small town and eleven homes were destroyed and many more had heavy damage, Pastor Williams wondered...."How do you minister to an entire community that is grieving, especially when you yourself are grieving? Our Stephen Ministers made a world of difference by literally multiplying the care I could provide," he said. "They helped in so many ways, and all the while I was ministering to the congregation, our Stephen Leaders were ministering to me-praying for me, caring for me, helping to carry my burdens and supporting my family."

"I gave up on church 20 years ago," said Andy. "I wasn't getting anything out of it and nobody even noticed when I stopped going. So when my neighbor told me about Stephen Ministry, I was resistant. The last thing I needed after a triple bypass was someone trying to guilt me into going to church again. But my neighbor explained that a Stephen Minister's role was to listen and care, not to tell me what I should think or feel or do. I was going to be laid up for awhile, so I

decided to give it a try. My Stephen Minister talked a little, but listened to me a lot. And he showed an unconditional concern for me that I had never experienced before. When I was well enough to get around, I tried church again. I found it different from what I remembered. The people were genuine-real people who really were glad to see me. I began to see there really was a God who cared for me."

Serving as a Stephen Minister is a very personal and rewarding thing to do. If this is something you want to learn more about, contact **Loretta Cross, Leslie Crowe, Judy Junker or Pastor Doug**. We will be glad to talk with you.



Matthew: 5:19 "And he said unto them, follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

As we prepare to close out another year and prepare for the coming of the Christ

Child we always reflect on the times recently passed. This year **Arts in Action** closed out the 60th Anniversary Celebration in April, with the Parma Symphony. We coordinated the Cancer Tribute concert with Clifford Smith and the luncheon to finish paying of the courtyard fountain.

On October 18th Divinity hosted the third annual choral concert presented by Tri-C, Valley Forge High School music department, Holy Name High School Chorale, and Padua High School Concert Choir. There were 140 young adults and 310 in attendance in the audience for a total of 450 people. It sure was overwhelming to see a capacity crowd for this event. This event has grown each year since its inception. This has been an excellent community outreach event and by bringing together the talents of our young adults, no matter what religious background, encourages fellowship and offers to the communities our welcome and support.

Because of this annual event we look to the future for other possibilities for community outreach. With the failure of the school levy on

Election Day 2009, the fate of the Parma City School District is still uncertain and could possibly open even more avenues for future events in support of the district's arts programs.

Coming in January we are welcoming back to Divinity **Tangled Blue** on the weekend of January 23rd and 24th. The husband/wife team wowed the Divinity Family last year and **Arts in Action** have been asked many times to bring them back. This year they will provide the music for all three services as well as perform in concert. However, the **Arts in Action** have decided to do something different in presenting the concert. This event will be held in the Fellowship Hall in a true coffee house format. Tickets will be sold for the event at \$5.00 each and different types of coffee will be sold, including we're told espresso. We are asking all in attendance for the concert and the three services to bring in canned goods for the food pantry to restock after the busy holiday season. Anyone bringing in a canned good to the concert will be entitled to one free coffee of their choice (one per person only)

At this time the Arts in Action team would like to wish all of the Divinity family a blessed Christmas and a very happy and prosperous New Year.



Youth in the Digest!

The Sr. High Youth here at Divinity have been involved in several activities in which they are discovering new and interesting ways to glorify God, acknowledge His presence, and be intentional about serving Him. Check it out!

November 13 the Sr. High Youth headed off to Camp Mowana for a Fall Retreat where they shared in the fun and fellowship of the weekend while meeting other youth from other churches. They returned on November 15th.

November 20 and 22 the Sr. High youth spent some time packing food at Redeemer Crisis Center and here at Divinity!

November 29 a group of Sr. High Youth helped serve the catered dinner and set-up/tear-down equipment at the Cancer Benefit Concert featuring Clifford Smith.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

December 18: All Sr. High Youth and their families are invited to join us at Redeemer to pack food (optional and church-wide)

December 20: Sr. High Secret Santa at "Whirlyball"

December 27: NO 10am CLASS!

January 3: NO 10am CLASS!

January 10: 10am class resumes, Youth return from LYO Winter Gathering in Independence, 1pm.

Remember: You can also receive updates pertaining to the Sr. High Youth's activities online. Go to www.divinitychurch.com and select the "youth" drop down box.

Coming soon to Divinity: "Tangled Blue Café". We would like to extend a special church-wide invitation to this event featuring "Tangled Blue" to all who wish to come on Saturday, January 23.



Yarn Group

Tuesday Afternoon Yarn Group

This year our members produced 206 pieces of prayer shawls, hats, mittens, scarves, sweaters and miscellaneous items for Divinity and Redeemer. Many thanks to our faithful handcrafters who are busy working on items for next year. **Eleanor Huetter** (Messiah), **Joan Huetter**, **Sue LaPerna**, **Alice Linee**, **Lori Schifano**, **Fran Schwarz**, **Vicki Warden** (Rocky River).

... Joan Huetter



GIVING THANKS AT YEAR-END

Though the past year has been one of substantial economic challenges, the final months of the year are a time when many will make important charitable decisions. Economic conditions have made it necessary for most of us to make careful choices about how to spend, save, and give. But time spent in considering how to make our gifts can help

- Cash. If you itemize your tax deductions, gifts of cash may be used to eliminate federal income tax up to 50% of your adjusted gross income (AGI).
- Securities. Giving stocks, bonds or mutual fund shares that have appreciated in value can bring additional tax savings. If securities are held more than one year they are generally deductible from income tax at current value, and can be used to offset tax on up to 30% of AGI. Also, no tax is due on any gain as could be the case if sold. Owning investments that now are worth less than they cost can be sold and the cash proceeds given as a charitable gift. This creates a loss you may be able to deduct from other taxable income. Deductions for the gift and the loss may be more than the current value of the securities.
- Gifts from qualified retirement plans. These assets can be a very practical and simple source for charitable gifts. Making a planned gift of these assets offers a double benefit: you pay no income tax on the income and the charitable beneficiary pays no tax as well. If you are over 70 1/2 and have an IRA you can make a charitable gift rollover up to \$100,000 until December 31st. Just have your IRA custodian make a direct transfer to the charitable beneficiary.
- Bequests through your will or living

make us better stewards of our charitable goals.

TAX SAVINGS

With changes in the federal tax laws, giving this year may never save you more. The higher your tax rate, the more your gifts will save you. So if you are subject to the alternative minimum tax (AMT), you may be surprised to learn that charitable deductions will reduce the amount of both income tax and AMT.

WAYS TO GIVE

- Trust. The most common vehicle for a planned gift. You can gift a specific amount, a percentage, a specific asset, or what is left over.
- Life Insurance. Policies that are no longer needed for their original purpose make great charitable gifts. Adding your church or favorite ministry as a beneficiary of your policy is a very simple way to make a planned gift. Premiums can be deducted from your federal income tax when the policy is gifted, naming the charitable organization/ministry as owner and beneficiary.
- Gifts that provide income for you or others. Charitable gift annuities and charitable trusts offer many benefits: lifetime income, tax savings, higher interest rates than CDs or commercial annuities based on the age of the donor.

As this year slowly comes to a close, we are thankful for all the blessings God has bestowed through his grace. Being generous in all things is truly a loving act of faith and hope.

Please contact me to talk more about how you can fulfill your charitable vision. I am available to meet also with your church leadership to discuss charitable giving seminars.

**... Pastor Tom Zulick, CRPC
Regional Gift Planner Director
Lutheran Planned Giving – Ohio/ELCA Foundation**

Sharing the Gift

The Christmas season is upon us. In less than 30 days we will be celebrating the most famous birthday ever. Forget about all the hustle and bustle of the preparations for the celebration for a moment and focus on the true meaning and promise of the holiday. Paul reminds us in Romans 6:23 that "...the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The strange thing about a gift whether it's expensive or free is not in the giving of the gift but in the receiving of the gift that is when it reaches full potential. Do you know someone who hasn't received Jesus as their personal Savior? Someone who doesn't know the true meaning and promise of Christmas? Someone who hasn't been actively attending worship? Consider inviting that person or family to join you in worship this Advent and Christmas season. We pray that your invitation will bring someone to a closer relationship with Jesus our Lord.

... *The Board of Witness*

The Christmas Giving Tree for the Redeemer Crisis Center's children will be in the Narthex through December 6. The tree will be decorated with ornaments specifying age and gender. You may choose an ornament and purchase an appropriate (not to exceed \$20) for that child. Please return a wrapped gift by December 13 with identifying information, boy or girl and age, on the outside. Social Ministry will deliver the gifts to Redeemer on December 13.

Christmas Food Packing at Redeemer Crisis Center Friday, December 18

Divinity will be helping with the annual packing of Christmas food bags at Redeemer. Won't you join us? Besides packing bags, which can be accomplished by all ages, there are many Christmas gifts that need to be wrapped. So, if you don't want to pack bags, you can always wrap gifts. Please donate your time and talents to help with these projects. Redeemer is located at 2970 W. 30th St. near W. 25th and Clark. The evening will begin with a free pizza supper at approximately 6 – 6:30p with packing and wrapping beginning about

6:30 – 7p. With many hands, the work is usually completed by 9p. If this is your first time visiting Redeemer, we can arrange for you to ride with someone, so don't hesitate to join us. You won't regret it! For more information, contact **Jan Jasko** at 440-888-6236.



"I thought about how the Lord is willing to give his own life just to protect us. It's a rare occasion for us to listen to him. But as the load gets heavier, we take more time to listen."

... *Alex Moe*

"When we are in a crisis situation, we cut ourselves off from God and rely on ourselves, but the psalmist tells us to instead open ourselves up to God even more during a crisis situation."

... *Sean Klemme*

"Stage 1 is a fact paced life. Stage 2 is marriage. Stage 3 is slowing down. Stage 4 is when we listen and appreciate as death nears. I'm in stage 1. My parents are in stage 3. My grandparents are in stage 4."

... *Drew Boxler*



To the Congregation of Divinity Lutheran Church and especially to those who gave me the chance to participate in Trinity Seminary's Summer Seminary Sampler, thank you. Growing up in a family who goes to church was what first gave me interest in wanting to know the Lord and to want to know about what even going to church was all about in the first place. Last summer I started taking this interest seriously and Pastor Doug presented me with an opportunity to go see what the life of a pastor might be like at a program called Summer Seminary Sampler at Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. With some help from some very generous individuals of our congregation I was able to attend this summer program. I had no idea what to expect when I first got there, but I can tell you that after experiencing three weeks of that camp I now know that I want to pursue a life in ministry. I met so many different

individuals with so many different perspectives on every aspect of Christian life including our beliefs, ways of reading the bible, prayer, unbelievers and so many more topics that have changed, tested and strengthened my beliefs. I was not alone in this camp though I met nine awesome people, who I will never forget; who also wanted to test the waters of what ministry life would be like as well. With these nine other individuals, three camp counselors, and Camp Leader or, Pastor Ruth as we knew her. We had life changing experiences and had many moments in which we knew God was at work in our world. I can't thank the people of Divinity who helped me participate in this program enough. Thank you all very much!

... **Sebastian D. Roldan**

"Dear Pastor Gunkelman,

On behalf of the NE Ohio Synodical Women's organization, I am writing to thank you for your participation in our recent Biennial Convention. We truly appreciated your presence among our group and your spirit of joy and hospitality that shown through your leadership of our worship service.

Using Divinity's wonderful space was a blessing for us in many ways. So thank you again for the many ways we're sure your hand touched the preparations and presentations for our convention.

May God continue to bless you and your family as you do His work."

... **Ruth Patrick, President NEOSO**

"Dear Pastor Doug and my Divinity Family,

I want to thank you for your visits, cards, calls and prayers. I had open heart surgery at Cleveland Clinic and rehab at a nursing home.

Your kind thoughts and prayers really meant a lot. It was a great comfort to me.

There are issues to be resolved yet, but we're working on them."

... **Mary Ellen Murray**

"Dear Pastor Doug and Divinity Family,

Thank you for all your help in getting me started on the road to recovery from my recent knee surgery at Parma Hospital.

It was so good of you to come to visit, Pastor Doug, and to bring communion to

Marlene and me. I also appreciate greatly your delivery of the beautiful, hand-knit prayer shawl from Loretta and her band of knitters. It means so much to know that others care and take the time to show it.

God bless you all and thank you for your prayers.

... **Bill Schneck**

"Dear Pastor Doug,

Thank you for a beautiful funeral service for Rose. Sunday's sermon was very much appreciated also. It was a touching tribute to her life. You're the best!

... **Carl and Joan Huetter**



THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Our tradition of the Christmas tree actually comes from customs and practices many centuries ago. Legend claims the fir tree was the "Tree of Life" in the garden of Eden.

The tree had large flowers, fruit and leaves until Eve took the forbidden bite. As punishment, the trees leaves shriveled to needles, and the fruit turned into cones.

Many cultures celebrated the winter solstice using trees. Egyptians used date palms, Romans used spruce and fir trees. The Druids and Celts used the oak tree and decorated it with gilded apples and lighted candles. The Jews, Greeks and Romans also believed that the oak tree was sacred.

Many of the traditions and history of our present Christmas tree originated in the eighth century in Germany. Christmas celebrations in Germany consisted of planting fir saplings.

A legend states that in 1532, Martin Luther was walking home on Christmas eve and was struck with the beauty of the stars shining down on the fir trees. He was moved to cut down a small sapling, bringing it home and placing it on a side table in the drawing room for his children. It was decorated with candles to teach others that Jesus is the "Light of the world".

In 1539, the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Strasburg displayed its first Christmas tree decorated with paper flowers, cookies, fruit and nuts.

In 1856 Franklin Pierce was the first president to have a Christmas tree in the White House.

In 1923 President Calvin Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony that is now held every year on the White House lawn.

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY

Try to select a fresh tree, one that is green, and needles that bend and do not break off the branches. Also, look for a trunk that is sticky with sap.

Cut off two inches of the trunk and put tree in a sturdy water holding stand. A tree may drink as much as one quart of water per day. To add water use a turkey baster to prevent spills. Before decorating, spray the needles with starch, the tree will last longer.

Keep trees away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.

If you have small children or animals that could topple your tree, secure the tree with fishing line and small hooks to the wall or ceiling.

If using an artificial tree choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. All electrical applications should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label. Do not connect more than three strings of lights per single extension cord.

Never use electric lights on a metal tree. The tree can become charged and a person could be electrocuted.

Never use candles on a tree.

Before using, check all light strings for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Throw away all damaged strings.

If using an artificial tree, dip the ends of the branches into petroleum jelly before inserting into the frame. It will be easier to pull the branches out when taking down the tree.

When leaving the house or going to bed, turn off all holiday lights, they could short out or start a fire..

HAVE A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS

*Joan D. Piper, Parish Health
References: Decking the Halls, Linda Allen
Encyclopedia of Christmas, Tanya Gulevich Allyou
publication December 2007*

Divinity Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This story was printed in the fall edition of *Te Deum*, the alumni magazine from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus. It's a powerful story reminding us of the challenges of being the Body of Christ in today's world.

... *Pastor Doug*

Remembering One Saint's Life and Death in Kansas

When the church bells toll for **George Tiller** on All Saints Sunday, **Pastor Lowell Michelson** ('06) imagines many in his congregation will recall more than the passing of a beloved saint. It was the way in which Tiller died that gives the members of Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas pause.

Tiller was shot and killed in the narthex at Reformation shortly before the start of Sunday services on May 31. He was serving as an usher when suspected gunman **Scott Roeder** opened fire. Tiller, one of few physicians in the country to perform late-term abortions, had been the target of abortion opponents for years.

In the days following the shooting - only nine months into his call at Reformation — Michelson watched police cordon off his church, met with frightened and angry members of his congregation, answered a barrage of questions from reporters, and prepared a funeral sermon for the man his own three children often referred to as "Grandpa George."

No seminary class discussion or textbook could prepare him for such a tragedy. The prayers and concerns of colleagues, friends and the seminary, however, did remind the Michelsons of God's goodness. "Right away it was helpful to have a flood of prayers and phone calls... many of the prayers I'll never know about from people who were thinking about us on that day," he said.

Michelson's congregation was aware of

the threats to Tiller. His Wichita clinic had been bombed years earlier, and in 1993 another gunman shot him in both arms. Some members of Reformation struggled with the doctor's profession. Most "decided a long time ago that we don't come to worship on Sunday morning because we vote the same way or hold the same political beliefs. A few left, but others felt their faith was bigger than all this," said Michelson.

Some members had feared something like this could happen. "There wasn't an expressed security fear. Nobody thought we should guard the door. Even now, we don't have security; we just ask our ushers to be a little more alert.

How do you be welcoming and hospitable when you're looking sideways at somebody who is not a 'regular'?" Michelson said.

On the morning of May 31st, he and **Associate Pastor Kristin Neitzel** were preparing for the Day of Pentecost. The congregation had planned to celebrate with world music accompanied by piano, flute, cello, and a percussion ensemble. Tiller's wife, **Jeanne**, and Michelson were participating in the prelude.

Michelson said he heard what sounded like a hymnal being dropped. An usher signaled for him to come to the narthex, where he saw the other ushers administering CPR on Tiller. The police immediately locked down the church and most members were unaware of the seriousness of the incident. Pastor Neitzel continued with the service, and it wasn't until the end that the parishioners learned of Tiller's death.

Michelson and members of his congregation involved in crisis intervention immediately formed a crisis intervention team. Michelson also contacted a member of his former congregation in Iowa, a specialist with men in crisis, to work with the ushers who witnessed the shooting. The synod bishop traveled to the church and offered a "service of grieving" the night of the shooting, and representatives of the ELCA news service counseled Michelson on his response to questions from the media.

John Brooks of the ELCA helped prepare a press release and assisted

Michelson with his sermon preparation. "Even the funeral sermon we knew would be public record," said Michelson. "John's words were, 'You can turn away all the media, but what a moment for proclamation. This is a congregation held together by Jesus.'"

Many members returned to the church that first night to talk and cry and scream. "It almost felt like an exorcism," Michelson said.

Conversation about the shooting has diminished some since then, and fewer sermons mention the events of that day. The carpet in the narthex has been patched, but not replaced. Much work remains for Michelson and his colleague at Reformation.

"There are still families who haven't come back out of fear. I don't know if some have left; some are on the fence. We have to give them the space they need to process, and give them the permission to leave if they need to go," said Michelson. "There are other people who say 'enough already,' can we get back to business as usual?"

They have returned to business to some extent. Following the church-wide assembly, Reformation's members met to discuss the assembly's decision to roster openly gay and lesbian individuals. "Six or eight years ago this congregation was talking about whether George and Jeanne could be members. There has been that idea of 'bound conscience' here, whether they knew the language or not," Michelson said. His congregation already has learned to live in unity in spite of its differences, so it made the more recent discussion a little easier.

No seminary class can prepare church leaders for a tragedy such as the one that occurred at Reformation, but Michelson appreciates how the totality of his theological education informed his ministry in the wake of the shooting.

"We have a God who is faithful. I knew that before I got to Trinity, but in talking about why we study theology and everything laid out [in systematic theology], to the languages...the reality is we aren't ever going to face anything that is too big for God's steadfastness with us," Michelson said. "It was really hard to face that day and that week, but I knew that God was on that journey with me and would give me the words to speak in situations I had never

imagined in my life."

Michelson also knew the acute pain of that week would not last. "When we talk about seasons, God is with us in those seasons. That was a difficult and painful season, but in the midst of it we were able to find joy," he said.

He drew on the support and wisdom of his internship supervisor **Pastor Al Jensen** ('91), and from the **Rev. Peter Marty**, Michelson's colleague and mentor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport, Iowa, where he served a two-year pastoral residency following seminary.



(The Michelsons, from left, Tera, Naaman, Isaac, Eden, and Lowell)

The Michelsons as a family have only begun to process the events of that spring day. Lowell, **Tera** and their three children have spoken to counselors. Three-year-old **Naaman** doesn't understand, but **Eden**, 8, and **Isaac**, 6, are friends with Dr. Tiller's grandchildren.

Another five-year-old member of the congregation still asks on her way to church, "is everyone going to be shot today?"

Michelson anticipates the trial of Roeder to stir the memories and the grief of his members, just like the bells on All Saints Sunday. "Even in those finding homeostasis, it is only going to get worse when the trial starts. Roeder is saying he is not guilty, that it was justifiable homicide. He is going to fight to the end, and we know some of our folks are going to be called to the stand. Just when we think things have settled down it is going to flare back up," he said.

For now, Michelson continues with worship and proclamation and Bible studies.

"I don't think God made this happen," said Michelson. "Even out of this terrible thing, we can grow stronger and know Jesus more."

*Te Deum
Trinity Lutheran Seminary
Fall 2009 edition*

Celebrating Partnership To Share the Gospel

For the **Rev. Laura Strietelmeier**, the last worship service of her seminary internship at Salem Lutheran Church, Toledo, Ohio[^] was filled with laughter and tears.

The congregation sang a song composed just for the intern by their pastor, the **Rev. Mary Lou Baumgartner**. "She didn't miss any of my foibles," remembers Pastor Strietelmeier with a laugh.

She was also presented with a handmade scrapbook that occupies a special place in her office at Hope Lutheran Church in Toledo, where Pastor Strietelmeier accepted a call in August 2009. Bursting with photographs and loving notes from members, the scrapbook is a tangible reminder of the place where she "lived and grew and served."

Says Pastor Strietelmeier, "What an overwhelming gift to receive at the end of a year in which you have poured so much of your heart into your work and so much of other people's hearts have been poured into you."

Pastor Strietelmeier is one of a dozen interns Salem has welcomed under the leadership of Pastor Baumgartner.

Acknowledging that the congregation faces financial challenges, Pastor Baumgartner says, "What we aren't able to give in mission support we can do by making an investment in future leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)." An ELCA Horizon Internship grant funds the interns' salaries and benefits.

Both pastors note that Salem's presence in the Vistula neighborhood of Toledo is contingent upon a network of financial support from all expressions of this church.

"Salem is of absolute importance to this church," said **the Rev. Marc Miller**, assistant to the bishop and director for Evangelical Mission, ELCA Northwestern Ohio Synod. "It's

in places like Vistula where the presence of God can often be most strongly felt."

Pastor Strietelmeier says, "At Salem I learned about the value of shared partnerships helping us to proclaim the gospel. Salem wouldn't be here without the support and generosity of the ELCA and its members."

Stories of Faith in Action – ELCA

A Lamerter, a Dreamer, And Two Pretty Good Leaders



Join Pastor Doug for a January interim "Book of Faith" Bible study. At 6 p.m. on Mondays and 9:30 a.m. on Wednesdays beginning January 4 and 6 through February 8 and 10, we will gather to study four key characters from our Old Testament. The

cost of the study book is \$6. Please call the church office by Sunday, December 13, if you'd like to order the book and join one of the classes. The following is an overview of the study . . .

"In this unit of study we meet four more key characters: Rachel, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. The stories of these characters take us from the second half of the book of Genesis, through the end of the book of Deuteronomy, and into the book of Joshua. In other words, we cover a lot of ground here! Each of the people we cover in this unit has a big story – both in the sense that the stories are long and in the sense that the stories are rich. Each of the people we cover in this unit has a foreign story – both in the sense that the stories will have features that are foreign to modern readers. (such as that Rachel is part of a polygamous family system) and in the sense that each of these stories takes us outside of (or back into) the promised land. Yet each of the people we cover in this unit has a familiar story-both in the sense that many readers will know part of these stories and in the sense that

the things they struggle with are the familiar struggles of God's people in all times and places.

Rachel's story may be the least familiar of these stories to modern readers, but through her we get a clear picture of how God is present even in our lamentations, in our sadness. Joseph's story also includes great sadness. But by meeting ourselves in Joseph's story, we gain a sense that God is a knitter, picking up the dropped stitches and patching the holes in our stories.

Most of us probably think that we know Moses' story pretty well. After all, we may have seen the movie (or movies). But what you think you know isn't always accurate. And what you learn from God's Word can often be surprising. As we learn from Moses' story that God lives to free us, we might do well to keep in mind that one of the things we need to be set free from is our misconceptions (in this case, about who Moses was).

Finally, Joshua's story teaches us that life isn't so much about the big shoes that you have to fill as it is about the God who walks by your side.

May God bless you as you open Scripture and find yourself in the stories of the lamenting Rachel, the dreaming Joseph, and two pretty good leaders, Moses and Joshua

... Pastor Doug



*From the Church Staff
Pastor Doug, Larry Jones, Laura Ramsey, Maria Voljin, Dawn Isley, Keith Wilson, Tom Eaton, Scott Drehs, Steve Czapor, Danette Gunkelman*

DECEMBER, 2009



Sunday, December 6, 2009 – Second Sunday of Advent

Head Usher	9:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Dennis Miller	Dan Bemer
Lector	Jim Deily	Kip Kanya
Acolyte/Crucifer	Jerry Crowe	
Lay Assistants	Mark Ackerman	Paige Grey
	Dennis Grand	Loretta Cross
	Pat Grand	Sandra Cramer
	Judy Jacobson	Ed Kahl
	Carolyn Aquilia	Dorothy Olson
	Rose Malcolm	Diana Vegh
Wine Steward		
Welcome Center		
Nursery Attendant		
Grace Prayer Team: Loretta Cross, Marilyn Sesock		
Communion Bread: Jennifer Klemme		

Sunday, December 13, 2009 – Third Sunday of Advent

Head Usher	Don Hartwick	Ed Pabst
Assisting Minister	Joyce Tallman	John Forbes
Lector	Leslie Crowe	
Acolyte/Crucifer	Drew Boxler	Chris Panico
Children's Sermon	Adam Havel	Adam Havel
Welcome Center	Marlene Brazina	Judy Votava
Nursery Attendant	The Kolk Family	Karen Hearld
Grace Prayer Team: Marty Hof, Mary Paul		

Sunday, December 20, 2009 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Head Usher	Dave Boxler	Doug Smith
Assisting Minister	Darryl Tinay	Jill Heise
Lector	Marie Dornbrook	
Acolyte/Crucifer	Megan Desmond	Sean Klemme
Lay Assistants	Linda Engelhart	Mary Goellner
	Beverly Selong	Joan Pratt
	Joyce Tallman	Karen Hopp
	Joan Hespe	Sandra Cramer
	Ethel Horvath	Sharon Massaroni
Wine Steward		
Welcome Center		
Nursery Attendant		
Grace Prayer Team: Judy Junker, Fay Maldari		
Communion Bread: Lana Gray		

Thursday, December 24, 2009 – Christmas Eve

Head Usher	5:00 p.m.	8:00 p.m.	11:00 p.m.
Assisting Minister	Dave Boxler	Doug Smith	Don Hartwick
Lector	Marilyn Sesock	Ken Spanagel	Jim Deily
Acolyte/Crucifer	Mary Ann Filipow	Lana Gray	Judy Jacobson
Lay Assistants	Samantha Knoblock	Dyllan Sesock	TBA
		Richard Quint	Judy Junker
		Marty Hof	Lynette Ziebro
		Jill Heise	Joyce Tallman
		Dorothy Olson	Marty Hof
Wine Steward			
Welcome Center			
Communion Bread: Kathy Czapor			

Friday, December 25, 2009 – Christmas Day

Head Usher	10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Dennis Miller
Lector	Joyce Tallman
Lay Assistant	John Sesock
Wine Steward	Pastor Don Hesterman, Loretta Cross
	Marilyn Sesock

Sunday, December 27, 2009 -- First Sunday of Christmas

Head Usher	Dennis Miller	Dan Bemer
Assisting Minister	Jim Deily	Ken Spanagel
Lector	Paul Klemme	
Acolyte/Crucifer	TBA	TBA
Children's Sermon	David Worsencroft	David Worsencroft
Welcome Center	Marie Dornbrook	Doris Tuhacek
Nursery Attendant	Janet Pariano	Sue Marko
Grace Prayer Team: Leslie and Jerry Crowe		