

## PASTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT – December 2010

MEMBERSHIP		
	COMM.	SOULS
<b>GAINS:</b> Transfers in:	--	--
Professions of faith:	--	--
Adults confirmed:	--	--
Children confirmed:	--	--
Adult Baptisms:	--	--
Child Baptisms:	--	--
Total Gains:	--	--
<b>LOSSES:</b> Transfers out:	2	2
Releases (of all types):	--	--
Deaths:	--	--
Total Losses:	--	--
<b>NET CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>471</b>

ATTENDANCES	
Sunday Worship (ave.)	167
Sunday attendance	184, 189, 167, 127
Wed Advent	54, 52, 54
Weekly worship (ave.)	220
Christmas Eve & Day	225, 77
Communion	148, 133, 61
Youth Bible Study (ave./mo.)	8
Sunday School (ave./wk)	18
Bible Inquirer's Class (no. enrolled)	10
Midweek Bible Studies (combined ave)	18
Confirmation Class (no. enrolled)	17
Adult Bible Class (ave./wk)	30

FINANCES	
Yearly Budget:	332,400
Monthly Budget:	27,700
Monthly Plate Offerings:	22903
Simply Giving:	2010
Save Our School – S.O.S.:	4,000
C.U.P.:	
Organ Fund	
Endowment Fund	

CALLING ACTIVITY		
	PASTOR	MEMBERS
Homes canvassed (door or phone):		
Telephone calls w/prospects:	2	
Personal visits w/prospects:	5	
Shut-in/hospital visits made:	9	
Letters to members & prospects:	76	
Telephone calls w/members	25	
Personal visits w/members	13	

This month we transferred a son and daughter of Epiphany to other WELS congregations near where they are living and going to school. Michael O'Brien was transferred to Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel in Madison and Caitlin Harrison was transferred to St. John's in Wauwatosa.

In addition to the sermon study outline in the bulletin announcements, I have been adding paragraphs on the history behind and explanations of the hymns for each Sunday. I am hoping that this will deepen your understanding and love for these sermons in song. I am also adding a short note on Christian stewardship based on one of the Scripture readings for that day. I see myself as being a teacher of God's truths, both in my sermons and the liturgy. The entire worship service is designed around our communicating with God – listening to Him and getting to know Him better, so that we can then worship and live for Him more fully.

On Dec 5, the Life and Growth Committee hosted another fun and successful Happy Birthday Jesus breakfast. On Dec 6, the Youth Group met to write out about 50 Christmas cards to our military personnel. We also had two large boxes of gifts from Epiphany and First Evan members to distribute. Thank you to everyone who remembered our men and women in America's service overseas. On Dec 12, the Youth Group met again to go Christmas caroling at three Racine nursing homes or Assisted Living centers. There were 19 young people from high schoolers even

down to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who wanted to be with their siblings singing God's praises for people. At the last place, one of the older ladies even sat down at the piano and plunked out a few tunes for the group!

We sent out 76 postcards to our prospects and inactive members to invite them to our Christmas services.

We had some beautiful Christmas services. It began with the WLS Christmas Cantata where there wasn't a single spoken word in the entire service. Everything was sung by the children, teachers, congregation and pastors. Just beautiful! I didn't do anything for the service, but that was OK, because the other pastors have beautiful singing voices. I did overhear a teenager telling his mom that there was too much singing in the service and his mom scolded him by telling him, "That's what a cantata is!"

Our Sunday School children and teens did another fantastic job of explaining the Christmas Gospel to us in Word and song for Christmas Eve. In my Christmas Eve devotion I led the people in remembering that our Lord Jesus came to bring us peace. On Christmas Day we heard the promises and fulfillment of the Christ child. I explained in the Christmas Day devotion that our response to Christ is always in song. That's why we had a cantata for the WLS service, 18 songs on Christmas Eve and another 13 on Christmas Day. You can read or watch the Christmas devotions online. God has blessed us with such a talented congregation that we had our Epiphany Choir, Sunday School children, Teens, two duets, two solos, piano, pipe organ, guitars, tambourine, violin, and trumpets for the celebration of Christ's birth! We also filled up the church on Christmas Eve where we had 225 in a church that seats about 180 comfortably!

Make sure you come to celebrate the Gentile Christmas on Wednesday, Jan 6 at 6:30 pm. We will celebrate the Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord. It is a grand and glorious festival of praise, communion and fellowship with Epiphany, First Evan and New Hope Lutheran Churches.

On Jan 10, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord on the First Sunday after Epiphany. We will learn the importance of Holy Baptism in our daily lives. In that service, we will visibly see God's blessings upon Epiphany with baptisms and new communicant members!

I will be leaving for Israel and Egypt on Jan 18 and return home on Jan 29. While I'm gone, Pastor Bauer and Pastor Brug, both from Shoreland, will lead the services on those Sundays. Both Sundays we will use the service of Morning Praise and you'll actually get to hear a pastor sing his portion of the liturgy!

As God's glory was veiled in ordinary looking flesh and blood, so also is the glory of Christ's body and blood veiled in ordinary bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is so extremely special to us as Lutheran Christians. Through this Means of Grace, the Holy Spirit works forgiveness of sins, new life and eternal salvation. In the past few months in Bible studies both with members and prospects taking the Bible Inquirer's Class, more and more questions about our frequency of the Lord's Supper have been asked. It is especially striking when non-members ask why we don't offer the Lord's Supper more often. If we believe that this sacrament gives us Christ's very body and blood and Jesus says to take it often in remembrance of Him, then why do we only celebrate it only twice a month? I don't have a good answer. We are going to be studying the Lord's Supper on Sunday mornings in January. Based on our study and discussion both in Bible study and among the Church Council, Elders and Worship Committee, it has been suggested to offer the Lord's Supper every Sunday. I hope to see you in Bible study for a great topic!

The Teens will be learning about Christians who are being martyred around the world for their faith. Bring them for study in the Parish House! And if your children have been in Sunday School yet, bring them in the New Year. Is there a better way to start the New Year than being in God's Word as a family?!

Epiphany is now on Facebook! We now have a brand new Technology Committee that has been studying how we can better serve our congregation and community with technology. We already offer copies of our services via DVD and VHS to our shut-ins and sermons and devotions on our web page. We have seen how the Lord has used the baptism information on our web page to lead a young woman in France to be baptized and become a member of the WELS. My "rock star" microphone and the personal mikes for our ensembles are all part of our commitment for better technology. I will be soon purchasing a computer and phone to keep me better connected to our people with texting, emails, Facebook, etc.

This is a way for our young and older members (especially the younger ones) to stay connected in a Christian atmosphere. I plan on adding blogs on different Christian subjects, as well as Bible quotes and Lutheran quotes every week. While I am in Israel, when I'm not playing Sheepshead at night with the other pastors, I plan on blogging and adding pictures from the Holy Land. You can follow along with your Pastor in the Promised Land. This Facebook page will also be used, Lord willing, for outreach to non-church goers who may searching for spiritual guidance, advice, information or just friendship on the Web. There are 350 million people on Facebook! We may be able to reach people on a global scale! The digital revolution has changed our culture – computers, GPS, cell

phones, I-pods, Twitter, texting, HD-TVs, etc. At Epiphany, we are just trying to catch up!

Through the Bible in one year: My devotional plan for the New Year is to read a portion of the Bible from my new Lutheran Study Bible and then also a portion of the Lutheran Confessions. My goal is to get through the Bible and the Confessions in 2010. I'm sure that will give me plenty of insights and inspiration to blog about in the coming year. I studied the Lutheran Confessions in college and the seminary, but I am gaining a deeper appreciation for them as I study and teach them at least 3 times a week for Bible studies with the lower school faculty, our Racine pastors, and our members. Hopefully I can lead you into a deeper appreciation of our Confession, also and apply them to your life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will soon begin construction on the new bathrooms for our church. The work will begin with taking at least half of the back of the coat room to make a family bathroom with a changing table. This is necessary since we have many elderly members who find it difficult to use the stairs, plus we have a lot of young children that can't seem to "hold it" during the service. On Christmas Eve, I saw two dads changing their babies in the Friendship Room. We need this bathroom. If there isn't room upstairs for coats, we may have a "valet" take your coats downstairs into the hallway where there is plenty of room for coats. Then we will redo the two downstairs bathrooms to make them more pleasing to the eye. Visitors care about these kinds of things!

Thank you to all of you who gave gifts to my family for Pastor Appreciation in October or for Christmas. It was certainly greatly appreciated! The entire cost of my trip to Israel has been paid for by you! As the apostle Paul said to the Philippians whom he dearly loved, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. (Philippians 1:3-7) I cannot say it more eloquently than the Lord's apostle. But the sentiments are the same!

Parents of 7th & 8th graders are invited to attend the Pacer Informational Brunch at Shoreland Lutheran High School. Discover the difference a Christian-based education can have on a child's life! In addition to a great meal, you will have the opportunity to meet the faculty, tour the school, and have your questions answered. The brunch will be held Sunday, January 31 at 11:30 AM. Please respond to the school office (262-859-2595) no later than Wednesday, January 27.

In your church mailbox you will find new offering envelopes for 2010. You will notice that they are very different from the ones we have used in the past. These were less expensive for us to order, but these new envelopes have our Epiphany logo on each envelope. Really the main purpose is that if you miss church some time, you can just seal your offering inside, put a stamp on it and mail it to church. It is already addressed to Epiphany.

If you did not give a special gift to the Lord for Christmas, consider giving to Him in the New Year or with the SOS. We had special gifts totaling \$4,000 come in this month! Thank you to all of God's faithful stewards!

In Christ's service, Pastor Zarling