



# The Torch

December 2009  
Vol: 33 Issue: 12

*The Torch is the monthly newsletter for Immanuel Lutheran Church in Dixon, Illinois.*

## The Man and the Birds by Paul Harvey

The man to whom I'm going to introduce you was not a scrooge, he was a kind decent, mostly good man. Generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that incarnation stuff which the churches proclaim at Christmas Time. It just didn't make sense and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just couldn't swallow the Jesus Story, about God coming to Earth as a man.

"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he'd much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the midnight service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to

watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound...Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud. At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow.

They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it. Quickly he put on a coat, galosh-

es, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them...He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms. Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn.

And then, he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them

know that they can trust me. That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how?

Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

"If only I could be a bird," he thought to himself, "and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could see, and hear and understand."

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. And he sank to his knees in the snow.

## Church Information

### Office Hours:

8 a.m. -4:30 p.m. M T W F

8 - 12 Thursday

### Worship Times:

Saturday @ 5:30 p.m.

Sunday @ 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

*Communion is offered weekly*

### Our Ministers:

The People of Immanuel

### Our Staff:

Pastor Frank Langholf

Parish Administrator: Lorrie Conry

Youth Coordinator: Kelly Albrecht

Caretakers: Glen Hart, Greg Currens

Organists: Barb Wiggins, Sandy Johnson

Parish Nurses: Gleason Lohse (coordinator),

Cindy Hoyle, Kathy Schutz

### Church Contact information

Phone: 815-284-2804

Fax: 815-284-2809

Church Cell (Pastor) 815-973-2804

Email: [immanuel@grics.net](mailto:immanuel@grics.net)

Website: [www.immanueldixon.org](http://www.immanueldixon.org)

Address: 1013 Franklin Grove Rd.

Dixon, IL 61021

### Bright Beginnings Christian Day Care

815-285-1033

## Our mission statement

As a body of believers created in God's image, called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we desire to proclaim the gospel by providing opportunities to grow in faith and love and promote healing and wholeness in our church, community, and world.

## We want your news!

The Torch is the newsletter for all of Immanuel Lutheran Church. If you have something you would like to share with the congregation, please let us know. Drop by a typed note or email it to [immanuel@grics.net](mailto:immanuel@grics.net). Please try to get all your items submitted by the 20th of each month. Thanks!

## A wonderful 2009

It's almost 2010, and we will be starting the year with a new youth room! Several of the students worked very hard, along with Josh and I to paint the the room. It looks great! The paint was graciously donated by Sherwin Williams downtown.

We owe them a big thanks because it took 13 gallons of paint to complete the room.

While the students are excited to get back into "their room" they are also grateful for all the support the congregation has given to make the youth room a safe place. It shows that Immanuel really wants to invest in the youth of the church.

Due to lack of interest, we can-

celebrated the Living Nativity Story at Immanuel. We will be having a nativity scene during the Christmas Eve Service.

Thank you for a wonderful year in 2009. We did a lot and had

### Youth Calendar for December

Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Service

Dec. 27 - No Youth Group

great times and have a great love for Christ. I know 2010 is going to be just as exciting! Peace and blessing for a Christ filled Christmas Season!

- Kelly Albrecht  
Youth Ministries Coordinator

### Bright Beginnings: A definition

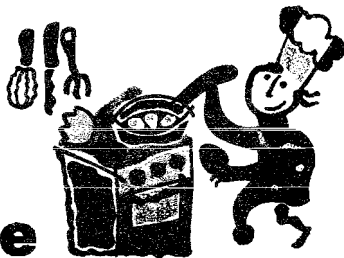
Do you know who we are? Just in case you didn't...

We are:

- ... caregivers for 102 children coming from 74 families
- ... a loving, Christian environment
- ... a home away from home
- ... serving families from a wide variety of social and religious backgrounds
- ... a child's glimpse of Jesus
- ... educating our future
- ... living examples of God's love, peace, and grace
- ... a ray of sunshine in the lives of every child who enters our doors
- ... created and brought together by God for His purpose
- ... thankful for your prayer, support, and love!!

Our Annual Christmas Program will be on Sunday, December 13th at 6:00! We invite you to come and see the children as they have prepared a special ensemble for you!

# Kitchen Task Force Update



*All things work together for good to those who love God; to those who are called according to his purpose.*

*Romans 8:28*

We still have a supply of butter braids (\$11) available for purchase. Please contact Carol Fisher at 815-973-5886 if you would like to make a purchase.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our fundraising efforts in 2009.

Donations to the Kitchen Fund are always greatly appreciated.

Thank you,  
The Kitchen Task Force

## *Sorrows*

*We remember this month those members, friends and family who have passed from this life and await the resurrection.*

*Marilyn Nysather*

*Mel McConnell*

*Julie Near Lahey  
daughter of Andy and  
Judy Near*



## **December Birthdays 80+**



**Ramona Reglin 12/05**

**Mary Levan 12/12**

**Hazel Remrey 12/28**



The Sunday School Christmas Program will be December 13th at 9:30 in the Sanctuary, and Bright Beginnings Christmas Program will be at 6 pm on the same day. Refreshments will be served after both programs.

# Stress, Depression and the Holidays

Despite the excitement this time of year, the Holiday Season often brings unwelcome guests:

stress and depression. With some practical tips, you can minimize anxiety that often accompanies these joyous occasions.

First, recognize anxiety triggers. Common ones are relationships due to stress, causing conflicts to intensify. Finances can be strained when the holidays take a chunk

out of your budget. Exhaustion also increases stress. So, here's some tips to prevent these curmudgeons:

1. Acknowledge your feelings. Realize sadness and grief are normal. It's OK to take time to express your feelings.
2. Reach out. If you feel lonely, seek out community or religious events. Volunteering your time to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits.
3. Be realistic. Holidays don't have to be perfect or like last year. As families change, traditions can change as well.
4. Set aside differences. Accept family as they are; chances are they're feeling holiday stress too.
5. Stick to a budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. That's not the reason for the season.



by Gleason Lohse, R.N.  
Parish Nurse Coordinator

## The Caring Corner

6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for activities, plan menus and stick to a schedule.
7. Learn to say no. Friends and family will understand if you can't participate in every activity.
8. Don't forget healthy habits. Overindulgence only add to stress and guilt. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
9. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Prayer and bible study reduces stress and clears my mind of clutter.
10. Seek help if you need it. You may feel persistently anxious, have physical complaints such as insomnia or irritability, or are unable to focus on routine tasks. If these feelings last longer than the stressor that created them, find someone to talk to or see a professional if needed.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you;

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

More information can be found at [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

## This & That

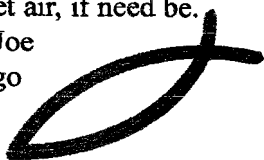
*News and notes to and from the congregation*

} Ruth Circle will meet for lunch on Thursday, December 3 at Bogey's beginning at 11:30 a.m. If you have a short reading, poem, etc. you would like to share, please bring it with you.

} Many thanks to Ozzie Toms for recognizing a flat tire when he sees one and letting me know. Also, for consultation on what to do: Harry Ulferts and Bill Wadsworth. A great big thank you to Don Koch who put air in my tire so I could get home. Also, to Rory Miller who was willing to follow me to the Shell station to get air, if need be.

And, last but not least, Joe Kellen who told me to go into the building to get out of the cold while the tire was inflated.

- Sandy Johnson



} Attention, new parish nurse coordinator: Gleason Lohse, will be available for blood pressures December 13th and 27th. These dates will vary each month, although there will be at least two, so check your torch for future dates.

} The Living Nativity at Immanuel has been cancelled.

} Thank you to everyone who donated food for the Food Pantry. We collected 51 bags!

} Thank you to everyone who helped with Meals on Wheels.

} Thanks to everyone who helped out at the Chili Supper. It couldn't be done without the support of volunteers. We served 316 people, had 80 volunteers who worked 240 hours total!

} The quilters would like to thank everyone that dropped off items for quilting plus financial support.

# Council Corner

by Scott Johnson

## A Year to Remember

As we approach the holidays, it's natural to sit back and reflect on what has happened to us. I want to take this time to recap our year, and to look forward.

On a personnel front, my year started out horribly with the death of my sister in January. I know many of you have felt the same loss of loved ones this year. My strength came from the incredible outpouring of kindness and caring I received from my friends, co-workers and my church family. Through our toughest times, we find our greatest strengths though we sure wish we didn't have to struggle to find those strengths.

In August, my family and I were blessed with the birth of our son and brother, Cade. After a few years it is easy to forget the incredible gift that a child is and the wonder of how God gives us new life. The birth and growth of a baby is an incredible process and journey. My family has truly seen the Alpha and the Omega this year.

Immanuel has also seen many wonderful events this year. We are on pace to have a total debt reduction of over \$60,000 on our line of credit while also raising enough money to fix the church roof over the youth room and offices. As we enter the final month of the year, we are currently only \$3,200 behind in our budgeted goal for giving. If you are able please consider giving extra in December to help us close the budget gap.

Immanuel has also been blessed with the bequest from the Marilyn Blum trust that will pay for a large portion of the new roof for the church and help to

fund the Bright Beginnings tuition program as well as other worthy local organizations. We have reduced our debt, repaired and improved our church and been able to give to other organizations in need.

So as we close out 2009, we not only need to look back and reflect on our past year but to look ahead and plan for what is next. We have had a group of members meet to create a new vision statement for Immanuel. We continue the dialogue to reach a consensus for a vision statement for Immanuel. We are going to work hard on growing our church next year. Pastor recently gave us a statistic that says 47% of people who start attending a new church begin on the recommendation of a friend. Do you have a friend you would like to invite?

We also need to work growing our youth programs in Sunday school, Bright Beginnings and through the youth coordinator program. Barb, Peggy, Gloria, Tami, Marsha and Kelly have done an exceptional job in promoting our youth programs. We need to make sure that we supply them with the resources they need to continue to serve and grow the important mission of caring and nurturing our children.

During this holiday season, when you are spending time with family and friends celebrating the birth of Jesus, I hope you all take some time to look back and realize what a wonderful year we had at Immanuel. May God bless you and your families during this holiday season and next year.

Peace



*If you would like to purchase a poinsettia to decorate the church, there will be forms available on the Narthex table the first weekend in December.*



# God With Us

Thoughts for the congregation

By Pastor Frank Langhoff

As I write this, snow is in the forecast for the week of Thanksgiving. By the time you read this, we will be in December, the beginning of winter. December brings snow, ice, and frost. Yet, wintry December is also filled with wonder, mystery, and hope.

There are popular songs that celebrate the wonder of winter. These are the songs of December, not the songs of January and February. The winter of January and February is cold, hard, and harsh. What makes the difference? Is it simply that in December winter is a new, fresh, and invigorating change from summer and fall? No, I think it is because the winter of December is another reminder of the coming of Christ.

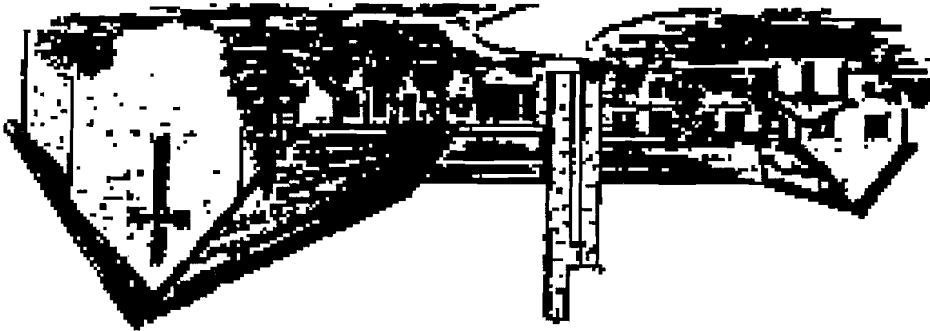
C.S. Lewis wrote of the power of evil in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with the image that it was always winter but never Christmas. Without Jesus the winters of life are times of death (as an old friend once described winter). The coming of Jesus transforms winter from a wearisome time to an

expectant time waiting for God to do wondrous things. May our hearts be open to wonder of the coming of Jesus as December unfolds before us.

Immanuel will be preparing for and celebrating the coming of Jesus through out December. I encourage you to participate in any or all of the following:

- Sunday/Saturday worship services in Advent with the theme of "Is it Light Yet?"
- The Christmas Gala on Sunday December 6
- Pastor Kurt Nordby - Asst. to Bishop guest speaker, Dec. 5th and 6th
- The Sunday School Christmas Program on Sunday December 13, 9:15 AM.
- Bright Beginnings Christmas Program on Sunday December 13, 6:00 PM
- Christmas Eve Services at 7:00 PM and 11:00 PM .
- Christmas Morning Service 10:00 AM.

Blessings



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