

Christmas with Luke (and a few others)

Advent is the season in which we are invited to draw near to the Christmas story. This December, during our Sunday worship, we will look to the Gospel of Luke to point the way to our Christmas celebration. Luke may be, as Emily Rodgers asserts, "the greatest storyteller of the four Gospel writers." You are invited to read the scriptures in advance of worship each Sunday. In some instances, there may be several listed. But, pay especially close attention to the words and message of Luke. May God bless our Advent preparations as we ready ourselves for Christmas 2006.

December 3: "Maybe it Takes a Child"

Readings: Jeremiah 33: 14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13; Luke 21: 25-36

December 10: "For Crying Out Loud!"

Readings: Malachi 3: 1-4; Philippians 1: 3-11; Luke 3: 1-6

December 17: "I Thought We Were Supposed to be Waiting?"

Readings: Isaiah 12: 2-6; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-16

December 24: "Flowing Along"

Readings: Micah 5: 2-5a; Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-56

A Day for Decorating

The Nurture Commission is organizing an afternoon of Christmas decorating at the church on Saturday, December 9. Plans are to begin with decorating at 3 pm. A light supper will be available to all after we finish. Please note this on your calendar. More information will be shared in coming days.

Alternative Holiday Fair

First Church of the Brethren will be sponsoring and hosting an Alternative Holiday Fair on December 1 and 2. As in past years, a variety of gifts will be available for purchase from several fair-trade organizations. Several community organizations have agreed to take part and will have tables during the Fair. Those organizations include: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); Pax Christi; the Springfield chapter Sierra Club; Positive Options, Referrals and Alternatives (P.O.R.A.); Contact Ministries; Heifer International; and Alternatives for Simple Living.

The Fair will begin on Friday, December 1st, 5 pm until 8 pm. On December 2nd we will be open from 8 am until 2 pm.

A light supper will be available on Friday. A lunch will be served from 10 am-1:30 pm on Saturday. Baked goods will be available, as well.

Please note the dates for the AHF on your calendar and invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

Help Someone for the Holidays

Our congregation will be cooking, serving, and delivering Thanksgiving Day meals to homebound seniors in our community. This year's coordinator, Roger Ruth, has set out a number of volunteer and donation lists for you to look over. We will need some food items donated. We will need help on Wednesday, November 22nd with set-up (a simple supper meal will be served at 5:30 pm to those who volunteer that evening). We will need food preparers, meal packers, and drivers on Thanksgiving Day. Cooking begins at 7:30 am and the meals are ready to be packed at 10 am.

Delivery will begin around 10:30 am. Monetary donations are welcome. These help us off-set the food items that we need to purchase in advance.



If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact Roger Ruth at 525-8301 or email the church office at pastor@1stcob.org. Or, you may sign the donation lists over the next few Sundays.

Emergency Shelter Re-Opens

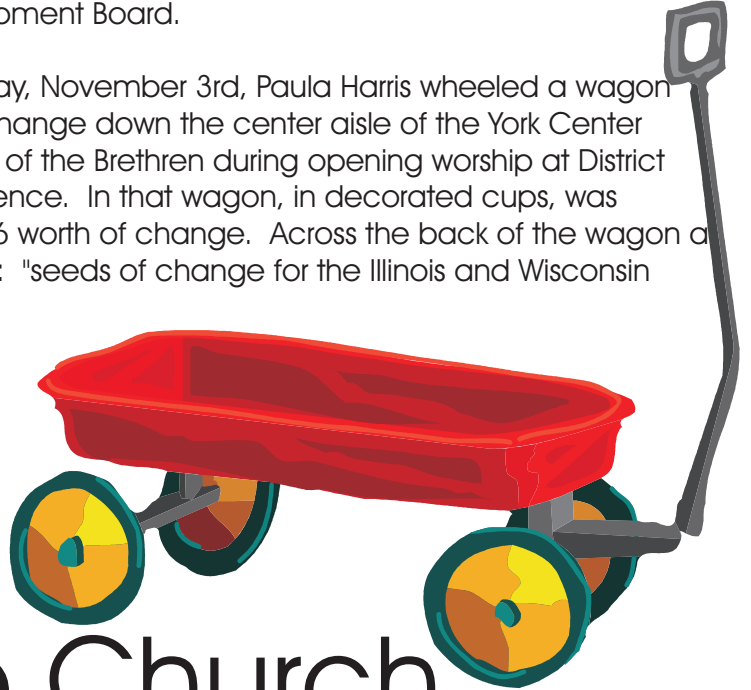
The Springfield Overflow Shelter (SOS) reopened on November 1. This shelter exists to provide additional emergency shelter during the months of November through March. The shelter has one or two paid staff who are assisted by other volunteer staff. Volunteers are needed from 5:30 pm. until 11 pm.

First Church of the Brethren volunteers provided staff and a meal on Thursday, November 2. The first Thursday of each month will be our designated night for volunteering at SOS. Our next assigned evening is December 7. This past month we had seven volunteers. Thank you! A sign-up sheet is posted at the rear of the church sanctuary for those willing to assist on December 7.

A Wagon-Full of Change Delivered

One year ago our District Moderator, Leonard Matheny, invited us to begin collecting change for the 2006 District Conference. Each Sunday, our change jar was available for all who wished to contribute. Our donations were to be divided between the Illinois & Wisconsin District budget and the needs of the Illinois & Wisconsin New Church Development Board.

On Friday, November 3rd, Paula Harris wheeled a wagon full of change down the center aisle of the York Center Church of the Brethren during opening worship at District Conference. In that wagon, in decorated cups, was \$833.06 worth of change. Across the back of the wagon a banner: "seeds of change for the Illinois and Wisconsin District."



...On Being the Church

The adult Sunday School class spent six weeks in the fall using the study guide called, Together: Conversations on Being the Church. Discussion focused on what it means to be the church now. Questions were asked and participants talked about matters such as belonging, working together, living with differences, the place of discipline, models of church, etc. At the end of the study, two different group paragraphs were written and submitted to the denomination reflecting our class' answers to two questions. The questions are: "What are God's yearnings for the Church of the Brethren? and What do we need to do to become more like the church God yearns for us to be?" The two statements are shared here.

As the church, we are called to be Christ's disciples and to witness to the inclusive love and grace Jesus exemplified. Professing salvation through God's bounteous grace and the gift of his son, Jesus Christ, we also profess our responsibility to minister to others. The foundations of being the church call us to relate to fellow believers as family, yet we also recognize our calling to do God's work to the ends of

the earth, modeling Christ's example of love and peace. While the church's focus for purpose and inspiration is on Jesus, the church must be willing to adapt in its understandings as led by the Holy Spirit, recognizing that God's revelation is ongoing and our striving to spiritual maturity is a work never finished.

As the Church of the Brethren, we celebrate our heritage of peculiarity, which includes openness to all, dedication to peace, willingness to work at communal discernment led by the Holy Spirit through Scripture, commitment to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and a spirit of joyfully living in tension with dominant culture. God yearns for us to be more confident in our witness, more assertive about our gifts as a church, more willing to lead ecumenically, and more faithful to Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

These two statements were prepared on Sunday, October 29. Thanks to all in the S. S. class who shared in the conversation which led to the above comments.