

DiscipleShip



Things learned along the way...

Volume 31, No.5
December 2018

As Christmas draws near, I would ask you to finish this statement: The word that captures Christmas is _____!

There are numerous words that people will use to capture the essential focus of the season...Is it Love? Giving? Serving? Joy? Generosity? I would suggest that at the heart of Christmas is the word, *humble*.

"Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant and being found in human form, he humbled himself obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Philippians 2:6-8

If you want to embrace the true meaning of Christmas, it is wrapped in humbleness.

What does this look like? This is where it gets tricky. Tim Keller writes, "humility is so shy. If you begin talking about it, it leaves."

But treated with gentleness, we may be able to not spook this shy virtue into hiding as we look at the humble life of Jesus.

Humbleness is not the same as humiliation. They share the same root word - "ground" but to humiliate involves being berated or being brought down.

Humble on the other hand is the lowering of one's self in an act of servant like love. We see the lowering of Jesus throughout his life -

"conceived by the Holy Spirit"

"born of the Virgin Mary"

"suffered under Pontius Pilate"

"crucified"

"died"

"buried"

Christmas is where this journey of humbleness begins as humble Jesus descends to greatness. So, may I challenge us, no, may I invite each of us to keep Christmas this season by walking and serving in humbleness.

"In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" 1 Peter 5:5

Let us clothe ourselves each day in humbleness - willing to lower ourselves through acts of servanthood toward one another.

May you have a humble and Merry Christmas,

Pastor Barry



Luke 2:1-7 *"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."*

Mark Wilt's Retirement

We were privileged to honor our retiring principal on Sunday, October 28th. Mark Wilt served St. Luke Lutheran School as principal for 38 years and as teacher for 39 years. There were over 300 people who came to help celebrate. Former students came from as far away as Florida, Tennessee, and Colorado. Many people worked tirelessly to host this event, from the planners, the decorators, the speakers, the countless hours spent on videos, the beautiful music, the unsung heroes who blessed us with amazing food and the clean-up crew after the gala.

Mark and his wife Cindy were married in 1977 and came to St. Luke from Westwood, New Jersey in 1979. Mark taught the 5th and 6th grade his first year. He accepted the challenge to become principal the next year and was the first to mention Pastor Barry when the call went out for a new pastor. They became a remarkable duo. Many people know that Mark's favorite hobbies are hunting and fishing, he loves Elvis Presley, doesn't drink anything hot, grew up with dogs, and especially loves beagles and dachshunds, but those who know him best were able to shed some new light on Mark. A common theme was that Mark is a man of few words, but a man with a humble spirit. He never likes to be the center of attention and often helps others without fanfare, but with a sincere desire to serve God through works.

Mark has always been dedicated to the staff and students. He never shied away from hard work and was often the last



person to leave for the day. It is almost impossible to calculate the number of coats of wax Mark applied to the St. Luke floors throughout the years.

Mark has often been deemed a thrifty guy. He would look at something and decide that it could be fixed with duct tape, rather than buy something new. He accepted challenges from students, even when it meant kissing a pig or taking a pie in the face after students exceeded a goal to raise money for charity. Mark also kept the Hostess company in good standing with his habit of eating a Twinkie every day for his mid-morning snack.

Mark and Cindy have two sons, Paul and Peter, one daughter-in-law Paige, and one energetic grandson, Ryan. Paul and Peter gave us a sons' insight into Mark, their father Sunday night. They honored Mark with their heartfelt and funny stories.

Mark was truly a many of many hats during his tenure here at St. Luke. He impacted the lives of thousands of students and their families. His legacy will remain in his family and his passion for serving others. Mark and Cindy look forward to retirement in 2019. They will be greatly missed and we wish them the best in this new adventure in life.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6 ESV

CHRISTMAS AND ADVENT CALENDAR		
December 4	3rd - 5th grade Christmas Service	10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
December 5	Advent Service	10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. at Faith
December 11	K - 2nd grade Christmas Service	7:00 p.m.
December 12	Advent Service	10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. at Faith
December 18	6th - 8th grade Christmas Program	7:00 p.m.
December 19	Pre-K Christmas Program	9:30 a.m.
December 19	Advent Service	10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. at Faith
December 21	PTL Dinner	11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
December 23	Sunday Worship	9:00 - Faith
December 23	Sunday Worship	9:30 - St. Luke Sanctuary
December 23	Sunday Worship	10:45 - New Life
December 23	Christmas Eve Eve Worship	6:00 p.m. - St. Luke Sanctuary
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	3:00 p.m. - St. Luke Sanctuary
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	5:00 p.m. - New Life - Family oriented
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	5:00 p.m. - St. Luke Sanctuary
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	7:00 p.m. - St. Luke Sanctuary
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	7:00 p.m. - Faith
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship	11:00 p.m. - St. Luke Sanctuary *
December 25	Christmas Day Worship	10:00 a.m. - Faith *
		*with communion

2019 Spring Calendar



JANUARY

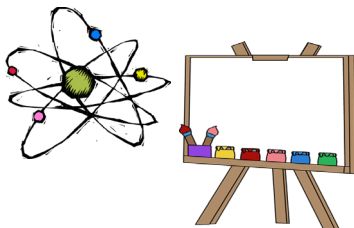
January 27 - February 2
Lutheran Schools Week



FEBRUARY

February 1
11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Talent Show

February 5, 12, 19, 26
Open House - Registration



MARCH

March 1

PTL Family Game Night

March 4

Read Across America Day

March 6

Ash Wednesday Chapel

March 15

Art and Science Fair

March 26

1st - 6th grade Spring Program

School News

THANKS FOR THE BRAVE



27 Veterans were honored at a Thanksgiving-style meal where 50 volunteers helped to set up, cook, serve, clean up, make cards and visit with the military men and women. We give thanks for their service.



Excited St. Luke students packed 200 shoe boxes with school supplies, toys and more for Operation Christmas Child on November 14th. The shoe-boxes will be shipped internationally to children in impoverished areas.



AMBROSE FARM SERVICE PROJECT



Eleven 8th graders, Mrs. Carney, Mr. Wilt, and Don Venturini went to Ambrose Farms on September 28th to pick vegetables. The produce went to the Salvation Army and Katie's Kitchen. What a blessing to be able to serve those in need.

BUNDLE UP BUTLER

St. Luke school students teamed up with the congregation to donate new and gently used winter clothing to project Bundle Up Butler. What a great way to help our neighbors stay warm this winter.



Servant Day

On Saturday, September 15, 285 people from St. Luke, Faith, Concordia, and the surrounding areas, came together to serve our neighbors and people around the world.

People served in many different ways. There were countless hours of preparation and planning by Brenda Fett and the Mission Board. Supplies were ordered weeks in advance and lumber was sorted and cut by volunteers the day before the event. We also had a special group of volunteers who provided child care so that parents could participate in the Servant Day activities.

There was activity going on in the church building as well as the parking lot.

With a lot of help and a spirit of cooperation, we were able to serve the Lord by:

- 185 walls framed in 3 hours
- 31 blankets made for Ronald McDonald House
- 150 Bibles marked for Light of Life Ministries
- 12 Infant blankets started for area hospitals
- 625 Greeting cards made for the military
- 573 Dry soup mixes packed for area food banks
- 18 Sundresses made for girls throughout the world.

Volunteers came on Sunday to load the framed walls onto a truck bound for Oklahoma.

Hebrews 13:16, *"and do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."*

Servant Day/House Build



House Build

The 185 framed walls that were built in the St. Luke parking lot, left on Sunday, September 16th and arrived in Durant, Oklahoma on Tuesday, September 18th. They will be used in a dormitory style house. It is slated for completion sometime in early 2019. It will become a home for 18 - 23 year old girls who have aged out of foster care. Foster care stops at age 18 and many young people become homeless after leaving the system.

We partner with a J127 Ministry that takes in these teenagers leaving foster care and teaches them practical life skills, while continuing their education. They have mandatory classes to attend as well as community volunteering requirements.

The building will be a place where girls can live and learn before embarking on their own.

It is humbling to think of the ways that God has used St. Luke to impact the lives of others in ways we may never know about.

Matthew 25:40, *"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"*

Ministry Updates

Reaching the Unclaimed, Lost Sheep in Our Community

Greetings in Christ!

Did you know that there are over 183,000 people that live in Butler County? Of those people, did you know that there are over 74,000 people who are "Unclaimed" (that is, they don't belong to any church, denomination, or religion)? That's 41% of the population in Butler County (2% more than Allegheny County!) that don't have any church to call home! That means, whether at school, work, or even when you drive by someone on PA 356, for every 3 people you see, one of them is a lost sheep! (That should be a statistic for Obesity and Heart Disease, not for the Church!)

You might be thinking, "Well, the church needs to start doing some mission and outreach!" And, you are correct! However, within Butler County's 74,000 "Unclaimed," there are only 3 Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod churches (totalling 1,205 confirmed members). While we might be more rural than city or suburban, if each of those LCMS churches is to do their part in mission and outreach to the county, each member must reach at least 151 lost sheep to bring them into the flock! You read that correctly: One hundred and fifty one lost sheep. That's Crazy!

Now, before you start asking for the phone numbers and addresses of 151 people so that you can start making calls or visits, understand that such a task is quite the challenge, even for me! So, don't get down over those numbers. That's where I come in!

Part of my Pastoral Call to Faith and St. Luke is to help develop mission in the area -- in fact they gave me a pretty fancy title to describe exactly that: Mission Developer. Pretty cool, huh?

As Mission Developer, my goal is to find ways our church can partner with or create impressionable ministries in the area that will speak the Gospel and reach the lost. Our churches, alone, would be greatly challenged to reach all 74,000 "Unclaimed." But, with the help of other faithful organizations and ministries in the surrounding area, the task becomes much more manageable! Then, it won't just be three churches trying to reach the lost, but, eventually (God willing), it will be the whole area ministering to the "Unclaimed," lost sheep in Butler County.



May God bless our efforts to "*proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" Amen. 1 Peter 2:9

If you would like to share any ideas or if you have any insights about mission in the area, please contact me at the St. Luke Church office at 724-352-2777 or the Faith Lutheran Church office at 724-285-5893. Thank you and God bless.

Pastor Gandy
agandy@stlukecabot.org



CHRISMONS



The Cross Pattee is a stylized Greek cross. The 4 scrolls at the corners represent the 4 gospels. Each scroll is embossed: a winged man for Matthew; a winged lion for Mark; a winged ox for Luke; and an eagle for John. Wings suggest the divine inspiration of the 4 gospel accounts.



This is a common symbol for the Holy Trinity. One God in three persons. Each is eternal, without beginning or end. All are one.



This Christmon is called "The Son of Righteousness." The orb amid the rays of glory. In the center of the orb, the Greek letters X (Chi) is overlaid with the P (Rho). They are the first 2 letters in the Greek word for Christ. This symbol was used extensively in the early church to identify Christians because the cross was too dangerous in times of persecution.



This is the Roman cross with the Alpha and the Omega, indicating the beginning and the end, suspended from the arms of the cross. They are all within a circle of beads. It is a symbol for eternity.

St. Luke Christmas



St. Luke Sanctuary - Christmas

The tradition of putting lights on Christmas trees symbolizes Christ as the light of the world. Legend has it that Martin Luther was walking towards his home one winter evening and was struck by the beauty of the stars shining through the evergreens. He brought a tree home and wired its branches with lighted candles to re-create the beauty he found in the woods that evening.

The ladies of St. Luke spent countless hours lovingly making over 300 cross stitched Christmons that currently decorate our trees. There are 22 different designs and 60 Christmon ornaments, which were first designed and made by Mrs. Francis Kipps Spencer in 1957 at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia. She was inspired by the theological symbols that have been used to tell the story of Christ throughout the ages.



New Life Service

John 1:14 *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Spring Bible Studies

SUNDAYS 9:15 a.m.

WEEKDAYS

JOINT BIBLE STUDY Led by the Pastors in the Church Transept

YOUR VOICE Meets the 1st Monday of each month from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. in the Bridal Room

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH BIBLE STUDY Led by Vicar Brian in the Discipleship Room

THURSDAY WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY Meets from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

LIFE'S HEALING CHOICES A Christ-Centered Small Group Recovery Program

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY Led by Ken Kupec in the Library



Our Congregational Journey, "Who am I, What am I doing here?" concluded the week of November 11th. Karen Driscoll, who along with Mark Wilt developed and coordinated the small groups, said she was grateful for the Spirit of God working in people's hearts in such a way that over 200 people met every week for six weeks at 16 locations. People were able to share in Christian fellowship, bible study, and prayer. Many felt their spiritual walk growing throughout this journey, learning who they are and that their purpose here is grounded in the Creation. The leaders of each of these groups encouraged the participants to attend the weekly Advent services in December. The Advent schedule can be found on page 2 of this newsletter.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS



New tax law changes that take effect for the 2018 tax year may impact you. Many people who were previously able to claim a deduction for their charitable contributions will be affected. If you are 70 1/2 years old or older and have Traditional and/or Inherited IRAs, you can donate any amount of money up to \$100,000 per year directly to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with no federal income tax consequences. These donations are not included in your Adjusted Gross Income, so this can lower your income and possibly decrease the tax you pay on your Social

Security income. This could also have a positive effect on your deductions, exemptions, and tax credits. If you should decide to implement this strategy, your financial institution will need to make the check payable directly from your IRA to a qualifying charity. You will receive a 1099-R for your tax preparation. Prayerfully consider this strategy to determine if it is something that you are being called to do.

The financial information in this article has been provided by Bennett Associates Wealth Management.

St. Luke Lutheran Church & School

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*St. Luke Evangelical
Lutheran Church*

*A community of believers
worshipping and proclaiming
the Good News of
salvation for over 170 years*

"By the power of Christ, we carry the power of hope to the poor, the broken, and the outcast."