

I Will Do More

We began a new year in the church's life before November's end when, on November 29th, we observed the First Sunday of Advent. But at the time you read this, we'll be on the cusp of a new year in the world. I don't know whether, this year, television news crews will be stationed around the world to show us the glamour and glitz of the New Year's celebrations in Moscow and Majorca, London and Lisbon, Helsinki and Hanoi, and frankly, I don't really care . . . I'm usually in bed, fast asleep, when the big ball drops in Times Square!

Nonetheless, the dawn of a new year is, for many folk, an opportunity to make a new beginning. How many of you will be making "New Year's Resolutions" . . . you know what I mean . . . maybe to lose a few of those extra pounds . . . ? But have you ever noticed how much the subject and the object of such New Year's resolutions as that are both . . . ME! Like so much of our lives, our New Year's resolutions end up being all about "me!"

This year, maybe it's time . . . maybe we should take a chance and think *outside* the box, or color outside the lines! Can we . . . dare we . . . focus our resolutions on someone other than ourselves?

Some time ago – actually, it was quite a long while ago! – I stumbled on the following inspirational little maxims. Some have attributed these words to William Arthur Ward (1921-1994), who was an oft-cited contributor of such verse as this to *The Readers' Digest*. As far as I know, however, the person who wrote these words is utterly anonymous; but whoever they were and whenever they wrote, these words have a timeless air about them. But they also carry a challenge within them, for, though each little verset begins with the word **I**, it is the direction of the verbs that speaks volumes. And so, as a new year dawns, let our resolutions take on such character as:

I will do more than belong; I will participate.

I will do more than care; I will help.

**I will do more than believe; I will put faith into
practice.**

I will do more than be fair; I will be kind.

I will do more than forgive; I will love.

I will do more than earn; I will enrich.

I will do more than teach; I will serve.

I will do more than live; I will grow.

I will do more than be friendly; I will be a friend.

As we enter this new year . . . the year 2010 . . . I'm guessing that not a one of us is hoping for a repeat performance of 2009! Know, then, that I pray for you and yours a year

richly blessed with good health and great joy . . . lived in, with, and under . . . God's amazing grace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pastor Carr

Preaching Matters

On the outside, January brings the beginning of the harshest part of winter: the days are short; the nights are long; the winds are cold; and the snow is deep. Come January, light and warmth seem as a distant dream.

But here, on the inside, in the community of faith called together by God, we sing the praises of the Light . . . and we mark and celebrate the *increase* of the Light . . . the Light of Christ that was kindled as such a little light on Christmas . . . the Light that is revealed to the nations on the Feast of Epiphany. Here, on the inside, we are walking in that Light . . . that increasing Light, until, at the end of the Epiphanytide, the glory of the Light shines brightly on the mountaintop of Transfiguration.

The Sundays of January offer us the following scripture lessons as guide for our worship and preaching as the Son of Righteousness rises and gives life and light to the world:

Sunday, January 3rd: The Second Sunday of Christmas¹

Jeremiah 31:7-14, or, Sirach 24:1-12²; Psalm 147:12-20, or, Wisdom 10:15-21²;
Ephesians 1:3-14; and, St. John 1:[1-9]10-18

Sunday, January 3rd: The Epiphany of Our Lord¹

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:11-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; and, St. Matthew 2:1-12

Sunday, January 10th: The Baptism of our Lord

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17; and, St. Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Sunday, January 17th: The Second Sunday after the Epiphany/Sunday 2

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36: 5-10; 1st Corinthians 12:1-11; and, St. John 2:1-11

Sunday, January 24th: The Third Sunday after the Epiphany/Sunday 3

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19; 1st Corinthians 12:12-31a; and, St. Luke 4:14-21

Sunday, January 31st: The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany/Sunday 4

Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; 1st Corinthians 13:1-13; and, St. Luke 4:21-30

¹The lectionary generally appoints this day as the Second Sunday after Christmas; but annually, we are given the gracious option of moving our observance of the Epiphany of our Lord to this second Sunday following Christmas.

²Sirach and Wisdom are two of the between-the-testaments books that were not included in the original *canon*, or commonly-accepted content of the Old Testament. These two books were, however, included in the translation of the Old Testament known as the *Septuagint*, a translation into Greek prepared for the

Jews who were scattered throughout the Greek-speaking world. The Septuagint was the basis for the translation of the Old Testament into Latin, the language used for centuries in the Roman Church. While few of us Lutherans, or any other "Protestants" for that matter, grew up carrying Bibles with these books included, they are very useful for understanding the expectations of the Jews for Messiah. That makes them a rich treasure trove to be mined by us as we learn to live and walk the life of faith until Jesus, our Messiah and Lord, comes again.

Thank You!

On Christmas Eve night we sang:

"Love has come – a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love!
Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love!
Glory to God on high!"

Your generous Christmas gifts to us who serve you are sign and symbol of your love for us, and reminders of God's great love which came down in flesh at Christmas. And so, we thank you, and sing:

"Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love!
Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love!
Praise to you, God on high!"

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Pastor Carr and the Church Staff

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS of December 15, 2009

Learning Shepherd, Linda Bozgan, stated that she is sending out invitations to Building Blocks families who have no church home. These invitations tell of our Christmas services and inviting them to attend. She is looking at a fund raiser for the Teens with regard to Super Bowl Sunday. The Sunday School Christmas Program will be presented on Sunday, December 20, at 11:30 a.m. with a lunch to follow.

Walt Smith, Worship Shepherd, reported that the committee set up for Christmas decorations is working well.

Doug MacKenzie, Treasurer, reported that November income was quite good. Income exceeded expenses by a little over \$6,000.

Our annual congregation meeting will be held on January 24, 2010, following service with a light lunch to be served. Elections will be held that day. The 2010 budget will also be voted on that day.

The next Council meeting is January 12, 2010, at 7:30 p.m.

Thank you!

- ~ Al Peterson & Bill Otto for painting the Building Blocks sign & installing it
- ~ Bill & Hank Otto for putting up the lights in the Parish Hall
- ~ Parish Life, the MacKenzie family & WELCA for providing dinners for us on our Advent Wednesday gatherings
- ~ All those who helped decorate for the season on December 19
- ~ Ralph Paschke & Dave Cunningham for vastly improving the balcony light situation
- ~ Dave Thomas for de-leafing the gutters & releasing 10 inches of standing water
- ~ All the gentlemen who helped set up and take down tables for "Advent by Candlelight"
- ~ To the anonymous person(s) who sent the card to Beth at her home (she feels blessed to work for the family of Faith)
- ~ Valparaiso University Nut, Dried Fruit & Trail Mix Sale:
 - Bill & Margaret Kohn wish to thank everyone who purchased these products from us during our annual Valpo Guild Fundraiser.
 - The money raised is used to fund the Guild Campus Gift Grants, such as those listed:
 - ~ new sound equipment for the Chapel's Celebrate! Service
 - ~ costs related to the Education Department's service learning experience in Nicaragua
 - ~ refurbishment of Chapel handbells
 - ~ installation of wireless access in Miller Hall

~ expenses needed to support Engineers Without Borders; Tanzania water project

~ a new welcome desk for Kretzmann Hall

Valparaiso University, known as VALPO, is a Lutheran University located in northern Indiana just 50 miles east of Chicago and 235 miles from Livonia. For more information go to www.valpo.edu or ask Bill or Margaret. Thank you!

January, 2010

2010 Elections: at our annual meeting on Sunday, January 24 right after service, we will hold elections for the following positions:

2-year positions

President - currently Julia Machnak (term limited)

Secretary - currently Virginia Smith (term limited)

Mission Shepherd - currently Cassie Haupt

Worship Shepherd - Walt Smith

1-year position

Fellowship - currently Carol Mazurek

Please prayerfully consider giving of your time to serve Faith. Talk to Julia Machnak or Pastor Carr if you are interested or wish to nominate someone for the above positions.

EDUCATION NEWS

On Sunday, Dec. 20, a fortunate audience enjoyed the annual Youth Christmas Program. Sunday School students did a great job of presenting a play entitled "The Crippled Lamb." Two groups of talented youths sang songs while playing handbells during the program. Another group of gifted string musicians performed music during the luncheon. Special thanks are due to Karen MacKenzie for adapting a book into play format and directing the production, and to Tami Klopfer for planning and making the delicious meal which was enjoyed by all.

Sunday School

Classes will **not** be held on Dec. 27, due to Christmas vacation. Classes will resume with a special activity on Jan. 3. Meet in the Teen Room at 9:00am that day.

High School Teens

On Sunday, Jan. 10, Livonia-Lutheran Teens in grades 9 - 12 will meet from 6:30 - 8:30pm at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (39020 Five Mile just east of I-275). The next event will be on "Super Bowl" Sunday, Feb. 7, from 6 - 8 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Join in the fun! Bring a friend for snacks, social time, and faith-based discussions.

Faith's 7th - 12th Graders

Two January activities are planned at Faith for 7th - 12th graders:

~ 4:30 - 6:00pm on Thursday, Jan. 14

~ 6:30 - 8:00pm on Monday, Jan. 25

Teens are invited to attend both events or just come to the one that best fits their schedule. Bring a friend along, too!