

FAITH MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

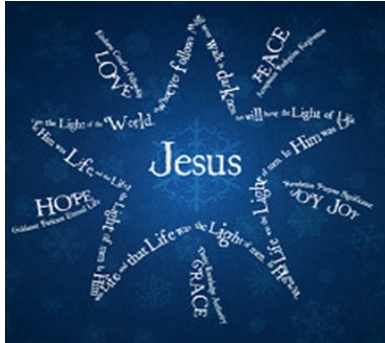
753 N. CALUMET AVE.

VALPARAISO, IN 46383

(219) 462-7684

WWW.FAITHMEMORIAL.NET

Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing within and throughout our community



Luke 2:16-20 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Christmas packages had been stacking up under the family Christmas tree for over a month now, obscuring even the lowest branches. When Christmas came, the family tore into these packages with great excitement. A new blender for mom, a phone for the teenager, an iPad for the 3 year old, these were just a few of the treasured gifts. However, the highlight of the evening came when the pile of gifts reached the bottom. Moving aside some of the discarded wrapping paper and picking up one of the last remaining presents, they finally uncovered the buried nativity scene that the family had placed under the tree that year. It was then that the youngest child let out her excited squeal, "look Mom, we found Jesus!"

Have you ever wondered: what if Jesus had gotten buried under everything else that first Christmas? What if Mary had gotten so caught up in all the preparations of being a new mom that she had failed to treasure what was really going on? What if Joseph had decided his brand new son needed a big stack of presents to celebrate his arrival, and had missed the whole thing because he was stuck in traffic? What if the Shepherds didn't want to give up their time or risk their job or their Christmas bonus to go off looking for some Baby in a manger? What if the Wisemen got so caught up in worshipping the beauty of all the wonderful twinkling lights in the sky that they failed to follow the most important one? Fortunately, this was not the case.

Those who were there to meet the Christ Child knew the real Star of the season. Family and friends gathered, gifts were given, and there was even one blazing Christmas light to brighten the various festivities. Yet, at the heart of it all was Jesus. God had come in the flesh to save and move, in ways that would have a profound effect on us all.

It would be easy for us to start to bury the Star of Christmas under all the other things we have going on during the holidays. However, I pray that like those that first Christmas, we would focus our attention on who and what matters most. In addition to attending worship, and regular Christmas devotions, here are just a few other ideas to help remind us of who is the Star of it all and what really matters.

Find a prominent place for Jesus in your Christmas decorations that reminds you and others to focus on who is really the star and what matters most this Christmas season.

Set a place for Jesus at your holiday table.

Pray about the gifts you are giving that they shine the light of Christ on their recipient.

Pray before and/or after you open your gifts to give thanks for the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. Then be sure to also thank God for your families, friends, and whatever other blessings, great or small, that God has put before you. Ask Christ to be at the center of your families and your use of the gifts you have been given.

Whatever ways you find to help you renew your focus on the Star of Christmas this year, I pray that all of our days will be filled with the joy and the light of Christ, and that we will each find new ways to let the Star of Christmas shine in us and through us, to others this holiday season.

In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schoeck

SUNDAY SCHOOL AT FAITH MEMORIAL

Waiting...Faith's Sunday School children are doing a lot more than waiting! They are practicing to help lead the congregation in worship during the yearly Children's Advent Program on Sunday, December 13 at 9:00am. The theme of the program, which was written by Deb Porter is "What are you Waiting for?" We hope you will join us to hear what we are waiting for!

The Sunday School classes meet weekly, from 9:30-10:30am. Students gather together in the "puppet room" for an opening presentation and singing, then they participate in activities and lessons. We currently offer three classes.

The "Mommy and Me" class is a time for parents to experience faith exploration with their toddlers. This class is overseen by Jackie Allwardt and includes Dean Gengnagel, Laura Allwardt, Daisy Fryman, Mackenzie Brandt, Aires Kimes and Liam West.

The "Elementary Group" is taught by Sherri Nord, with students Ryan Gengnagel, Adison Foss, Lucy Fryman, Dayla Fryman, Sam Kimes and Payton Marton.

The Jr. High/School Class includes Melodie and August Nord and is led by Bruce Lindner.

Upcoming Sunday School Schedule:

Sunday School will meet for the next three weeks—spending part of the hour preparing for the program.

Dec. 13: Childrens' Advent Service

Dec. 20—Opening puppet show and VeggieTales movie

Dec. 27 - no classes

Jan. 3- regular classes resume.

Coming Soon: **Childrens' Activity Bags**. We are stocking bags for the ushers to share with children during the worship services. The bags will include Bible storybooks, finger puppets, pencils, paper, crayons and seasonal coloring sheets. We will need a "bagger" or two to regularly check the bags and restock them as necessary. Please speak to Jackie Allwardt or Sherri Nord if you are interested in helping with this.

Other Sunday School needs include donations of weekly snacks (granola bars, raisins, crackers and cheese, gluten free, peanut free) and teachers to assist with the classes and/or teach for a season.



THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHILDRENS' CHRISTMAS SERVICE

On Sunday, December 13, the children of Faith Memorial will present their annual Christmas Service during Sunday worship at 9:00am.

Immediately following, we will begin our celebration of the Advent Season by decorating the church with evergreen boughs, putting up Christmas trees and getting into the spirit of the holidays.

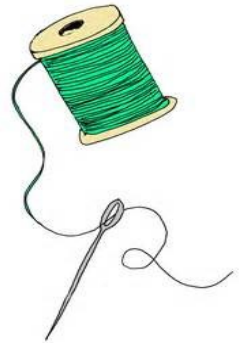
Please join us for this time of celebration and fellowship as we prepare for the joyous season of Christmas.

SEWING SEEDS OF LOVE

Sewing Seeds of Love is a new ministry at Faith Memorial. A group of women, under the guidance of Donna Cawby, are sewing items to share with God's people.

First, we started with pillowcases, which were distributed to families at the Caring Place. Prayer shawls have been knitted and crocheted

and these will be given to cancer patients and others with extended illness to let them know we are praying for them during their treatments.



We are now sewing dresses for Africa and aprons for the elderly in nursing homes. If you know of someone that might have a need for one of these items, please contact Donna Cawby. If you would like to join us for fellowship and some sewing, bring a friend and come on the 2nd and/or 4th Thursday of the month at 9:00am at church. There is always something to cut out, iron, or sew!

THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.'"

Most of us have probably experienced the following: the homework assignment or paper is placed in our hands. The work that was so meticulously prepared is now decorated with red marks. We wonder why there isn't another color circling the items that we did correctly, but only the mistakes are highlighted.

The time for a work review has arrived. Our supervisor may begin with a short compliment, but the conversation quickly turns to the things we could do better or have done wrong.

Or maybe it is just a conversation with a family member. Just once we would like to hear that the work was done well, instead of how the other person would have completed the task.

The majority of us know that we are not perfect. We know what it means to do something wrong, to break the law, or to ignore a commandment. Many of us live under a dark cloud of never measuring up to the standards of the world. Many of us wonder if there is ever any grace.

If there was any time in the history of the world that God would have had the right to tell us that we have failed, it was at the birth of Jesus. God had to completely rearrange the plans for creation after the sin of Adam and Eve – after our sin. God could have appeared in the heavens that Christmas night. God could have said that because we are failures, because we have sinned and don't stop, Jesus was going to have to die a horrible death in order to make things right. God could have disowned us and refused to help.

Instead, an angel comes to a group of shepherds. And the first words are not condemnation or law, but words of grace, "Fear not." And then, it is good news, not a reminder of failures and failings. It is good news of a Savior who will make things right. The entire message from the angel and the heavenly hosts is grace filled. There is no law, but only grace.

For those of us who live under that dark cloud, for those of us whose life seems to be filled with only red marks, read again those words from the angel. A Savior has been born for you and me. God did not disown us. God willingly and lovingly rearranged the plans and sent Jesus.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"



GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS

When you are grieving a loved one's death, the holiday season can be especially painful.

A GriefShare *Surviving the Holidays* seminar helps participants discover how to deal with emotions;

what to do about traditions; helpful tips for surviving social events; and how to find hope for the future.

The seminar will include a video and time for sharing. Each participant will receive a book titled "Holiday Survival Guide" that includes more advice and help for the holidays.

Faith Memorial will host two of these seminars:

Sunday, November 29 from 2-4pm and

Thursday, December 10 from 6:30-8:30pm.

If you would like to attend one of these seminars, or know someone who would benefit from them please RSVP to (219) 462-7684. Cost is \$5 per person.

WEDNESDAYS IN ADVENT—ADVENT SUPPERS FOLLOWED BY EVENING PRAYER.

DECEMBER 2, 9, 16. SUPPERS BEGIN AT 6:00PM WITH CHURCH SERVICE FOLLOWING AT 7:00PM.

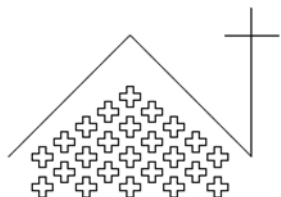
WARM A HOME

The Care Committee has arranged for a way to help families with financial needs during the month of December. We will accomplish this by working with First Contact, a non-profit organization in Porter County. Their objective is to raise funds to help qualified applicants pay for their heat and rent obligations during the Christmas season. The fundraiser is called "Warm a Home". How does it work? First Contact will place a tree in the narthex, decorated with houses and envelopes, on December 2. Members are invited to take an envelope, make a donation to First Contact and put the envelope in the offering plate. These contributions will help families in our area with basic necessities this Christmas season. Please consider making a donation to First Contact in December.

Faith Memorial
Lutheran Church

753 N. Calumet Ave.
Valparaiso, IN 46383

Email:
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AND DON'T FORGET...

FMLC LADIES CHRISTMAS
LUNCH, WEDNESDAY,
DEC. 2, 11:30 AT DISH.

CHOIR REHEARSALS:
WEDNESDAYS, DEC. 2, 9,
16 AT 7:45PM AND WED.
DEC. 23 AT 7:00PM.

WE WILL MISS YOU!

In November, with much regret, we said good-bye to two families of Faith Memorial. Jerry and Cindy Splitgerber embarked on a new chapter in their lives and moved from the Valparaiso area to Arizona, and Melinda Kersten has moved to North Dakota.. They will all be sorely missed. Cindy and Jerry left a good-bye letter addressed to the FMLC congregation. Regretfully, due to busy Christmas-season news, there is no room to publish it in this newsletter, but it is in the Narthex, along with their new address. We wish Cindy, Jerry and Melinda love and all the best in their new homes.

FAITH MEMORIAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The First Wednesday in Advent, December 2, 7:00pm, Evening Prayer
The Second Sunday in Advent, December 6, 9:00am, Holy Communion
The Second Wednesday in Advent, December 9, 7:00pm, Evening Prayer
The Third Sunday in Advent, December 13, Children's Service, 9:00am
The Third Wednesday in Advent, December 16, 7:00pm, Evening Prayer
The Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 20, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord, Thurs., Dec. 24, 7:00pm Service of Lessons & Carols
The Nativity of Our Lord, Friday, December 25, 9:30am Holy Communion
St. John, Apostle, Evangelist, Sunday, December 27, 9:00 Holy Communion

