



Anniversaries

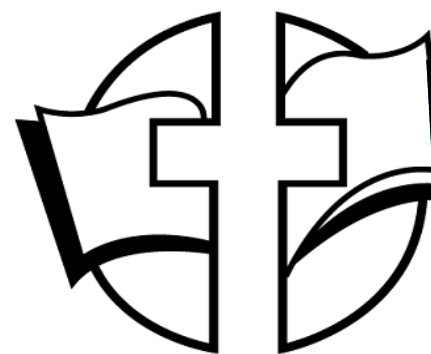
December

Jack + Sherry Bue 12/3
Joe + Alisha Southwood 12/19

Birthdays

December

Garrett Spaude	12/1
Annette Markhardt	12/4
Jerry Eggen	12/11
Aron Bue	12/11
Toni Anderson	12/14
Bill Yahnke	12/18
Noelle Kiesow	12/20
Sharalyn Hartley	12/22
Elaine Fatla	12/24
Nicole Kiesow	12/28
Justin Goetzka	12/29
Avah Reetz	12/30
Jeremiah Spaude	12/31
Richard Sitarz	12/31



The Messenger

December 2018

The Perfect Pearl

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45, 46).

Have you found the perfect Christmas gift for that special someone yet? If so, what makes it perfect? Is it perfect because it's unique, like handcrafted pottery? Is it perfect because it fits the personality of the individual for whom you bought it?

What if you find the perfect gift only to discover that it's beyond your budget? Would you sell your car, your house, everything you own to obtain THE perfect gift?

Jesus once told a parable about a pearl-dealer whose goal was to find the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he owned so he could buy his treasured find.

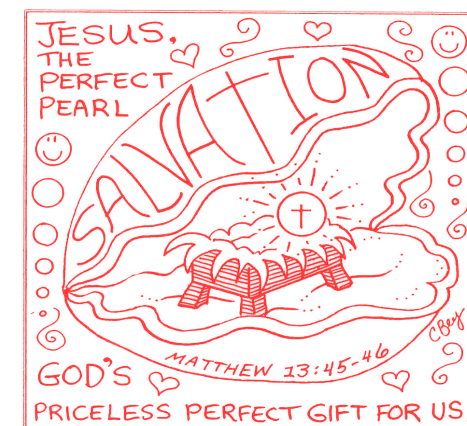
The perfect pearl represents the message of salvation

found in the Bible. This message is perfect because it tells us everything we need to know for this life and the next. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and deserve God's eternal punishment in hell. But the Bible also says that Jesus came to take that punishment. That's what he did when he hung on the cross and died. Because of Jesus our sins are paid for and forgiven!

This message is not only perfect; it's one of a kind. There are plenty of places you can look for the answers to life's questions, but the only place you'll find the real and right answers are in the Bible. The Bible appears to be like any other book, but within there is a precious message that exceeds everything we've known. It's like the person who pries open a dull clam-

shell and finds a glowing pearl nestled within that's worth more than any other.

A pearl in a clamshell! That's often how God works. He comes to us in unlikely places to give us his love. Could that be illustrated any more beautifully than it is at Christmas? At Christmas, the Son of God, our Savior, was born ... in a barn! And then this Jesus willingly gave up his life on the cross to pay for our sins and win us a place in heaven. This message is God's priceless, perfect gift for us!



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We're on the Web!
www.faithwels.com

The Messenger is published monthly for the congregation and friends of Faith Ev. Lutheran Church. Its purpose is to provide information regarding all areas of congregational news and to offer enlightening articles.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, please contact Laura Mueller at the following email address: muellerlaura@hotmail.com

Newsletter deadline: The submission deadline is the next-to-the-last Sunday of each month.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS EVE PRACTICE

Practice for the Children’s Christmas Eve Service will start Sunday, December 2, and continue December 9, 16, and 23. The children practice during the regular Sunday school and Bible Class hour. On these Sunday’s there will be no adult Bible Study in Black River Falls.



FISH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Faith's Social Harbor, also known as FiSH, is a social group sponsored by our congregation. It organizes activities for adults - single or married - looking for an opportunity to have fun and build friendships with other adults in our congregation.

FiSH invites you to a Christmas Party at the Black River Falls location on Thursday, **December 6, at 6 p.m.** Bring an appetizer to share as well as a wrapped white elephant gift to exchange. Also feel free to invite a friend.

CHILI COOK-OFF

The Outreach Committee is looking for someone who might be interested in organizing and overseeing the Chili cook-off event that has been hosted at Faith a number of times over the past few years. If you would be interested – or if you have questions – please speak with Brad Markhardt.



CHRISTMAS DECORATING

Both our Black River Falls and Cataract locations will get decorated for Christmas this month. Everyone is invited to help. Here are the details:
Black River Falls—Saturday, December 1 @ 9 a.m.
In Cataract—Sunday after service on December 2



ADVENT 3 – THE GIFT OF JOY

The ancient church had Latin titles for all their Sundays. They called the third Sunday in Advent “Gaudete Sunday.” The Latin word gaudete means rejoice. On our Advent wreath, the third candle is a pinkish rose color, symbolizing joy. An encouragement to rejoice might sound odd in light of this Advent season’s themes, especially Christ’s second coming to this world. We have seen that when Jesus comes again he is going to judge all mankind and destroy the universe. Even the gospel reading for the third Sunday warns about “the coming wrath” which will include “unquenchable fire.” If that is what Christ will bring at his second coming, how can we possibly live joyfully? Answer: because of Christ’s first coming. When Jesus came that first Christmas, it wasn’t to bring judgment, but to bear judgment. Jesus was born, not to punish sin, but to be punished for sin. All those with faith in Christ know that when he comes for the second time, it will be to deliver us, not destroy us. He will not increase our pain but take every pain away. Then, and not a moment before, our lives will finally be perfect! And so, we live joyfully and thankfully, looking forward to Christ’s return.

ADVENT 4 – THE GIFT OF LOVE

Love is rarely a gift. Typically, when you love someone, it is because you get something in return. You love your spouse in part because of the support and affection they show you. You love your favorite teacher because of what they give you by making learning enjoyable. You love your dog because it is a loyal companion. In such cases, love is not a gift. It is something that is merited...deserved. Now, if you loved a spouse who always treated you like dirt, loved a teacher who taught you nothing, loved a dog that daily bit you, then your love would be a gift. If you love someone who gives you nothing in return, who makes your existence more difficult, then your love is a gift. You are showing undeserved love, which Scripture calls grace. Love is rarely a gift. However, with God, his love is always a gift. God the Father looks at humanity and he sees us doing the evil we should not do. Just as bad, he sees us failing to do the good that we ought to do. Do we make God’s existence easier? No. Instead, God the Son took on human flesh and suffered and died to make atonement for our sins. Yet, he did so gladly. Why? Love! Love that is undeserved. The gift of love!

SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL SERVICES
IN DECEMBER

Monday, **December 24 – Children’s Christmas Eve Service:** Our children will lead us in worship. A Light in the Darkness—focusing on how Jesus is the Light of the World—will be the focus of our **4 p.m.** worship in Black River Falls.

Monday, **December 24** – We will have a candlelight **Christmas Eve service in Cataract @ 7 p.m.** This service will be a service of Lessons & Carols.

Tuesday, **December 25 - Christmas Day:** We will worship at **8 a.m. in Black River Falls** and **9:45 a.m. in Cataract.** We will dive into an in-depth look at the Miracles of Christmas.

Monday, **December 31 - New Year’s Eve:** We will worship and celebrate Holy Communion at **6:30 p.m. in Black River Falls** as we close out 2018. As we do, we will gather around the theme: “And His Name Will Be Jesus.”

He Comes, Bearing Gifts

Curly head dolls that toddle and coo. Elephants, boats, and kiddie cars too. Santa Claus is comin' to town. You'll hear those lyrics often during the holiday season – a song about a man who's coming to bring all sorts of gifts. But, are they really gifts? The definition of a gift is “something given voluntarily without payment or condition.” The man in red has conditions.

You better watch out. You better not cry. You better not pout. He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good... If you give someone a gift only if they meet certain qualifications, that is not a gift.

There is one who is coming, bearing real gifts, profoundly important gifts. Jesus came that first Christmas to win forgiveness and give all the

gifts that come with it: hope, peace, joy, love. He is coming again at the end of this world to give you the gift of resurrection to eternal life. In the season of Advent, we connect Christ's first coming with his second coming. We rejoice in all the unconditional gifts he gives. We gather around the theme: He comes, bearing gifts.

ADVENT 1—THE GIFT OF HOPE

When you look at the downward spiral of humanity, it is easy to grow cynical. The world seems to grow more dangerous each year. People are more divided than they have been in a long time. Immorality is no longer something that people try to hide. As a nation, we have become largely disinterested in God. Disgusted by the world, we then look in the mirror, and things do not improve much. For we confess that we are not pillars of nobility and virtue either. Looking at our world or at ourselves, it is easy to become jaded. But today, Christ Jesus wants us to set that aside and, instead, to live in hope. Our hope is not a naïve wish that things will get better. Our hope is rooted in the fact that Christ came at that first Christmas to forgive every sin. Our hope is that just as he kept his promise to come the first time, Jesus will keep his promise to come again and destroy everything that is wrong with Creation. Judgment Day will be full of incomprehensible terror for those who have aligned themselves with the world. But Christians hope that day comes soon. Confident that we are wrapped in Christ's righteousness, it will be a day of great deliverance.

Advent Sermon Series

ADVENT 2 – THE GIFT OF PEACE

How do you feel when meeting someone important? Maybe it was a job interview with your potential future boss. Did you feel peaceful walking into that meeting? Or perhaps you were summoned, for a reason unknown to you,

to come to the principal's office at school? As you walked the hallway towards his door, were you at peace? When we come face-to-face with someone who can influence the direction of our lives, that tends to be nerve-racking, not peaceful. How nervous will you be, then, when you stand face-to-face with your God, who will determine where you spend eternity? God is much more than a boss or a principal. He is your Creator, the one who gave you life. And when he did, he intended you to use that life in a very specific way, one which would bring glory to him and beauty to this broken world. So, are you ready to meet him? This Advent, we see that God wants you to be at perfect peace when you stand before him. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace...” the angels sang that first Christmas Eve. Through the work of Christ, sinners are at peace with a holy God. Even more, throughout history God's messengers like John the Baptist proclaimed the gospel, so that God's people could live in peace.



CONGREGATIONAL VOTERS MEETING

At our congregation's last voters meeting in October, a common thought repeated throughout the meeting was that “God has tremendously blessed us as a congregation.” Indeed he has. May we praise and thank him for these blessings and ask him to continue to bless us. With that in mind, mark your calendars now for our next quarterly meeting that will take place on **January 20, 2019 at 11:30 a.m. in Black River Falls**. This meeting will include some important decisions that need to be made as to how to use the blessings God is giving us.

HERITAGE TREE

This December, you will notice a Christmas tree adorned with decorations standing in the gathering area in Black River Falls. This is a Heritage Tree. The idea behind the Heritage Tree is that each family in the congregation is invited and encouraged to provide an ornament for the tree. This ornament should have the names of the family members displayed on it and will be stored at church so that it can be set up year after year. What a wonderful way for us to express our unity and see how God blesses our congregation through the many changes that happen over the year. Please consider participating by simply placing your ornament on the tree.



YOUTH GROUP MEETING

The Youth Group meets next on Sunday, **December 9, 2 p.m.** at our Black River Falls location.



LADIES AID

December 15, 12:30

Cataract



The Ladies Aid will have their annual Christmas potluck and gift exchange on Saturday,

December 15 at 12:30 p.m. at our Cataract location. If you are able to participate, bring a dish to pass and a gift to exchange. We try to keep the gift between \$5-\$7.



Advent Social Sunday December 2 , 2 pm BRF

Advent Social is an opportunity for women of all ages to set aside the hustle and bustle of holiday preparation and focus their minds and hearts on the birth of Christ. It is a beautiful time filled with Scripture readings, narration, prayer, songs of praise and Christian fellowship.

Advent is a time for us to prepare our hearts for Jesus' coming. We want our focus to be on Jesus throughout this season, but all too often it gets caught up with the preparations in our homes, churches or communities.

Advent Social this year is based on the fourth and final evangelism movie from WELS titled, To the Ends of the Earth, telling the story of the apostle Paul's work in Philippi. We'll ask and answer the question, "Who are you?" as told through the story of Lydia, a seller of fi-

ne purple cloth and a believer in the one true God.

Advent Social at Faith Lutheran Church, our 6th year. You are invited! Feel free to invite a friend or family member, acquaintance or neighbor. Set aside the date and time, **Sunday, December 2, 2:00 p.m. at our Black River Falls location.**

After the devotion, those interested may participate in a homemade cookie / candy etc. exchange. If you choose to participate in the exchange please bring 5 dozen homemade treats to share, the recipe, and a container to take your treats home in! We will make copies of all the recipes at church. Please note that if you do not wish to be part of the treat exchange, you are still welcome to come and enjoy the devotion, fellowship and cookie samples!



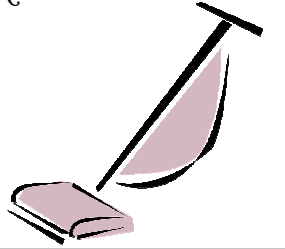
As the property Committee Chairman, I would like to thank all the members who helped with cleaning our church in BRF this last year. Your service is appreciated as we continue to have a clean and orderly church. I will soon be working on the schedule for 2019. If the availability of any of you has changed please let me know. Also, if you were not on a crew this year, and would like to be included on the 2019 schedule please let me know.

Thank you for your service,

Scott Templeton

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dscotttempleton@gmail.com



Attention Bakers!

Do you love to bake and then find yourself with too many cookies, candies, cakes, or other confections?

Did you see the theme on the front of our recent bulletin, "Serve As You Have Been Served"?

How often have you enjoyed the delicious Sunday morning treats after worship service and before adult Bible class and Sunday school?

If you have a penchant for baking, a servant's heart, and love to partake of the bountiful baked goods God continuously supplies us with, we could use your gifts and talents.

If you would like to bake some treats and bring them to church to be used for Sunday morning, Thank You. We take all kinds. We take all amounts. Just place them in containers that can be placed in the freezer, mark the container with your name (to get your container back) the contents and the date baked, and place in the freezer for use by our wonderful and gracious Sunday morning treat ladies.

Don't bake, yet want to contribute? Many of the local bakeries have wonderful selections that we have used in the past also. Or how about some of those yummy store bought cookies and place those in the cupboard! We take all kinds. We take all amounts.

If you have any questions, please speak with Kari Kellen.

From the Library

The Devotions section of our church library located in the Fellowship Hall at the BRF location has devotion books for the season of Advent.

Celebrate While We Wait written by the Schroeder family has devotions to guide your family through the Advent and Christmas seasons. Each devotion has a meditation, Bible references, a prayer, and song verses. The book also includes a section of instructions for a yule log, an Advent wreath, and Advent cookies.

Celebrate Jesus! At Christmas by Kimberly Ingalls Reese has devotions to help your family celebrate the real reason for the season - the birth of Jesus.

Each devotion has scripture readings, familiar hymns, devotional thoughts, and lighting an Advent wreath. The book also includes family projects and service ideas that encourage your family to put your faith into action.

To checkout, write the date your name and the name of the book/DVD/CD in the notebook on the shelf.

To return, put the book/DVD/CD into the basket on the shelf and cross out your entry in the notebook.

