

The Bell

February, 2017

The season of Epiphany lasts all the way through until we begin our Lenten season. It is the season of light. Epiphany celebrates the Magi following the star to Bethlehem. We follow in their footsteps seeking the Christ Child, seeking a deeper connection with God, and seeking that something which seems to be missing - each of us in a different place, physically, and spiritually.

It is always amazing to me how God works in our lives. It often is that when we are in trouble, in despair, lonely, or sick that the most amazing things happen.

I was listening to another such amazing story on the radio the other day. You can listen to it by going to thestory.org. It is about a couple near Boston and of their love story for the ages. Tom was a Hungarian Jew living in Budapest during the rise of Nazi power. Jutta was a young German girl in Berlin who was the daughter of one of Hitler's officers. But they found each other and found long-lasting happiness.

Tom and Jutta Gerendas talk to Dick Gordon about their distinctly different childhoods during World War II and how their lives eventually intertwined. What is even more amazing than the fact that Tom was a Jew in Poland, and Jutta a daughter of a Nazi officer in Germany and that somehow they met in Canada fell in love and married, is that along the way they became Christian. It wasn't so much the doctrine of Christianity but the love and care shown by Christians they met, **and their lives were changed because of it.**

When I hear stories like Tom and Jutta's or I hear stories from friends. I am still amazed that these changes in people's lives happen as they do. It happens in our midst all the time. We may not always hear them because they are a little personal to share. I am sure you have heard stories similar to that of Tom and Jutta. I could tell the story of how I met and married Linda, or the sign and reminders given to me that God was right there with me when my parents moved to Europe and I stayed behind, in my loneliness in college, of guidance received in working with the fledgling Center for Public Ministry in Dubuque Iowa.

I am sure you have stories to tell as well. In that time two things are often learned. Kathleen Norris in her book *Amazing Grace* explains, First of all, that it is God who is seeking me, and who has myriad ways of finding me. Second, that my most substantial changes, in terms of religious conversion, came through other people.

Even when I am convinced that God is absent from my life, others have a way of suddenly revealing God's presence. In these long cold days of winter, I encourage you to be open to the light of the Christ Child coming to you, be open to the myriad ways that God seeks us out and gives us to each other.

In Christ,

Pastor Karel

FPC SCHEDULES CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The annual Congregational Meeting will be held after service on Sunday, February 5. During this meeting we will review the happenings of 2016. The 2017 budget will be presented along with the church's annual reports from our teams.

The Pastoral Terms of Call for the coming year will be discussed and voted upon.

The final items of business will be dismissing the 2016 Nominating Committee and electing the new committee for 2017.

As in recent years, the 2017 Annual Report will not be mailed but will be distributed before the annual meeting. It will also be available in the office the week before the meeting.

MORE ON THE ADVENT BANNER

During the service on Epiphany, Pastor Karel explained the significance of the colorful banner which has been on display on the Chancel through Advent. What he didn't tell us was where the banner came from.

Jean Peissig made the whole thing.

She used a booklet about the banner as a guide but she bought all the materials and crafted the banner.

The banner may be stored away for now but you can expect to see it again. It's far too pretty to keep under wraps.

How fortunate we are to have talented ladies like Jean to help our ministry in so many ways

THE COLORS OF THE RAINBOW (ALMOST)

Throughout Advent, the sanctuary was adorned with purple which is the liturgical color of the season, but that changed with the new year.

On Christmas Eve through Epiphany (which this year was celebrated in the church on January 8) we changed to white. But since we installed new officers on Epiphany, we used red which is the color of ordination and installation.

After Epiphany, we reverted to green, the color of growth and ordinary time. But on the last Sunday of February, which is Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday, we go back to white. And there will be more changes as we move into Lent.

FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

SUMMITTED BY BARBARA SHORREL, TREASURER

New Year's Resolutions

Where has our first month of 2017 gone? What have you been doing to accomplish those new year's resolutions? Have you made a plan? Does your plan include God?

Our Session is working diligently to set goals for 2017. I hope that we all will do what we can to achieve these goals.

The Finance Team will continue to keep you informed throughout the year of our financial health.

One thing that we all must do is to pray for God's help. In Matthew 7:7 we read, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find..." Let us remember to include God in our decision-making.

ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report will soon be out. Please be sure to take the time to read it. It is a struggle for the writers to try to give as much information as possible without it becoming too detailed. However, the annual report is not just for the present. It is also a history to be read from the future. For that reason, I feel that much information should be included.

When writing an annual report, it gives the writer a chance to look back and see what has been accomplished, and then maybe, what has not. I hope that you may glean some idea of what we did in 2016. If you don't see something in the annual report that you feel should be there, please be sure to speak up.

Session has asked that I discuss in more detail our mission giving and the scrip card program at the annual meeting. As always, if you have any questions regarding the financial side of our church's operation, ask.

PER CAPITA

This year's per capita is \$30 for each confirmed member of our congregation. This year we will pay a total of \$4110 to cover the administrative costs of our denomination. Please write "per capita" on the memo line of your check.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

I did not order offering envelopes this year. If you feel that you would like them, please let me know.

CONFIRMATION CLASS PLANS WORKING TRIP

The 2017 Confirmation Class will go to Clear Water Forest in May as part of their preparation to join the church.

At this point six class members will be going but there is room for seven more. In addition to the young people, adults will be on the trip to act as chaperones.

The group will leave on a Friday night and return Monday afternoon which will give them the entire weekend to clean up the camp and participate in special activities.

Our collection on Noisy Sunday, January 29, will help support this effort but additional money is needed to defray costs.

Watch the Bell for more information as the date approaches.

SESSION/DEACONS SLATE ANNUAL RETREAT

February 11 will find members of Session and Deacons at the Cook-Rutledge Mansion for their annual retreat. The purpose of this year's meeting will be to finalize priorities for the coming year.

You can expect to hear much more about the meeting and its outcome later this month.

BEST WISHES

Congratulations and best wishes go to those having birthdays or anniversaries in February.

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| February 1 | Bonnie and Doug Gullickson and Margi Namejunas |
| February 6 | Julie Johnson |
| February 7 | Beth Cripe |
| February 10 | Esther Frazier |
| February 11 | Amelia Reemtsma |
| February 12 | Barbara Hedrington |
| February 14 | Julie and Eric Haglund |
| February 15 | Sonia Anderson |
| February 16 | Patricia Gutknecht |
| February 19 | Catherine and James Drace and Nathan Fleming |
| February 20 | Avory Anderson |
| February 22 | Jackie Reich, Zander Whalen |
| February 23 | Barbara Meredith |
| February 25 | John Jensen |

TINY HOUSE PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

As you may have seen in the January 17 issue of the Leader-Telegram, the Tiny House Project is moving right along.

Several churches including Trinity United Methodist have elected to have one or more houses on their premises and there are plans in the works to purchase a lot to have a tiny house village complete with a facility which would include showers, restrooms and possibly apartments for those people who would qualify for that assistance.

But the job is far from complete.

The Tiny House Project needs help in the form of people to help build the houses, trailers to put the houses on, money to buy supplies as well as articles with which to outfit the homes. They are particularly in need of:

Small refrigerator, Microwave, Pail, Broom and dustpan, Small alarm clock, Flashlight, 10" high plastic totes, Plates, cereal bowls, glasses, cups, silverware, Microwave containers, Can opener, 4-6 cup coffee maker, Slow cooker, Double bed sheets, Collapsible clothes hamper

If you have any of these articles to donate or are willing to help, please contact Anne Welke.

MARY JO REEMTSMA SHARES HER LIFE EXPERIENCES

Editor's Note: In December we welcomed Mary Jo Reemtsma as the latest member of our church. Here's some interesting information about her.

Mary Jo was born in Iowa where she worked after attending Dubuque Beauty Academy. During her marriage to Milt, which took place in 1966, the family lived in Illinois, Indiana and Iowa before moving to Wisconsin.

Mary Jo and Milt had three children, Ryan (who with his wife, Sara, and daughter, Amelia, are regular faces at FPC), Todd who lives in St. Paul and Kim who lives in New York.

Mary Jo grew up as a member of Salem Lutheran Church before joining St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Wausau.

She worked in a variety of jobs in Marathon, Wausau and Eau Claire.

Mary Jo was widowed in 2015.