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DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA NORTH



Enjoying **‘Breakfast in Bethlehem’**

A shepherd with a live goat greeted visitors and parishioners at St. Johns, Park Rapids, on Dec. 3. The congregation welcomed attendees to its first “Breakfast in Bethlehem” Advent event. In the church’s entryway, participants viewed staged scenes depicting how Bethlehem may have appeared as Mary and Joseph entered the town 2,000 years ago.

After a hearty breakfast was served to attendees, the story of Jesus’ birth was presented through narrated character reenactments. Photo ops were available to all. Children engaged in crafts, cookie decorating and a Christmas kazoo review. A display of 57 Nativity sets ran the length of the sanctuary for visitors to view.



Giving thanks **BY GIVING BACK**

Immanuel, rural Wheaton, achieved its goal of collecting more than 500 items for the Traverse County Food Shelf as part of the "Give Thanks Give Back Challenge."

Because the congregation met its goal, Northland Thrivent also donated \$1,000 for the food shelf's drive.



Celebrating the Savior's birth

On Dec. 10, Trinity, Appleton, hosted a Festival of Nativities. The well-attended event featured more than 100 nativity scenes displayed throughout the church. Many owners shared the stories of their nativities. Some of the scenes are more than 100 years old!

Trinity's LWML served drinks and goodies for the event. Funds were provided by Thrivent.



Ladies gather for Advent event

But as (Joseph) considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

MATT. 1:20-21

The world was living in darkness, so God sent His Son to show people the light! Jesus was born to die on the cross so that we may have eternal life.

This was the main message of the Zion, Detroit Lakes, LMWL Advent by Candlelight on Nov. 29. Under the theme "Take Me to the Manger," the special event was a time for girls, mothers, grandmothers, aunts and friends to prepare their hearts for the true meaning of Christmas — the birth and coming again of Jesus.

Volunteers made small mangers, while a Baby Jesus, straw and crosses were used as table centerpieces with Advent candles. Small versions of the mangers were



boxed for participants to take home to use with Advent devotional booklets. Cross table favors with candy were made for each of the 135 attendees.

The evening centered on an inspirational message focusing on how Christ's birth relates to His cross. Attendees also enjoyed music, appetizers and fellowship.



Cleanup on Highway 27

Members of Trinity, Isle, were treated to a meal at the church before their Minnesota Department of Transportation-sponsored ditch cleanup on State Highway 27. This outreach project was an ongoing part of the church's 100th anniversary celebration, "Making Christ Known." Pictured are, from left (front row) Cadence Mueller, Kenley Kohlgraf; (middle row) Cheryl Anderson, Miriam Mueller, Aria Mueller, Thaddeus Mueller; (back row) Rev. Mark Maunula, Dave Oslin, Dave Mueller, Josiah Mueller and Sharon Maunula. Also participating but not pictured was the Dangers family.



Blankets made with love

Members of Trinity, Millerville Township, made tie blankets, which they donated to Love INC (in the name of Christ). The organization helps churches help people with material, emotional or relational poverty in their communities to transform lives "in the name of Christ."

Share your news with us!

Why publicize your congregation's stories in *The Lutheran Witness* district Insert?

- ▶ It reminds people that Christ is active in His church in so many ways.
- ▶ It gives readers a sense of the larger body of Christ, that they have brothers and sisters engaged in the same work.
- ▶ It gives congregations ideas for events and outreach.
- ▶ It helps former members to see what is going on in their former congregations.
- ▶ It aids other congregations in knowing who to reach out to when they need resources or referrals for a project they are considering.

We love to feature a wide variety of events occurring in our district congregations. All that is needed is a brief description of the event and one or two photos. No event or announcement is too big or small.

Send submissions to *the.lutheran.witness@mnnlcms.org*. You may also mail your submissions to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 12, Backus, MN 56435, attn. Rev. Travis Lauterbach.

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution. Send the largest sized photo from your camera or phone. Many email programs will try to resize the photos, but please send the original size.

Counselor's Corner

Making CHRIST KNOWN



And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." LUKE 22:55-57

Are you familiar with the term "ghosting?" This describes the actions of a person who stops answering phone calls or responding to texts and simply disappears from another person. This happens between dating couples, employer and employee, church member and pastor, and even family members.

Recently I was told that this is a Millennial and Gen-Z phenomena, but I must disagree. The act of writing others off, giving someone the "cold shoulder" or acting like someone doesn't exist has been around for a very long time.

The biblical text describes when it even happened to our Lord. "Woman, I do not know Him." For three years Peter sat at the feet of Jesus. Peter was there when Christ healed the blind (JOHN 9), calmed the storm (MATT. 8:26) and fed the 5,000 (MARK 6:41-44). He stood with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and heard the voice from heaven, "This is my son" (LUKE 9:35).

He watched as palms waved and shouts of "Hosanna" rang out as Christ entered Jerusalem (MATT. 21:9). The Lord even entered Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law (MATT. 8:14). But in the matter of a split second, Peter was ready to "ghost" the one whom he, just hours before this fateful scene, vowed that he would go to prison or even die for (LUKE 22:33).

I consider myself extremely blessed. I have a career in which people expect me to talk about my faith. This is true whether I am making small talk with a

perfect stranger who was assigned the seat next to me on a plane or talking to the nurses when I am being admitted to the hospital. The topic of Jesus becomes front and center after they ask the simple question, "what do you do for a living?" The roadblocks that prevent the average person from sharing their faith are not there for me.

But maybe you are one who is told that you can't talk about your faith at work or that you can't ask to pray with your clients. Or perhaps your roadblocks aren't that pronounced. Are they found in a feeling you get, an unspoken rule, or just something that wouldn't be taken well by your supervisors or others where you work? It could be that your biggest roadblock is none of that, but rather fear itself; fear of saying the wrong thing, offending or appearing to be a "Jesus freak."

Make no mistake, this is what persecution looks like in our culture today. The world presses in as the woman did to Peter in the courtyard, breathing fear into his heart and mind to the point that he does the unthinkable — he denied knowing Jesus.

You should never be put in a position in which you are not allowed to be who you are in Christ or be shamed into silence. We try to impress this lesson upon our children, yet after dropping

them off at school we submit to those same pressures when we enter the world ourselves.

This world tries to get us to think that our belief in Christ is tantamount to our preference of pizza topping instead of what it really is — a way of life that permeates our heart and mind as we love the Lord. Being a Christian changes the way we value life, cherish relationships and understand our role in creation; and informs our decisions and priorities. It also teaches that we are not God and that truth comes from Him alone.

It is true that Peter did the unimaginable by denying Christ. However, that wasn't the end of his story. Near where he denied knowing the Lord he would eventually deliver the sermon on Pentecost (ACTS 2:14). He would be used to heal a beggar in the name of Jesus instead of simply offering him gold or silver (ACTS 3:6). He does this because the Lord, after His being betrayed, murdered and raised Himself, returned to Peter and asked, "do you love me?"

Our Lord moves to you through His Word and restores you. He feeds your faith and equips you to stand as His child in this place and time (1 PETER 5:10) regardless of the roadblocks the world would try to put in your way.

I am not telling you to be Peter or have the charisma of Billy Graham. Simply be honest about your faith with yourself, your co-workers and others in your life. Make it known by word and deed. Let them know you are not afraid to say, "I am a Christian, I know my savior!"

Rev. Dr. Patrick Lovejoy
Arrowhead Region Pastoral Counselor

In November, the **Holy Cross, St. Cloud**, Evening Guild voted to support Pathways4Youth (pathways4youthmn.org), a resource center for homeless youth, for its "What's your 80?" project. Members donated new and unused socks, underwear, pants and shirts for the youth being served.

