

# SHEPHERD'S STAFF

**SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Volume 57 Issue 11

November 2015

## Leaving the Light on for Christ

As you read this, we have begun the season of Advent, those four-plus weeks before Christmas in which, in stubborn contrast to the fulsome joy of Christmas, we dress the sanctuary in hues of blue and focus on hope. Where Christmas brings rich celebration, Advent seems sparse and simple by comparison.

My favorite Advent decoration is a simple one: a candle in a window. Though ours are electric to avoid fires, the concept is timeless. We leave a light in the window to guide a traveler who could come at a late hour. We leave a light in the window to show welcome to one who seeks shelter.

You've heard, I imagine, that Advent is a season of waiting and expectation. But waiting for what? Naturally, we wait for dinners with family, trees with presents, and Christmastime sights and sound. But ultimately in Advent we are waiting for Christ himself, for the newborn in our celebration of Christmas, but also for Christ's promised second coming to a world that needs his light. The candle symbolizes both our waiting for Christ and Christ as the light of the world (cf. John 1).

The candle also brings to mind hospitality, an essential virtue that we often associate with Christmas. In biblical times, hospitality was the most sacred of duties. Three days' lodging and feasting was an obligatory gift for friends, enemies, or total strangers. Even when one did not "entertain angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2, cf. Genesis 18), hospitality formed the basis for mutual security and coexistence in a diverse, dangerous world.

Of course, hospitality is still important to us. While the unconditional, extravagant hospitality of the Ancient Near East is not the same in our culture, we still care about how we host others in our homes, especially for the holidays. Here's hoping that as we play host or guest this Christmas, the stress of the season does not outshine the joy of being together and sharing the kindness of hospitality.

The same goes for us in the church. At our worship, especially in Holy Communion, Christ is our host. But we are not only guests, but called in baptism to be Christ's servants. And so especially at church, our hospitality reflects the host, our master. While some of us have more gifts than others for particular aspects of hospitality, all of us have the calling to make others, especially strangers, feel welcome in the presence of Christ. Would you wait until a guest was already in your living room before greeting him? How much more should Christ's guests be greeted at the door of our church, welcomed with the kind of genial kindness we give our own houseguests. Advent is a time to focus on hospitality, remembering that Christ has welcomed us and that we await him knocking at the door (Revelation 3:20).

### Inside this issue:

Pastor's Column 1

Financial 4

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## † IN OUR PRAYERS †

Nevagay Abel, Kelsey Dolan, Lois Johnson, Sam Horvath, Don Abel, Kevin Persaud, Dan Webber (friend of Bruce Solko), Marge Rhodes (friend of Don & Neva Abel), David Johnson (nephew of Dyvone Freburg), Mildred Anderson (mother of Cheryl Erdmann), Nancy Lund (sister-in-law of Bob & Patte Lund), Robert Kibble (brother of Vee Kerley), Pastor Paul Garchow (friend of the Lund family), Lisa Jones, Barb Rose, & Julaine Lofquist-Birch (Jerry Lofquist's sisters) Barb Schafer (friend of Phil & Susie Smalley), Carl Every (friend of Susie Smalley), Rosemary Kincaid and the family of Ed Kincaid, (friends of Rod & Bev Bjerke), Mary Ann Hopper, Pastor Jeffrey Butz (nephew of Don & Neva Abel), Brian Lyngaas (friend of Rhoda Fox), Pastor Laura Koppenhaefer, Al Bettisch, Pastor Jay Quinn, the people of Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry, India, and our homebound church members.

(Please let either Pastor Scott or the church office know when a name can be removed from the prayer list).



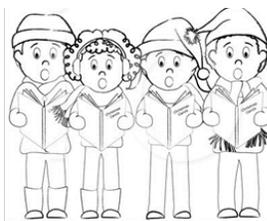
## Senior News

### SENIOR CHRISTMAS POTLUCK Tuesday, December 8 at Noon.

Meat, beverage and place settings will be provided. Please sign up on the kiosk for a side dish or dessert. Following the meal, the Fourth graders from Rockford Lutheran Academy will sing for us.

GOOD NEWS BIBLES  
OLD "GREEN" HYMNALS  
FREE

ON THE TABLE IN THE NARTHEX  
HELP YOURSELF



## Caroling & Cookies Saturday

December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

Please join us in visiting congregation members at home bringing Christmas cheer and songs. Fellowship

back at the church afterwards. Please sign up on the poster board in the narthex. We are looking for carolers, drivers and well as holiday cookies makers for this event. Meet at church by 5:30 pm for organization and caravan transportation. Cookies are to be delivered to the church by December 6<sup>th</sup>. This event is sponsor by Fellowship and Outreach Committees.

## Tying Fleece Blankets



Join us in tying fleece blankets on Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> in Moline Hall during fellowship after worship. All ages are

welcome to help. The fleece blankets will be blessed on December 13<sup>th</sup> and given to Rock House Kids. Rock House Kids is an Outreach program that cares for at-risk children (ages 5 – 18) providing a safe, warm, and nurturing environment in Rockford's inner City. Thank you to Dennis and Sherry Scheider as members of Thrivent Financial for leading the Thrivent Action Team "Fleece Blankets For Kids." Thrivent Financial gave Dennis and Sherry \$250.00 to purchase fleece material for this project.



## Women's Bible Study

We're taking a winter break and will begin again in March. Stay tuned for updates. Have a Merry Christmas.

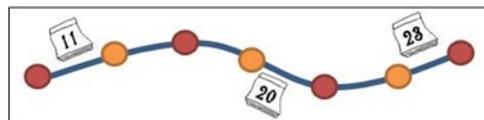
*Prelude to Christmas*



*Our third annual Prelude to Christmas will be held this year on Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30pm. This is a program put on by the Worship and Music committee in which we decorate the sanctuary and Christmas tree, all while singing Christmas Carols.*

*This year, after we are finished decorating, we will go into Moline Hall for 'Coffee, Cocoa and Cookies' and for fellowship with Christmas music playing softly in the background.*

*Ask a friend or neighbor if they would like to come and share in the celebration of the Christmas season. This has become a fun evening for our young and young at heart!*



**TIMELINE**

On December 13 & 20 people of all ages are invited to gather in Moline Hall during educational hour to help make and augment a timeline of the congregation's history. In order to share Shepherd of the Valley's story and shape it for the coming years, we (including your new pastor!) need to know that story and share it with each other.



For many of us the holidays are a joyful time to enjoy our blessings. The Food for the Needy Drive is one way to share

those blessings with families who really need our assistance to have a happy holiday. This year, can you help? We will again be partnering with the Salvation Army's "Food for the Needy Drive" throughout the month of November. Food items most needed are **Canned Fruits, Canned Vegetables** and **Canned Meats**. Please no glass jars or bottles. Thank you for your generosity.

**LIBRARY NEWS**



Advent and Christmas books will be displayed on a table in the narthex. We have a wonderful collection of books to enlighten the season.

No library workday in December.





**WELCOME PASTOR SCOTT**

Pastor Scott Benolkin, his wife Monica and their daughter Claire. Pastor Scott was installed on November 8th.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Financial results as of October 31 , 2015 and Year to date totals

	C & B Actual	C & B Budget	C & B Yr td Actual	C & B Yr td Budget
Income	\$11,427.39	\$12,664.58	\$147,169.12	\$141,215.83
Expense	\$15,346.78	\$13,481.81	\$175,733.47	\$163,701.81
Inc/exp plus offsets plus interest	-\$3,919.39	-\$817.23	-\$28,564.35	-\$22,485.98
	\$2,368.88	\$550.00	\$16,217.16	\$4,120.00
	\$0.62	\$0.67	\$6.79	\$6.67
Net income	-\$1,549.89	-\$266.56	-\$12,340.40	-\$18,359.31

C&B balance 10/31/15 9/30/15  
 (\$9,717.50) (\$8,482.61)

	Building Actual	Building Budget	Bld Yr TD Actual	Bld Yr TD Budget
Income	\$2,055.00	\$2,055.00	\$22,065.00	\$22,241.00
Expense	\$2,207.40	\$2,257.40	22,474.00	22,574.00
Net inc/exp	-\$152.40	-\$202.40	-\$409.00	-\$333.00

Building fund balance 10/31/15 9/30/15  
 \$19,415.85 \$19,558.25

Please note: Financials run one month behind in the bulletin.  
 Also note: The second installment cost \$4,600 and we have paid \$1,494 of this bill as of 10/31/15.  
 Balance on our mortgage - \$308,141.99.



**GOD'S BLESSINGS**

to our 3rd graders who received their first communion on November 1st:

- Abby Bjerke Gabriel Harezlak
- Ezekiel Harezlak Alyssa Purvis
- Samantha Spangler Benjamin Woodcock
- ( Not pictured)

Attendance statistics are based on the 5 weeks  
 October 25 - November 22

Average weekly worship attendance:: 102

Contributions are based on the 5 weeks  
 October 25 - November 22

Average weekly contributions:  
 Current & Benevolence - \$ 3,681.50  
 Building Fund - \$ 515.50

Dear People of God,

I so enjoyed the wonderful installation service and reception on November 8. Thank you especially for your thoughtful gift of the beautiful Holy Communion set. I will use it with thanksgiving for you and for God's presence and work in our midst.

Yours in Christ,  
 Pr. Scott



**Envelopes changes for 2016**

We want to inform you of some upcoming changes to the envelopes for 2016. Sometime in mid-December, you will receive in the mail a packet of envelopes for your 1<sup>st</sup> quarter giving. Included with these 13 Sunday envelopes will be special offering envelopes for an Initial offering, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday) and Easter.

The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter envelopes will again be mailed directly to your home about 15 days prior to the start of the quarter. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter will not contain any specials and the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter will have Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve as specials.

You will note that we have eliminated most of the special envelopes. We are trying to move to a point where the Current and Benevolence giving will fund all aspects of the expenses of our church without having to make special collections to support expenses that are already budgeted for. That is not to say that if you want to make a special donation to Christian Education, Fellowship, Hospitality, Library, Outreach or any other specials that we have had in the past that you can't. You will be able to make the donation by filling in the "other" line on the front of your envelope and it will be directed to that expense as it has in the past. Again, we are trying to move to a process where the giving to C&B supports all the expenses of the church.

Remember also that if you do not want to write a check, you have the option to have your giving deducted directly from your checking or savings account through Simply Giving.

If you have any questions about the envelopes, Simply Giving or the budget process, please feel free to talk to me.

With God's blessings to each of you,  
Phil Smalley - Treasurer

**Blue Christmas**

Christmas is a time of joy, but for many of us it is also a time of sorrow. This time of year we may feel more deeply the loss of loved ones, the loneliness of Christmas without family, or simply the "holiday blues." But God's love and healing is for us in all seasons. Please join us for a "Blue Christmas" service of prayer and healing at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 13.



**WARM FEET MISSION**

Warm Feet Mission is a Rockford based mission that was started in 2008 with the help of the church, family, and friends. We are collecting socks through the middle of December. The socks will be donated to Rock House Kids, Rockford Rescue Mission, and Carpenter's Place. Socks are available for purchase for \$1.00 per pair. If you would like to purchase your own socks, there will be a box in the Narthex for your donations. Thank you in advance for your support. Ann Honer

**Families Helping Families**

We will have the opportunity again this year to help preschool-aged students from Summerdale Early Childhood Center to have a few extra gifts for Christmas. Tags with clothing sizes and a toy request will be available in the narthex by Thanksgiving. Please make sure to sign out the tag on the master list. When you take a tag, you are committing to buy that child a shirt, pants and the requested toy. This is usually a \$25-\$30 commitment. Instructions on how the gifts need to be wrapped will be available. All gifts must be back to church no later than Sunday, December 13th for distribution to the families that week before school lets out for the winter break. All questions should be directed to Carol Bailey. Her phone number is 815-222-4935 or email at [carol.bailey@rps205.com](mailto:carol.bailey@rps205.com). Thank you so much for your generous giving spirit this holiday season.

The Reverend Scott Benolkin  
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church  
2715 S. Mulford Rd.  
Rockford, IL 61109

Dear Pastor Benolkin,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

On behalf of Bishop Gary Wollersheim and Synod Vice-President Bill Bartlett, I wish to thank you and your congregation for hosting the North Conference 2015 Discipleship Gathering at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church on September 17, 2015. I am so sorry that it has taken me so long to send you this "thank you." Please forgive my tardiness.

Shepherd of the Valley was a wonderful place to have the Gathering. Your congregation's warm and kind hospitality helped everyone to feel welcome and comfortable. Please convey our deep appreciation to everyone who helped with preparation for the event. Your congregation members did an amazing job, and the opportunity to talk over food truly enhanced the entire gathering. I was so proud of my fellow members!

Thank you again for your part in our ministry doing God's Work with Our Hands. May God bless you and the members of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in your ministry to God and neighbor.

In Christ,

Deaconess Cheryl A. Erdmann, AiM  
Assistant to the Bishop  
Northern Illinois Synod, ELCA  
103 W. State Street  
Rockford, IL 61101

**COMMITMENT CARDS**

If you haven't turned in your commitment card please bring it to church and place it in the offering plate or drop it off in the church office. We're working on the budget and need to have an accurate idea of what our income will be for 2016. Thank you.



Many thanks to the cooks, bakers and donors for Rock House Kids meal! Goulash, salad, cheese, rolls and homemade cookies were delivered Monday. It takes a village (or a church!) to make it happen!

**KATIE'S CHOICE BOOK CLUB**

The book for January is "A Spy Among Friends: Kim Philby & the Great Betrayal" by Ben Macintyre. It's the story of the head of Britain's counterintelligence against the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War while he was secretly working for the enemy. His best friend and fellow officer in MI6 and his American friend were unaware of the betrayal. They never abandoned him until it was too late.

**CONGRATULATIONS**

To Cheryl Erdmann on the birth of her granddaughter, Ember Grace Erdmann.

# YOUTH

## Parent's Night Out

The youth at SVLC will be providing child care for children aged 6 months to 5th grade on **Friday, December 11 from 6-10 p.m.** This is a great opportunity to get some shopping/wrapping done or just have a date night!

A free-will offering will be accepted and all proceeds from this service will go toward future youth events. Reservations must be made in advance if you want your child to participate, and there will be limited space depending upon how many youth and adults will be assisting. There will be planned activities including making gingerbread houses, so each family is asked to bring one bag of candy to be used to decorate them. Dinner will be provided. RSVP to Carol Bailey at 815-222-4935 or email at [carol.bailey@rps205.com](mailto:carol.bailey@rps205.com) if you would like your child (ren) to participate.

**December 6 - 5:00-7:00 pm** GAGA-BALL @ Alpine Lutheran Church. Join other Youth Connect Churches for a night of GAGA BALL, Ginger Bead House Decorating Contest, other games and pizza!!! \$3. covers pizza, pop and all the activities!!!

## SAVE THE DATES

- Dec. 3 - 6:30 pm Swedish Christmas Dinner with the Salvation Army Bank @ Salem Lutheran Church. \$15.00 donation
- Dec. 12 - 9:00 - noon 57th Annual Lucia Celebration @ First Lutheran Church, Rockford. Arts, crafts "treasurers", and homemade bakery.
- Dec. 12 - 9:00 - noon Lucia Fest @ Zion Lutheran Church.
- Dec. 13 - 12:30 - "Blue Christmas" @ SVLC
- Dec. 13 - 5:30 pm Healing Service for all who are hurting, sad, lonely, sick or care for someone who is. @ GPS, Machesney Park.
- Dec. 20 - 5:00 pm "It's Not Only a Merry Christmas" a worship service for everyone, and especially for those who are hurting or grieving during this holiday season @ Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd.

## Earn money for Shepherd of the Valley

The more you shop, the more you earn. 3 easy ways by using your Schnucks Grocery Card. Merchants deposit earned money directly to the church.

1. Swiping your Schnucks Card when purchasing Schnucks groceries.
2. Shopping online with your credit card and/or debit card. What could be better than shopping from the comfort of your own home while earning money for Shepherd of the Valley with each purchase! The eScrip Online Mall program has over 800 stores to choose from. Here is a small sampling business that will give money to Shepherd of the Valley through the eScrip's Online Mall:

Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Bergner's, Best Buy, ebay, Home Depot, Kohls, Old Navy, Target, and Shutterfly,

1. Dining out. Use your registered credit and/debit cards at participating restaurants across the country. Restaurants currently in Rockford are: Gene's Place, 4412 Manchester Dr. and Lone Star Steakhouse, 6690 E State St.

To participate contact Kay Brindle.

## PRESCHOOL NEWS



The 4-year olds performed a Thanksgiving program including songs about the first Thanksgiving at a potluck lunch on November 25th.

The 3 & 4-year olds enjoyed a Saturday with their Mom's on November 14.

Merry Christmas to all.





Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church (ELCA)  
2715 S. Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61109  
Phone: 815-399-5503 E-mail: [svlcsecretary@att.net](mailto:svlcsecretary@att.net)  
On The Web: [www.shep61.org](http://www.shep61.org).

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## RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

### Office Hours

Monday—Thursday  
8:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

### 2015 Church Council

Kay Brindle, Outreach  
Carol Dahl, Financial Secretary  
Janette Erickson, Vice President &  
Fellowship  
Chad Farris, Property  
Amy Kellogg, Youth Ministry  
Lena Lund, Youth Representative  
Robert Maness, Finance  
Vicki Nitz, Preschool  
Laurie Pellant, Social Ministry  
Sally Schrader, Christian Education  
Phil Smalley, Treasurer  
Bruce Solko, Personnel  
Bev Wacker, Worship/Music  
John Wolf, Stewardship  
Terri Woodcock, Secretary

### Staff

The Rev. Scott Benolkin, Pastor  
Judi Fields, Secretary  
Linda Longardner, Organist  
Phil Smalley, Treasurer  
Susie Smalley, Music Director  
Diane Kirkland, Bell Director  
Patte Lund, Christian Education.  
Carol Dahl, Financial Secretary  
Anita Ralston, Custodian



## COME CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

(We worship each Sunday at 9:30 am)

**November 29 – 1 Advent**

**December 6 – 2 Advent**

**December 13 – 3 Advent**

Children's Christmas program during morning worship

**December 20 – 4 Advent**

Christmas Cantata during morning worship

**December 24 – Christmas Eve**

Communion Service

5:00 pm & 11:00 PM