

# THE GOOD NEWS

## St. Francis Church

DECEMBER, 2007

### Have a Blessed Advent

Advent is our season of preparation for the coming of Christ. This includes the coming commemoration of his birth at Christmastide, but more importantly calls us to be ready for his return in glory. As I said in Sunday's sermon, it's not about preparing for Christmas, its about preparing for *CHRIST!*

Spend some time this advent in special prayer, especially for those in need, in study of Holy Scripture, in self-examination, in confession of sin.

As I asked Sunday, If this was your *last* Advent and Christmas on this earth, how would *YOU* prepare?

—Fr. John+

### Christmas Season Draws Near

Plans are in motion for another very special Christmas at St. Francis. Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> we'll have our annual Christingle Lessons and Carols service at 5:00 PM, a great event for our young people! Christmas Eve we'll gather at 5:30 PM for our Christmas festival, including lots of special music and an elaborate Liturgical Dance presentation that opens our liturgy. (See the article by Candice.) Christmas Day we'll have a 9:00 AM sung Eucharist for those unable to be here Christmas Eve, or those who just like to be at both masses on Christmas.

Christmas ends January 5<sup>th</sup>, so it is appropriate to keep your Christmas trees and decorations up until then! (It helps guide the Wise Men to your door.)

Twelfth Night, the evening of January 5<sup>th</sup>, ends Christmas with the Eve of the Epiphany, and ushers in the season of Epiphany, which runs through Shrove Tuesday.

### CHRISTMAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thur. Dec. 20	5:00 PM	Advent Caroling
Sunday, Dec. 23	10:00 AM	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent
	5:00 PM	Christingle Service
Mon., Dec. 24	5:30 PM	Christmas Eve Mass
Tues., Dec. 25:	9:00 AM	Christmas Day Mass
Sunday, Dec. 30	10:00 AM	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas Mass
	5:00 PM	Evening Prayer
Sunday, Jan. 6	10:00 AM	Epiphany Mass
	5:00 PM	Epiphany Mass

{Please note there is no 5:00 PM mass on Dec. 30 as Fr. John will be away. We will have Evening Prayer instead.}

### Liturgical Dance Adorns Christmas

By Candice Hogden

Dancers will usher in the Glory of the Lord in the Christmas Eve Mass at St. Francis Church In Dunlap, 5:30 p.m.. This year's theme is "Gloria!" Liturgical Dance will be a new experience for our church family who have embraced this new style of worship and have given endless hours in preparation of sewing costumes, and practice dance sessions.

Some wonder if dancing is biblical. And the answer is, Yes. There are many references to dancing before the Lord. 2 Samuel 6:14-16 talks of the procession into the house of the Lord. "David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the

entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart." In Psalm 150.4 it says, "Praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with strings and flute. In Jeremiah 31 it talks of the families of Israel gathered together, singing aloud on the height of Zion. Vs. 13 "Then the maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. I will satisfy the priests with abundance and my people will be filled with my bounty, declares the Lord." (Other references to dancing include: Psalm 149.3; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Luke 15:25,32; 1 Samuel 18:6, 29:5; Exodus 15:20-21.) I encourage you to do a word search on dancing. You will be amazed at what you will find in references to Dancing before the Lord.

Claudette Seele, Choreographer and assistant Candice Hogden prepared the dance segment with Julie Tower, pianist providing the music. Nine dancers from St. Francis Church, consisting of men and women and children of various ages, will praise the Lord with their whole being to music. The dancers are Claudette and Cassidy Seele, Stephanie Cannon, Faith Brodkorb, Catherine Powell, Ron and Julie Nielson and Paul and Michael German. They will enter during "The Bells of Christmas," a song arranged by concert pianist Lorie Line. The dancers will continue to dance to the Christmas hymn "Angels We Have Heard On High" interspersed with the Brass interludes composed by Candice Hogden. They will then move into the Handel's Messiah duet "Glory To God" sung by Nell German and Candice Hogden. The dancers will use various things to express themselves. The Fanfare will continue with a Christmas Banner and the Regal procession of our Lord's Cross and his servants Fr. John Spencer and assisting lay ministers to another wonderful Christmas Hymn, "Joy to the World".

And this is only the *beginning* of the Christmas Mass. More special vocal and instrumental music will follow throughout the mass. We invite you to come and worship with

us this Christmas Eve as we give Glory to the Lord with Dance, song, and instruments! "Glory Be to God!"

(This article was originally published in the December Harvest Plain)

## **Christingle Service December 23rd at St. Francis**

—by Candice Hogden

Once again this year St. Francis, Dunlap will celebrate the English "Christingle" festival with a special liturgy at 5:00 PM on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Christingle celebration is an English custom brought to St. Francis by the Powell family, natives of the UK, when they joined St. Francis in 2005. The special liturgy focuses on Christ as the Light of the world, and includes special lessons and carols, along with special Christingle gifts prepared and given to all the children present.

If you'd like to take part in the festival this year, please call the church office and let us know how many young people you will bring, so we will have ample "lights" on hand.

## **Alpha Coming in January**

An adult **Alpha** course will begin in January. If you would like to participate, please contact Debbie at the office. We are still considering the best night. It would likely be Sunday evening or Monday evening, and we'd like your input.

If you haven't been through the **Alpha** course, it's a GREAT experience!

**Teen Alpha** will also begin in January on Sunday evenings. Young people of High School or Young adult age may take part.

## **Pledges & Commitments Received**

THANK YOU to all who have returned your 2008 pledges. All who completed the Gifts and Talents commitment will be hearing from our ministry coordinators soon!

If you have not returned your financial pledge, please do so as soon as possible so that your Bishop's Committee can finalize our budget plans for 2008. YOUR support is valued, and appreciated!

## **Blood Drive**

Most churches only ask for your money, we want your blood!

Our first Red Cross blood drive is Dec. 27, 3:00—7:00 PM. We need to make appointments for donors so everyone doesn't show up at the same time and have to wait.

To make your appointment, call coordinator Gretchen Powell, 243-9856. More donors are needed.

## **Stocking Project Huge Success**

Friends, we would like to express a huge THANK YOU to everyone that helped with the stockings. We collected 84 and had several larger items that would not fit in the stockings. This was a very "worthy" project and we are sure the needy children will have a brighter Christmas because of your generosity. Ron and I are blessed to be a part of such a loving church family.

—Julie & Ron Neilson

## **And Thanks To Ron And Julie!**

Thanks to Ron and Julie for their great efforts chairing all our Outreach work this year. They have done a wonderful job. In addition to the stockings we made (and collected) and sent to New Orleans, we also sent many cartons of books to replenish a public library, and two large boxes of new shoes and clothing items generously donated to us by our Dollar General store here in the Plaza.

It amazing the opportunities God continues to put before us. Let's pray for the energy to keep up!

—Fr. John+

## **Maintaining Our Prayer List**

Our parish prayer list grows quite long at times. First, and most helpful, when you submit a name, please tell us how long you believe the name should remain. Normally, we will remove names after one month unless we're informed of the need to keep them on.

If the office ever removes a name which you want left on, please email or call Debbie at the office.

Also, be aware we have a quiet Intercessor team at prayer throughout the weeks. If you would like someone on that prayer chain rather than on the "public" list, please submit that name through the office as well.

## **Annual Cookie Walk**

We will be having our annual Cookie Walk on Dec. 23, right after 10:00 am mass. I know this is a little later than usual, but there are many cookie monsters out there that eat up all the cookies long before Christmas! This way you will have a little more time to bake, and you might even have one or two left by Christmas! If you are interested in baking, you will need to bake 4 dozen of the same variety of cookies. Bring them to church on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and after mass we will walk around the tables and select whichever cookies are your favorite. They will be selling for \$5.00 per pound. Martha Brodkorb and Joanne Carter will bring boxes to put them in. Any questions, give them a call. Happy baking!!!

## **Upcoming Diocesan Events**

Dec. 16, 6:00 PM Traditional Festival of Lessons & Carols, St. Paul's Cathedral.

Medical Mission to Dominican Republic, January 24<sup>th</sup> through February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Peoria Deanery Cookie Exchange, and English Tea Luncheon, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 12:30 at St. Andrew's.

I shall attend to my errand of love  
Early this year,

So that the brief days before Christmas may be  
Unhampered and clear

Of the fever of hurry. The breathless rushing  
That I have know in the past

Shall not possess me. I shall be calm in my soul  
And ready at last...

I shall have leisure - I shall go out alone  
From my roof and my door;

I shall not miss the silver silence of stars  
As I have before;

And oh, perhaps - if I stand there very still  
And very long,

I shall hear what the clamor of living has kept from me-  
The angel's song.

*Grace Noll Crowell*

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