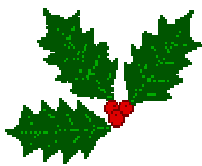


The Spirit at Bethel

December 2009/January 2010

Sherwood Park, Alberta

Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world



All About Advent

Q. Why does the church year begin at Advent, what is the history of Advent, and what is the history behind the Advent candles and wreath?

A. The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh.

Advent begins the church year because the church year begins where Jesus' earthly life began--in the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation. After Advent comes Christmas, which is about his birth; then Epiphany, about his miracles and ministry; then Lent, about his Calvary-bound mission; then Easter, about his resurrection and the sending of the apostles; and then Ascension (40 days after Easter) and Pentecost, with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The first half of the church year (approximately December through June) highlights the *life* of Christ. The second half (approximately June through November) highlights the *teachings* of Christ. The parables and miracles play a big part here. That's "the church year in a nutshell," and it should help reveal how Advent fits into "the big picture."

Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways--past, present, and future. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the future focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings which highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today.

The traditional use of Advent candles (sometimes held in a wreath) originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle. The purple candles matched the purple paraments

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on the altar (purple for the royalty of the coming King). The pink candle was the third candle to be lit (not the fourth) on Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means "Rejoice!" in Latin, and is the first word of the traditional Introit for that day which is taken from Philippians 4:4:

**Rejoice in the
Lord always.
I will say it**

"Rejoice! . . . the Lord is near". Hence a "pink" candle was used to signify "rejoicing." Some also included a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas, December 25-January 5.

(Taken from the LCMS Website)



A Legacy of Faith

Deloyce Elle

What is the greatest legacy you wish to leave behind for your children, or your grandchildren? Is it money? Possessions? These are earthly things that will fade with time. The greatest legacy to pass along is the gift of faith.

Throughout the coming months and years, we will be using a series called *Faith Legacy*. The materials are written by the same publisher used for Grace Land and Quest 56. *Faith Legacy* is a 'stepping stones' program to assist and support parents in the promises made during their child's baptism and to help families grow spiritually in their homes as children reach different age milestones. Parents meet for three 60 minute sessions with other parents of same-age children. Sessions involve DVD teachings combined with small group discussions.

In addition to the sessions for parents, each part of the series involves a blessing object as a

physical reminder for the child. Infants are given a **faith chest** which becomes a symbol of the treasure of faith built in your child's life. It is never too early to begin to pray and plan for your child's spiritual future. Parents are encouraged to personalize the chest for their child. Inside, objects from the child's baptism can be placed (the candle, cloth, and shell), along with the other blessing objects as they grow older. When their children reach age 2, parents learn how to share their faith with their child using a **picture Bible**. A **worship kit, which includes a candle and cross**, teaches your 4-year old child that worship is saying "I love you, God." When children turn 6, they are presented with a special towel and basin as they learn about serving others and seeing people and the world through God's eyes. Eight-year olds are given a **Bible** as parents teach about the importance of a devotional life, both as a family and personally.

While your child may have already passed these age milestones, it is never too late to begin to share these blessing objects. For more detailed information about the objects and how you can present them to your child, please speak with Deloyce Elle.

The first session called "Faith Chest" is being offered for parents of children under the age of 2. Classes will be Saturday, January 9, 16, and 23 at 10:00 am. If you would like to attend, please call the church office at 780-417-7775 to register.



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The Missing Piece

Pastor Marv



Is there a piece missing in your life?

Grandmother's Love Returns to Grandmother's Bay

Ron Ludke

For eleven years, Grandmas Lu, Fran and Dorothy shared God's love with the children of Grandmother's Bay, Saskatchewan. Many of those children are now young adults with children of their own. Everyone in the community remembers with fondness the joy and hope these three grandmothers brought to Grandmother's Bay. On Good Friday, 2008, Grandma Lu was received into her heavenly home.



The band councilor, Leon Charles, was one of the children who attended the Grandma Vacation Bible School. He told me that the "Grandmother Spirit" would always be with the people of Grandmother's Bay. He requested that we send more grandmothers to the children of the community.

This year, three new grandmothers responded to God's call: Grandma Kathleen from Alberta, and Grandmas Jan and Lorna from Wisconsin. Kathleen and I met the two other women in La-Ronge for the first time, just before we attended worship and then began the last leg of our journey to Grandmother's Bay.

It was delightful for me to walk around the community and make introductions. The children exclaimed with joy: "You brought Grandmas? We are going to have Bible School!"



The Grandmas held VBS in the morning and afternoon. More than 50 children were taught how to pray. I returned to visit the children and the Grandmas the following Wednesday, and it was evident that God's love had returned to Grandmother's Bay. A bond had been forged between the Grandmas and the children.

The Grandmas commented to us, and LAMP's supporters: "We need Grandma reinforcements. Is God calling you to join us?"

Kathleen told us, "It was a most humbling and unique experience. God showed me a lot that week. God showed me that it is not about programs and plans when I went to this community. The children were looking for love and acceptance. I tend to be focused on delivering the "lesson" in the best possible way; whereas God showed me it is LOVE for His people that matters."



Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

10:00 a.m.
3:00 p.m.
4:30 p.m.
6:00 p.m.
7:30 p.m.
9:00 p.m.

Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion

The Great French Fry Quest, Part One

Kris Buchholtz

On Friday, November 13 at 7:00 PM, thirty youth armed with \$90.00 among them gathered at Bethel to begin their annual quest for the “Best French Fry.” After traveling far and wide (across Sherwood Park) and partaking in extensive taste-testing, this year’s Junior High fry hunters are proud to announce the following results from their extensive search: the Best French Fry for 2009 (Junior High Edition) was discovered at... McDonalds!!! Honorable mention goes to the potatoes at New York Fries and Dairy Queen (in that order).

Stay tuned for Part Two of the Great French Fry Quest when our senior high group conducts their own investigation...



T'was Amazing—Simply Amazing

Laila Klaszus

What, you ask, was so amazing? The answer:



the music, dedicated to the glory of God, that filled Bethel's sanctuary the afternoon of Sunday,

November 22. The occasion? The special Hymn Festival planned and organized by Connie Bromley, Contemporary Worship Director. The 22-member Blended Choir under Connie's direction was outstanding. The choir was accompanied by organist Gayle Berg and pianist Barry Bromley,

both of Bethel. For several of the hymns, the congregation was invited to join in. Outstanding guest soloists rounded out the Festival. It was truly a worshipful experience.



The following is Connie's summary of the presentations:

“The Blended Choir did a wonderful job on an anthem by Handel and a Gloria by Haydn. Gayle Berg and Barry Bromley blessed us with piano and organ duets, and Kathy and Andy Olasker read Scripture passages related to the hymns and narrated the life stories of the composers. Guest soprano Wendy Vanderwel, a professional singer presently singing with the Da Camera Singers, touched our hearts with the aria “I Know that My Redeemer Liveth” from Handel’s *Messiah*. Pastor Lorne Manweiler, a winner of organ performance and improvisation competitions and a solo performer in major churches and concert halls in North America and Europe, played the first movement of an organ sonata by Mendelssohn based on the hymn “Our Father, Who from Heaven Above” by Martin Luther. A vocal trio--Kathleen Galbraith-Robertson (Connie Bromley and Wendy Vanderwel) and a quartet (Jonathan Strand, Richard Kraemer, Heather Higgs and Connie Bromley) completed the afternoon. Pastor James led the congregation in the reading of a Psalm and prayer. Thanks to all who shared their talents and helped remember the gifts of music these composers have given us.”

And thanks be to God for blessing Bethel with people who have such rich and varied musical talents.

Soli Deo Gloria



Dr. John Patrick at Bethel

Doug Haberstock

On Sunday, November 8, Dr. Russ Nelson's Bible Class welcomed a special guest speaker, Dr. John Patrick, M.D. Dr. Patrick is the President of Augustine College, located in Ottawa. In 2002, he retired from the University of Ottawa as a Professor of Clinical Nutrition in the Departments of Biochemistry and Pediatrics; he now lectures at numerous universities throughout the world. At Augustine College he is a Professor of the History of Science and Medicine.

His talk at Bethel revolved around The Beatitudes (The Sermon on the Mount) as recorded in the book of Matthew, Chapter 5. Dr. Patrick, quoting Bonhoeffer, challenged us to ask God for a scripture verse(s) to keep in our heart at all times. To this end, Dr. Patrick has committed the Sermon on the Mount to memory. He expounded upon the first 12 verses, describing Jesus' words as the framework for Discipleship and Christian Character. Quoting from numerous authors, and relating stories of his own life experiences, he revealed to the attendees the meaning and application of The Beatitudes. As Dr. Nelson indicated, an hour was far too brief to cover this profound section of Scripture, and should Dr. Patrick return to Edmonton again, we would be wise to schedule an afternoon so that a more in-depth study could be pursued.

In addition to his visit at Bethel, Dr. Patrick spoke to the participants of the 4th annual Love Life Conference at Concordia University College of Alberta; there he spoke on "How Abortion Became Acceptable....How Did We Get Here?" and "On Using Our Own Language in the Public Sphere". On the same weekend he was a guest speaker at the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute in Camrose and at the Christian Medical Dental Society.

At the end of his presentation, he passed out a CD of his complete exposition of The Sermon on

the Mount. Those who received this CD are welcomed to donate to

Dr. John Patrick
%Augustine College
18 Blackburn Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario

Those interested in learning more about Dr. Patrick's lectures or about Augustine College, please check the following websites:

www.johnpatrick.ca
www.augustinecollege.org



Help Needed to Search Out Needs!

Gladys Teske

A research project is helping us get to know the needs in Sherwood Park—could you help?

Coming out of this year's Ecumenical Mission is a research project that will help our churches get to know the needs and resources in Sherwood Park, and to consider how we, as Christians, might step into some of the gaps. The research team is looking for some folks who might be able to help. They need someone who can conduct a handful of interviews about life in Sherwood Park with a cross-section of our congregation. The interview questions are supplied.

They are also looking for people who might be willing to interview their neighbours (again, questions supplied). And they need someone who can take information the County has supplied and condense it down into key themes.

If you are able to help in any of these ways, please contact Rev. Lori Calkins at St. Thomas Anglican Church at 780-467-5730 or at calkinsl@telus.net. Lori is the local coordinator for the Action Group that is moving the research forward.



This Little Light of Mine

Sherri-Dawn Annett

The virgin taper is kissed excitedly by the fire of Christ. A flare of flame ignites on the slender white candle, its light flickering and growing brighter, as if gaining strength from the One who created light itself.

He stands beside me, my hand resting on the small of his broad back, willing my love to help support him on this day of acknowledgment. A child-like man, towering at 6'5, stands before strangers, stripped of the masks of pride, ego and shame. Tears of longing, regret and rawness mark their path down his cheeks and into the hearts of those who listen as his voice relents to emotion, ***"I have come to proclaim my belief in God."***

The path to this moment has been laced with disillusionment and at times obscured by suits and hollow words. God's voice hushed by the urgencies of the day, exposed flaws in man's religious law and personal agendas.

But even shadows cannot exist without light. And the light pointed to signs. Signs to our new home, signed by God himself. His grace filled both our hearts and caused us to feel God and weep with longing. ***"How precious did that Grace appear the hour I first believed."***

And so here he stands, in front of the congregation, hands steadied by his childhood Bible, with the worn blue cover and pages tabbed by his five-year old self. Baptismal waters cascade over his brow, washing away the loneliness and hurt, cleansing his soul for rebirth. The sign of God is marked with oil on his forehead.

And the candle is lit. A fire that can never be put out, a fire that thirsts for truth, a fire that pushes the shadows away ~ casting only light. ***Let it shine.***

(Editor's note: Sherri-Dawn's husband Mike was baptized into his new life in Christ on October 4, 2009 at Bethel)



Laminin

Taken from the Internet

A couple of days ago I was running (I use that term very loosely) on my treadmill, watching a DVD sermon by Louie Giglio...and I was BLOWN AWAY! I want to share what I learned....but I fear not being able to convey it as well as I want. I will share anyway.

He (Louie) was talking about how inconceivably BIG our God is...how He spoke the universe into being...how He breathes stars out of His mouth that are huge raging balls of fire...etc. etc. Then He went on to speak of how this star-breathing, universe creating God ALSO knitted our human bodies together with amazing detail and wonder. At this point I am LOVING it (fascinating from a medical standpoint, you know.)and I was remembering how I was constantly amazed during medical school as I learned more and more about God's handiwork. I remember so many times thinking...."How can ANYONE deny that a Creator did all of this???"

Louie went on to talk about how we can trust that the God who created all this, also has the power to hold it all together when things seem to be falling apart...how our loving Creator is also our sustainer.

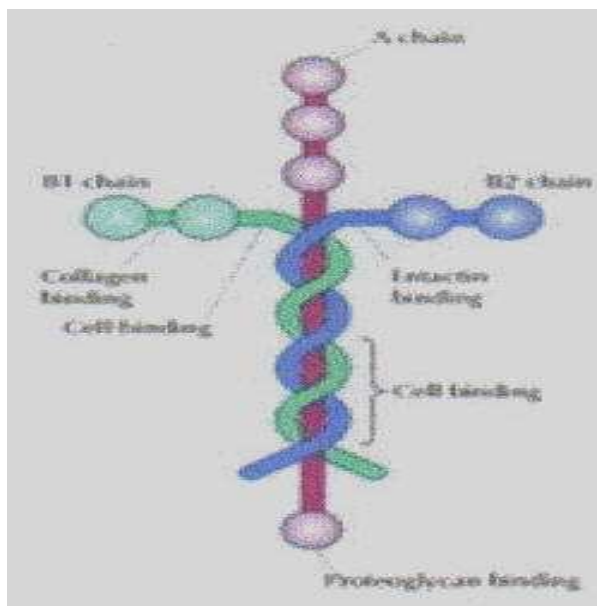
And then I lost my breath. And it wasn't because I was running my treadmill, either!!! It was because he started talking about laminin. I knew about laminin. Here is how wikipedia describes them: "Laminins are a family of proteins that are an integral part of the structural scaffolding of basement membranes in almost every animal tissue." You see....laminins are what hold us together....LITERALLY. They are cell adhesion molecules. They are what holds one cell of our bodies to the next cell. Without them, we would literally fall apart. And I knew all this already. But what I didn't know is what laminin LOOKED LIKE.

But now I do. And I have thought about it a thousand times since (already)....

Here is what the structure of laminin looks like...AND THIS IS NOT a "Christian portrayal" of it....if you look up laminin in any scientific/

medical piece of literature, this is what you will see...

Now tell me that our God is not the coolest!!! Amazing. The glue that holds us together, ALL



of us, is in the shape of the cross.

Immediately Colossians 1:15-17 comes to mind: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things HOLD TOGETHER." *Colossians 1:15-17*

Call me crazy. I just think that this is very, very, very cool.

Thousands of years before the world knew anything about laminin, Paul penned those words. And now we see that from a very LITERAL standpoint, we are held together...one cell to another....by the cross.

You would never in a quadrillion years convince me that is anything other than the mark of a Creator who knew EXACTLY what laminin "glue" would look like long before Adam even breathed his first breath!

!

Praise the Lord!!!!!!

