

LOVE LETTER

JANUARY 2009

St. John's Lutheran Church
ELCA
1224 East Street
Grinnell, IA 50112
(641) 236-4946
stjohngr@iowatelecom.net
www.stjohngrinnell.org

The Rev. Kathryn Roys, pastor
pastorkathy@iowatelecom.net

Muriel Johannessen,
Associate in Ministry
muriel@iowatelecom.net

WORSHIP

Saturday at 5:30 p.m.
Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

10:45 a.m. Sunday, preschool
through Adult Forum

OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
8 a.m. to noon. At other times,
leave a message at the office,
236-4946

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Bob Falck, president
Nancy Heineman, vice president
Bev Cook, secretary
Gary Cook, treasurer
Dan Huebner, Properties
Donna Beck, Stewardship
Kelly Rose, Education
Lisa Henderson, Worship,
Music, Arts
Bobbie Kahler, Fellowship
Mike Schaeffer, Service
Sue McDonough, Evangelism
Amy Anderson, Youth

MURIEL'S MUSINGS

Although I didn't "need" it, I purchased a new Advent devotional book this year, simply because I was drawn to the title — "In the Bleak Midwinter" — and the author, Herb Brokering. As I have read his reflections on this old hymn, I have been struck by how appropriate it is to speak of Christ coming "in the bleak midwinter" this year.

As we hear news of corporate greed, government corruption, job losses, plant closings, home foreclosures, wars, torture and incredible darkness around us, we can well echo the cry for rescue uttered by the people so long ago who waited for the Messiah to come. We who live in the middle time between Jesus' resurrection and his return might also cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly."

But as I reflect on this, I wonder who we see as we cry out. Do we see the sweet Babe of Bethlehem, lying quietly in a manger? Do we see the gentle man from Galilee who walked among the people, feeding, healing and proclaiming that the Kingdom of God had come? Or do we see the powerful Word of God spoken of in John, the very Light of the World, the Son of God, the Savior who conquers all, including death itself?

This Jesus echoes the words of the angels and tells us to "fear not," for God is, indeed, with us.

The Jesus whose birth we remember and celebrate on Christmas Day is indeed the powerful one who will return in triumph over all evil, all sorrow, all violence and hatred. As we sing carols and rejoice in the wonder and beauty of this season, let us also take courage, for the One to whom we cry out now is the One

who will never be overcome, who can conquer any tribulations that may come our way, and who can protect us from anything that threatens us. Let us honor him as the shepherds and

wise men did so long ago, but let us also look for his presence among us today, stronger than Satan and all the forces of evil, yet gently, lovingly cherishing us and holding us close as his beloved brothers and sisters.

This Jesus echoes the words of the angels and tells us to "fear not," for God is, indeed, with us. May we all trust those words throughout the new year, walking every day with unfaltering faith and hope, for by our side to guard, guide and restore us is the one and only King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and he will never abandon us to face the world alone.

*Muriel Johannessen
Associate in Ministry*

CHURCH NEWS

AROUND the CONGREGATION

Dancers will return

Psalm 149, the liturgical dancers from Wartburg College, will be part of our worship on both Saturday, January 17, and Sunday, January 18. The group performed at St. John's a year ago.

For a time of fellowship after the Saturday evening service, the annual chili dump will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a batch of your favorite recipe...you know what happens next.

If you are able to host one or more of the dancers in your home overnight on Saturday, January 17, please contact Lisa Henderson, 236-4301.

Semiannual meeting set

The semiannual congregational meeting will be held after worship on Sunday, January 25. At the meeting, the 2008 finances will be reviewed and the 2009 budget will be presented. Treasurers of church groups are reminded to submit their financial reports to the church office by January 11 so the semiannual report can be available to the congregation a week before the meeting.



Offering envelopes ready

If you have not done so, please pick up your 2009 offering envelopes on the shelf in the narthex.

We wished them a Merry Christmas

Approximately 30 people — including half a dozen Grinnell College students — brought song and treats to homebound members as they caroled in the community on Sunday afternoon, December 14.

In addition to singing to church members in their homes, the groups caroled in the halls at the Mayflower and St. Francis health centers.

The effort was appreciated. Below are several thank-you notes received at the church.

THANK YOU for the caroling and the treats. That's my first time to have caroling. I enjoyed it very much. Thank you for thinking of me. (Sorry it was so cold.)

Irene Edgeton

A SPECIAL thank to the Christmas carolers from St. John's, and the treats they brought. You were courageous to be out on such a cold afternoon. I am deeply grateful, it meant a lot. May love and happiness be yours in this season of joy.

Leora Jones

I REALLY appreciated the carolers from St. John's that came to my door before Christmas. It was especially nice to see so many children and young people involved.

Emma Helmke

At Autumn Leaves

Pastor Kathy will speak about community resources at the January meeting of Autumn Leaves. The gathering on Thursday, January 15, will start at noon with a potluck. Everyone is welcome.



Children tell the Christmas Story at the Sunday School program

Making St. John's more hospitable

Plans are under way to make our sanctuary more welcoming and accessible to worshipers in wheelchairs or who use walkers. The process started with the addition of the elevator in 1998. While the elevator makes both the sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall reachable for everyone, it is time to make our worship space accommodating and comfortable for members or visitors who have difficulty with mobility.

The Council of Ministers, at its December meeting, approved a recommendation from the Worship, Music and Arts Committee to take the next step forward in this process by replacing two pews on either side of the center aisle with padded chairs. A pew will also be removed at the back of the church.

The addition of chairs will create flexible space in the sanctuary that will allow persons with wheelchairs and walkers to be seated within the congregation and with their families. The new open space at the rear of the church will provide an optional location for seating.

The chairs that will be purchased are currently being researched. The chairs will likely have upholstered seats and backs that complement our current pew pads, with space alongside or underneath for hymnals.



The area for the chairs will be approximately one-third of the way from the front of the sanctuary, making the worship space into a cruciform (cross) shape.

Pastor Kathy believes strongly in the need to make all people feel welcome and comfortable at St. John's. She is concerned about individuals who are not in worship because their mobility issues are not accommodated.

The plan to integrate everyone into the worship space is the most recent effort to make St. John's more hospitable and accessible to

all members and visitors. Starting in early fall, large-print bulletins for persons with vision problems were made available and a simple option to receive Holy Communion in the pew was introduced. In October, directional signage (with a large WELCOME word) was placed on the north and south entrances. Additional directional signs inside the building are planned.

The Worship, Music and Arts Committee and the Church Council began discussing accessibility in the sanctuary in early fall. Before the final plan was agreed upon, several options were discussed.

The cost of the chairs will be paid for by a recent unrestricted monetary gift to the church. No budgeted funds will be needed for the adaptation.

'Getting to Know You'

To build strong relationships with everyone in the congregation, three "Getting to Know You" sessions will be held at the church in January. Pastor Kathy and Muriel will be inviting members they don't know as well (and would like to get to know!) to join them at one of the three informal gatherings. The sessions will include time to share personal stories as well as time to hear one another's ideas, concerns and dreams for St. John's. We hope those who are contacted will take the opportunity to strengthen bonds with the staff and renew connections with one another. If you

would like to be sure you are part of these conversations, please contact the church office at 236-4946. The dates are Tuesday, January 20; Thursday, January 22; and Tuesday, January 27 – all at 7 p.m.

Epiphany service planned

Come celebrate Epiphany (January 6) at St. John's with a special worship service at 7 p.m. In western Christianity, Epiphany is a day (January 6) as well as a season of the church year (from January 6 to the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent). The term *epiphany* means "to show," "to make known" or "to reveal." As a

day, Epiphany celebrates the coming of the magi bringing gifts to the Christ Child. As a season, it represents the revelation of Jesus to the world as Lord and King.

After the service we'll gather for snacks and conversation. Bring a snack to share.

A reminder...

Cancellations or postponements of church activities – including worship services – will be recorded on the church answering machine and announced on radio station KGRN. Confirmation class will not be held if there is no school or an early dismissal on that day.

Many words of thanks

THANK YOU for the generous outpouring for Christmas Shares (130+ gifts), Storks Nest (close to 100 blanket sleepers, crib pads and sheets and packages of disposable diapers) and the handmade cards and gifts for nursing home residents. St John's generous nature is stunning.

THANK YOU to the musical leadership of St John's for all the wonderful worship services and extra music prepared as St John's prepared for Jesus this Advent and on Christmas Eve.

THANK YOU from Jo, Muriel and me for the numerous cards, baked goods and gifts at Christmas, Your generosity has been simply overwhelming! We are all filled with gratitude. It is privilege to serve beside you!

Pastor Kathy

WE want to thank all of St. John's for their prayers, cards and visits while Mike was in the hospital and at St. Francis Manor, and both of us now at Seeland Park. Thanks also for the delicious food that was brought to us, for the rides to our appointments, the flowers from Lydia Circle, and to all who put on the delicious Thanksgiving dinner which we really appreciated. God bless all.

Mike and Agnes Mikel

THANK YOU to everyone who has been so kind to me, opening doors, carrying coffee for me and doing other things. Blessings in the new year.

Lu Ahrens

THANKS to everyone who sent cards, called and delivered meals following my eye surgery. Thank you also to Lydia Circle for the flower. I am grateful to be part of St. John's.

Jo Olson

Reading Mark aloud, start to finish

In the new church year that started with Advent, the Gospel readings will come mainly from the Book of Mark. To get a feeling for God's story as told by the author of Mark as a whole rather than in bits and pieces over the year, Pastor Kathy is inviting members to come together on Sunday afternoon, January 11, to read the book aloud in its entirety. Bring your Bible. The differing versions and translations will add to the experience. The reading will start at 2 p.m. and will last until we finish. (Since Mark is the shortest gospel, you'll definitely be home for supper!)

The tradition of a lectionary — list of scripture readings to be read on a particular day during the year — has its roots in Jewish worship of long ago and was adopted by the early Christians. Many Christian denominations, including Lutherans, use the Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year cycle. Each year the Gospel of Matthew, Mark or Luke is read primarily, with the Gospel of John interspersed throughout the three years. Consequently, if you worshipped every Sunday for three years, you would be able to hear the majority of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

New Adult Forum series to start

"How Lutherans Interpret the Bible" will be the topic of the Adult Forum on Sunday mornings starting January 11. Led by Pastor Kathy, the seven-week forum will use a DVD and written materials prepared by Mark Allen Powell, a Lutheran pastor and professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary. The class will look at how we Lutherans, despite the theological differences that divide us, have significant agreement on issues of biblical interpretation. The Adult Forum meets at 10:45 a.m. in the adult education room in the lower level. Join us!

Read and discuss in February

Start reading! Planned for February is a discussion of the best-selling book, "The Last Lecture," by Randy Pausch. Dates for the discussion have not been set, but anyone interested in participating is invited to begin reading the book and thinking about its thought-provoking content. The book is based on the final lecture that Pausch, a 47-year-old computer science professor, delivered to his students at Carnegie Mellon University. He told them about the pancreatic cancer that had taken hold of his body, but, more important, about lessons he had learned in his too-short life. He died less than a year later. . Join Muriel and others to talk about the book and its message. In addition, another discussion of the book "The Shack" has been requested and will be offered in February by Pastor Kathy.

STEWARDSHIP OF SERVICE

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

Acolyte: Jacob Lamb
Welcome Team: Donna Beck, Bobbie Kahler
Reader: Brian Heineman

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4

Acolyte: Eli Dunne
Greeters: Gaylen and Kathy Johnson
Reader: Jo Olson
Coffee Servers: Bob and Pam Ashing
Nursery: Shirley Broders

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

Acolyte: Rachel Pinkerton
Welcome Team: Gary Cook, Christopher Weir
Reader: Bob Falck
Communion Assistant: Nancy Urfer

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

Acolyte: Chance Winburn
Greeters: John and Dorothy Martinek
Reader: Lamoyne Gaard
Communion Assistants: B. Ashing, L. Gaard
Coffee Servers: Cindy and Steve Dudley
Nursery: Laura Weigel

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

Acolyte: Jarren Ford
Welcome Team: Brian and Nancy Heineman
Reader: Pam Ashing

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

Acolyte: Caprisse Honsbruch
Greeters: Becky Wilson and Jan Sherlock
Reader:
Communion Assistants: J, and D., Martinek
Coffee Servers: Junior Youth
Nursery: Tammie Van Hamme

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Acolyte: Ashley Mikel
Welcome Team: Ted and Nancy Urfer
Reader: Ted Urfer
Communion Assistant: Gary Cook

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

Acolyte: Joe Nowasell
Greeters: Don and Doris Sundell
Reader: Dave Huth
Coffee Servers: K. and R. Osland, I. Morrison
Nursery: Renee Beach

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

Acolyte: Zach Osland
Welcome Team: Keith, Rose Osland and family
Reader: Shirle Huth
Communion Assistant:

JANUARY CALENDAR

Weekly meetings and activities

Staff meeting — Tuesdays at 10 am
 Bible Study with Muriel — Mondays at 11 am, Meeting Room
 Men's Breakfast — Tuesdays at 7 am, Westside Family Restaurant
 LWR Quilters — Tuesdays at 1:30 pm, Room 9

Sat	3	5:30 pm	Worship
Sun	4	9:30 am	Worship
		10:30 am	Coffee Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
		12:45 pm	Seventh-grade confirmation
Tue	6	7 pm	Epiphany Worship Service
Wed	7	Noon-5 pm	First Wednesday after-school program
		7 pm	Confirmation
		7 pm	Celebration Singers rehearsal, Sanctuary
Thurs	8		Reports due for semiannual meeting:
		6:30 am	Final session, "Preparing for Jesus," Saints Rest
Sat	10	5:30 pm	Worship with Holy Communion
Sun	11	8:30 am	Choir rehearsal, Music Room
		9:30 am	Worship
		10:30 am	Coffee Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
		10:45 am	Sunday School, preschool to Adult Forum
		2 pm	Reading Gospel of Mark aloud (See page 3)
Tue	13	2 pm	Caring Team, Meeting Room
		6:30 pm	Church Council, Meeting Room
Wed	14	7 pm	Celebration Singers rehearsal, Sanctuary
		7 pm	Confirmation
		7:30 pm	Confirmation meets with Faith Friends
Thurs	15	9:30 am	Lydia Circle
		Noon	Autumn Leaves, Fellowship Hall
Fri	16	5 pm	Scrapbooking, Fellowship Hall
Sat	17	8 am	Scrapbooking, Fellowship Hall
		5:30 pm	Worship with Wartburg College liturgical dancers
		6:30 pm	Chili dump, Fellowship Hall
Sun	18	8:30 am	Choir rehearsal, Music Room
		9:30 am	Worship, Holy Communion, liturgical dancers
		10:30 am	Coffee Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
		10:45 am	Sunday School, Preschool to Adult Forum
Tue	20	7 pm	Getting to Know You gathering
Wed	21	7 pm	Confirmation
		7 pm	Celebration Singers rehearsal, Sanctuary
Thurs	22	7 pm	Getting to Know You gathering
Sat	24	5:30 pm	Worship with Holy Communion
Sun	25	8:30 pm	Choir rehearsal, Music Room
		9:30 am	Worship
		10:30 am	Coffee Fellowship, Fellowship Hall
		10:45 am	Semiannual Congregational Meeting
Tue	27	7 pm	Getting to Know You gathering
		7 pm	Sarah Circle
Wed	28	7 pm	Confirmation
		7 pm	Celebration Singers rehearsal, Sanctuary
Sat	31	5:30 pm	Worship with Holy Communion

SUNDAY USHERS: John Ruchotzke, Gaylen Johnson, Dave Huth, Aaron Winburn, Kalen Winburn

MONEY COUNTERS: Madge and John Ruchotzke

ALTAR GUILD

December 9-January 13 — Addy Hanson
 Month of January — Judy Lebeck
 January 13-February 10 — Bev Cook



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GRACE MATTERS

Radio Ministry of the ELCA, hosted by the Rev. Peter Marty
Heard locally at 7:30 a.m. Sundays on KGRN, AM1410

JANUARY 4

Ralston Deffenbaugh – *A Refugee Named Jesus*
Exodus 23:9

Ralston (“**Ralie**”) **Deffenbaugh** knows his way around immigration issues. He is a first-rate lawyer who understands the intricacies of immigration law. But more importantly, for the past 17 years, he has been president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, a vantage point for getting inside the hopes and heartaches of refugees and immigrants around the world. In these times of contentious debate over how to handle immigration reform in America, Deffenbaugh has some wise, faith-inspired words to think about with freshness about the subject.

JANUARY 11

Jacob Needleman – *Your Relationship With Money*
Matthew 6:19-21

It is a strange phenomenon to equate happiness with having money, especially since having more money (at least beyond a certain point) rarely makes people more happy. **Jacob Needleman** has a philosopher's mind for thinking about the subject of money. Clearly, the inability among Americans to take money more seriously, and to talk about money with true honesty, distresses this San Francisco State University professor. Here is a program that gets to the heart of our relationship with money.

JANUARY 18

Catherine Wallace – *The Perplexity of Choice*
Deuteronomy 30:19

Most people will admit that we live in an age when a barrage of choices keep assaulting our lives. Bombarded by choice, we are forced continually to reevaluate our identities. We repeatedly must remember or figure out exactly who we are. Living in this confounded way rarely feels good. It fragments and divides up our lives. **Catherine Wallace**, a social historian and freelance writer, joins this edition of *Grace Matters* to wrestle with the perplexity of choice in our modern world.

JANUARY 25

Wayne Messmer – *Finding Release From Hatred*
Revelation 21:5

Wayne Messmer has quite a story to tell. This professional singer and broadcaster was shot at point blank range in the throat one night during a bungled robbery attempt. His vocal cords survived, as did his life and spirit. Through an amazing act of courage and faith, Messmer later found his way to the prison where his assailant was doing time. What happened there is a testimony to the dissolution of hate when one understands life as a supreme gift of God.