

Volume LIV
Number 1

January 2016



MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH

7301 North 28 Avenue Omaha, Nebraska, 68112 402-455-8700 www.mountoliveomaha.com

Messenger



Sweet Life!

DESSERT COMEDY THEATRE
Featuring Scott Davis

Friday • January 22 • 7:00 PM

Florence City Hall

2864 State Street • Omaha, NE 68112

Hosted by Mt. Olive Lutheran Church of Omaha

TICKETS: \$15 in advance | \$20 at the door

Doors open at 6:00 PM • Event begins at 7:00 PM

INFO: 402-455-8700 | www.mountoliveomaha.com

www.ScottDavis.com

A woman and six children were walking toward a park. An elderly man who was also headed there stopped the woman and said with a smile, "My, what a nice group of children! Are they all yours ... or is this a picnic?"



A new calendar year awaits. It's a good time to assess our lives and to make changes, if necessary. The famous Athenian philosopher Socrates once said, "The life which is unexamined is not worth living." God's Word certainly seconds that idea. One way to do this is to divide our consideration into three categories: things I want to **START** doing, things I want to **STOP** doing, and things I want to **CONTINUE** doing.

- 1) Things I want to **START** doing. Common New Year's resolutions are exercising more, eating better and losing weight. What is it that God wants me to begin doing that I have put off doing? Certainly taking better care of the body God has given me should be an important goal. If I am going to be a good servant of others, I need to be in good shape physically so that I am not a liability to others, but an asset.

But what am I doing to be spiritually fit? Reading God's Word everyday. Meditating on what God is saying to me there. Acting on what God is saying with the Holy Spirit's help. Expecting that God will afflict me when I am comfortable, and will comfort me when I am afflicted.

Following Jesus is not some solo activity. We have been baptized into the body of Christ, the church. That means learning and growing and challenging one another and comforting one another in a community of Christians known as Mount Olive. We are not seekers and shoppers. We are committed people who care more about others than ourselves. We resist the idea that "regular attendance" is "getting there when we can."

- 2) Things I want to **STOP** doing. Smoking and overeating and nursing a critical spirit and worrying are certainly habits God desires to help us stop doing. Gossiping and blaming others and complaining are other bad habits He wants to help us confront in our lives.

It is comparing ourselves to others that will get us into trouble every time. (Remember that we are to compare ourselves only to holy God.) Measuring ourselves by others either leads to pride or to despair. And neither of those are good. They get in the way of our being the useful servant of God and others that God has created us to be.

- 3) Things I want to **CONTINUE** doing. Let's hope that God has led us to establish certain patterns and practices in our lives that are not only admirable, but also demonstrate God is molding us more and more into a Christ-like attitude and life. Maybe it is a healthy prayer life that asks God to equip us for more faithful service. Maybe it is a forgiving spirit that sets aside slights and deep hurts and moves us to treat others as God has forgiven us in Christ. Maybe it is a generous and cheerful heart that constantly looks for ways to pass on to others what God has given to us to distribute.

Ask God to help you to do such an inventory.

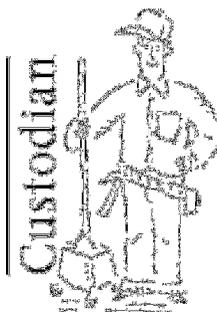
—Rev. Roland A. Jank, Jr

**Goals for the
NEW YEAR**

English Language Learning

Mount Olive's English Language Learning spring session begins Monday, February 1, 2016 and will run through the end of April. This is a fun and easy way to meet people in our community from different countries and cultures. Help is needed to continue serving our neighbors in this mission. No experience is required. If you speak English, you are qualified! Please contact **Marsha Behr** (mjbehr@cox.net or 402-250-1269) if you would like to learn more.

If you are interested in providing janitorial services to the church, please email **Kelly Wegner** at Kwegner310@gmail.com. You will be provided with an outline of the position's requirements and expectations for your review. Inquiries will be accepted until January 15, 2016. Submissions received past that date will not be considered. After January 15, 2016, the Board of Church Properties will evaluate the entries.



On behalf of the entire Sunday School staff, we would like to thank the children and parents for their practice and preparation for the Mount Olive Sunday School's Christmas Program, "The King is Coming!" We are all thankful for the Mount Olive families and friends for their continual support and encouragement provided to us throughout the year. We were so glad that so many people were able to come to our program and share in the joy of the birth of Jesus. Thank you!



(Continued on page 7)

The Lord has joined the 249 congregations of the Nebraska District as partners at work in His mission fields. In order to support this partnership, the Nebraska District Office works to connect congregations, schools, and ministries with one another as prayer partners and resources for each other. This networking takes place through the *Nebraska Lutheran Report*, the weekly *Email Update*, and the District website, www.ndlcms.org. Please visit the District website at www.ndlcms.org/news/communications/index.html to learn more about these communication tools or contact Kim Myers at the District Office at kimberlym@ndlcms.org or 888-643-2961 with questions or comments.



Weekly Giving Needs for 2016

In 2016 our congregational needs will be \$4861/week, with an overall budget increase of .8%. As a part of our yearly budget, we distribute 10% of our weekly offerings to needs outside of Mount Olive. In the year 2016, they will be:

- \$17,702 Nebraska District and Synod Work
- \$ 250 District Convention and Circuit Assessments
- \$ 1,050 Crossways International
- \$ 2,000 POBLO ministry
- \$ 1,900 Project Hope (food pantry services)
- \$ 1,900 Together, Inc. (emergency human services)
- \$ 500 Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska

Mount Olive has also committed to help support two overseas missionary families - **Julie Lutz** in Papua New Guinea and **Sharon Owens** in Macau. You are encouraged to periodically make additional monetary gifts toward their support. Put this cash or check in an envelope and notate its purpose on the envelope.

Our LWML group did not meet in December but we still kept busy. On December 5 we sponsored a Christmas Cookie Exchange following the Christian Education Hour. Thank you to **Anne Wegner** for organizing and advertising this. We also held a Diaper Drive for Project Hope. Along with the donations of diapers and cash from the congregation, we were given seed money from Thrivent to purchase additional diapers. A final count will be in next month's Messenger.

We will meet Tuesday, January 19, at 6:30 p.m. **Jody Wells-Padron** will lead our Bible study and **Annette Hurt** will provide refreshments. All Mount Olive women are invited to join us.

C
O
S
M
O

The Mount Olive Book Club will meet Tuesday, January 12, at 7:00 at the home of **Liz Matson**.



Dessert will be provided by **Carol Childers**. We will discuss the Omaha Public Library's 2015 selection for "Omaha Reads" - Eleanor & Park by Omaha North High School graduate Rainbow Rowell.

Set over the course of one school year in 1986, this is the story of two star-crossed misfits-smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try. When Eleanor meets Park, you'll remember your own first love-and just how hard it pulled you under.

Our February meeting will be Tuesday, February 9th, at 7:00 p.m. at the home of **Lois Barr**. **Gloria Sorensen** will provide dessert. Our February selection will be Daughter of the Regiment by Stephanie G. Whitson.

Please join your fellow Mount Olive movie buffs on Friday night, January 8, at 7:30 p.m. We will be showing the movie “Little Foxes.”



“Little Foxes” is a 1941 Drama directed by William Wyler based on a story by Lillian Hellman. Betty Davis, Carl Benton Reid, Charles Dingle, Herbert Marshall and Teresa Wright star. Regina Hubbard Giddens and her scheming brothers, Oscar and Ben, plan to get rich from a cotton mill, but first they must tap into the wealth of Regina’s sickly husband, Horace Giddens. The trio attempts to marry Regina’s daughter Alexandra to Oscar’s son Leo. When that plan fails, their schemes devolve into theft and blackmail, driving an irreparable wedge between family members.

Popcorn and movie candy will be provided. Circle the date!

— **Dixie Gerhart** (402-602-3252)

In Ministry With God’s People

We remember in prayer

...**Lorraine Irwin, Neena Kraemer-Solberg, Rod and Karen Lorang, Mike McGrath, Dawn Payne, Don Weihe, and Janet Zulfer.**

...the family of our sister in Christ, **Mary Hahn**, who mourns her death.

...**Emad and Shireen Tawadrous** in their work as POBLO missionaries in metro Omaha and the Peace International Center at 44th and Grover.

...the English Language Learning (ELL) classes at Mount Olive and the teachers, greeters, and coordinator, **Marsha Behr.**

...those in our community without Christ and His church.

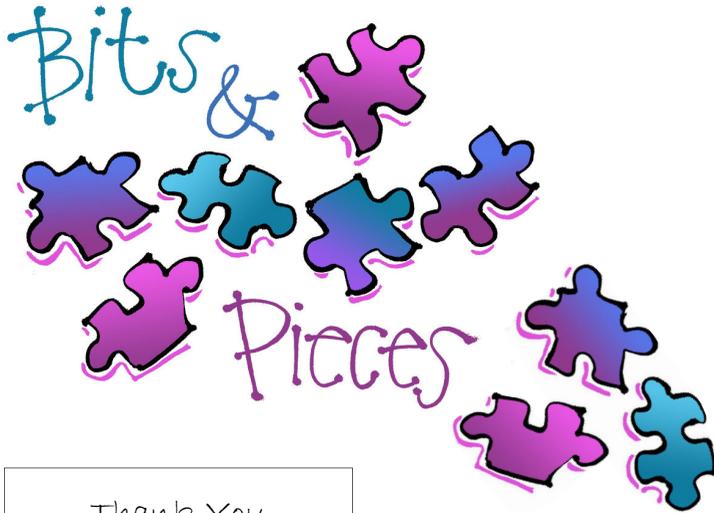
(Continued on page 14)

Our 15-week Spring Adult Information Class will begin on Sunday, February 14, at 3:30 p.m. This two-hour class is for those who are new in their faith, for those who are somewhere in the middle, and for those who have been life-long Christians. No matter where you are in your faith journey, God yearns to get closer to you.



To register, please call the church office at 402-455-8700. You can also find registration forms inside the Sunday bulletin. Fill out the registration and drop it in the offering plate.

As we grow closer to Jesus, our lives will reflect Him more clearly.



Thank You

Thank you to **Sharon McDonald, Barb Stacy,** and **Bonnie White** for helping with the December Messenger.

Thank you to **Barb Stacy** and **Bonnie White** for taking the finished newsletter to the downtown post office.

A special thank you to **Rich Wismont** who takes care of all of the church's recyclables.

Thank you to **Rosalie Soodsma** for weekly lending a hand in the church office.

- **Teresa Kuti**

POBLO

We continue to assemble a few bags of groceries for our POBLO work with families who are in need. Items that can be used are: sugar, salt, tea, rice, flour, cooking oil, dried beans, jam, sugar-free peanut-butter, cookies, juice. Please no canned vegetables or macaroni and cheese. A receptacle for such foodstuffs is in the north hallway.

Mt. Olive Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request, please call **Kristi Townsend** at 402-457-9611 or by email at townsend.kristi@gmail.com

Thank You

Thank you to **Ron Hurt, Paul Kosch, Bob Wegner** and **Terry Wegner** for changing the light bulbs in the sanctuary after the Children's Christmas program.

- **Kelly Wegner**
Director, Board of Church Properties



VBS

This year we have changed the Vacation Bible School dates. Please mark your calendars. For 2016 our Vacation Bible School will be July 18-22.

- Jody Wells-Padron
VBS Coordinator

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who attended our Christmas Caroling event this year on Saturday, December 19th. We received many thanks from those we caroled for. We warmed up afterwards with refreshments at the home of **Paul and Jill Clausen**. It was a fun way to share the joy of Christ's birth.

(Continued from page 3)

A special thank you goes to the Sunday School teachers and staff, the Board of Christian Education, **Pastor Jank, Suzan Jank, Melissa Lorang, Kelly Wegner** and **Terry Wegner** for helping construct the costumes, **Paul Kosch**, the Church Properties Board, the ushers that helped at the service, **Dixie Gerhart** for displaying pictures for our bulletin board, **Arnie Jacobson** for technology assistance, **Marilyn Beig** and **Joan Johnson**, Kitchen Coordinators, and to everyone that helped with the props, decorating, cleaning up, and treat bags for the children.

Thank you to everyone that donated a teddy bear or stuffed animal to our tree for a local charity. Thank you also to Thrivent for providing a seed money grant to support our program.

From our Mount Olive Sunday School family to yours, we hope you all had a happy holiday season filled with friends, family, and most of all, Christ our Lord!

With much thanks and appreciation,
Betsy Kosch and **Anne Wegner**, Co-Program Directors

(Check out the pictures on page 11.)

Altar Flowers are no longer arranged by our church. Altar flowers are still welcomed and encouraged. If you would like to remember a loved one, celebrate an anniversary or birthday with flowers, please purchase the flowers at a floral shop of your choosing or maybe picked from your garden. You can either have them delivered the Friday before the chosen Sunday from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. or call the church office at 402-455-8700 to make other arrangements. Please call no later than Tuesday prior to the chosen Sunday. Always make sure to call the church office so an announcement can be included in the Sunday bulletin.





Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word epiphaneia, means “an appearance” or “a revealing.” Centuries ago, the church set aside January 6, the 12th day after Christmas, to mark the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the wise men, who were Gentiles. Jesus’ first followers were Jewish, so the revelation of the divine Christ to the non-Jewish magi reminds us that Jesus came to earth to save the whole world.

Symbols of Epiphany include light, a star, a crown (or three crowns) and a globe or stylized portrayal of the world. The color of Epiphany is green to symbolize life, growth, hope and eternity.

On the church calendar, the Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday, which is determined by the date of Easter. This year Ash Wednesday is February 10.

SOMETIMES WE JUST NEED TO BE “REMINDED”

A well known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, “who would like this \$20 bill?” Hands started going up. He said, “I am going to give this \$20 bill to one of you but first, let me do this.” He proceeded to crumple up the \$20 bill. He then asked, “who still wants it?” Still hands went up in the air. Well, he replied, “What if I do this?” and he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumbled and dirty, “Now, who still wants it?” Still hands went into the air.

(Continued on page 14)

Thank you to the following who purchased poinsettias for the chancel at Christmas:

Marilyn Beig
Marge Eastman
Jackie Headid
Becky Hurt
Ron & Annette Hurt
Randy & Joan Johnson
Paul & Betsy Kosch
Kathy Mansfield/Rome
Motiejaitis
Victor & Jody Padron
Frank Sabatka
Rosalie Soodsma
Gloria Sorensen
Barb Stacy
Frank & Yo Tierney
Don Weihe
Andrew & Cindy
Wheeler
Bonnie White
Max & Linda Williams



Ring in the New Year with Financial Resolutions

With the New Year comes the opportunity to improve your financial well-being. Here are four financial resolutions to help you get started:

- 1) Establish a budget based on what you spent last year, taking into account the variable prices of gas, heating and food.
- 2) Cut back on debt by paying off a credit card balance, foregoing unnecessary purchases or paying an additional amount each month to your mortgage payment.
- 3) Prioritize major purchases you want to make and figure out how to pay for them out of your current income.
- 4) Meet with a legal professional to review your will or estate strategy to ensure it reflects your current life situation.



OUR MISSIONARIES ABROAD

Mt. Olive is helping to support two missionaries and their families who live abroad. We remember them periodically in our public prayer. We ask that you continue to support them financially with your regular gifts. Information about their work is shared on the north hall bulletin board and in our Sunday worship. May it serve as an encouragement for your continued interest and support. For the year 2016 our missionaries abroad are:

Julie Lutz
 Box 803
 Mt. Hagen,
 Western Highlands Province
 Papua New Guinea
 lutz.travel@gmail.com

Concordia English Center
Sharon Owens
 174 Rud de Pequim
 Com. Bldg. Kong Fat 6 A-B
 Macau, SAR China
 smomacau@yahoo.com

For help achieving your 2016 financial goals, contact **Sarah Jank**, Financial Associate, at 402-905-4229 or Sarah.Jank@Thrivent.com today or visit Thrivent.com.

Merry ... Winter?

To avoid offending anybody, [my son's] school dropped religion altogether and started singing about the weather. ... They now hold the winter program in February and sing increasingly nonmemorable songs such as "Winter Wonderland," "Frosty the Snowman" and — this is a real song — "Suzy Snowflake," all of which is pretty funny because we live in Miami. A visitor from another planet would assume that the children belonged to the Church of Meteorology.

—Dave Barry

“In all things I have shown you that . . . we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (*Acts 20:35*). And indeed it is. Does this not strike a chord that resonates in us all? Which of us can’t recall the look of surprise and thanks for the Christmas gifts that we labored to give to those whom we love? And the joy written on their face when that gift is received with thanksgiving means more than all the gifts we have received. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Our Lord knew this because He practiced it. He gave of Himself, sparing not even His life in death, in order to give us back to our Father in heaven. He knew that in giving, you get more because in giving joy is multiplied: the one who receives and the one who gives both rejoice in what is given and received. What is more the one who receives is thankful and only wants to give back to the one who gave so generously.

So also with our tithes and offerings in church. We want to give because we have received from God all that we are and all that we have. Our giving does not originate in what we must do to earn God’s favor. We have God’s favor because of the gift of His Son which we receive through Word and Sacrament. Thus, we are made free from the compulsion of giving. Now our tithes and offering are freely given *in thanksgiving* for what God has so generously given to us.

Why then does the church struggle to make budgets? Why does the church always seem stretched so thin? After all the Church is the

place where God not only gives to us once, but continually again and again. And what gifts He gives! He gives us the forgiveness of sins, generously pouring out His grace and mercy because He loves us. So why does the church struggle?

It is because sin still clings to us. Our fallen nature makes us selfish and miserly. It leads us to believe that we can have our cake and eat it too. Because of sin we want to receive, but not give. We want God’s blessings, but we don’t want to share them with those around us. We want to remain comfortable in our own self-contained, neat, and tidy lives, without the headaches of loving those around us by helping them in their time of need.

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Remember that God has placed you in a church, not only to receive His grace and mercy, but also to use you to bless others. Your tithes and offerings ensure that those around you have a pastor to preach the life-saving and life-giving Word of God. They ensure that the lights and heat and air-conditioning are working. They ensure there is water for Holy Baptism and bread and wine for the Holy Communion. Everything the Church does, she is able to do by and through the generosity of the members of the Church.

So remember the words of the Lord Jesus. It is more blessed to give than to receive. And remember the joy that attended the gifts you gave at Christmas. This same joy attends your gifts to the church.

-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Children's Christmas Program "The King is Coming!" Highlights



HIV/AIDS

This article is provided by Mount Olive Health Ministry.

Every year, December 1st is designated as World AIDS Day – an opportunity for people worldwide to get educated, recognize the impact of HIV disease, learn prevention measures, show support for people living with HIV and commemorate those who have died of AIDS. World AIDS Day was the first ever globally recognized health observance, first held in 1988.

WHAT IS HIV?

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus, the virus that can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS. Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV – once you have HIV, you have it for life. Currently, no safe and effective cure exists for this infection, but scientists around the world continue to work hard to find one. Meanwhile, HIV can be controlled with proper medical care, including anti-retroviral therapy. These drug treatments have prolonged the lives of many people living with HIV and reduce – but don't eliminate – the possibility of their infecting others. Before these medications were available, people with HIV could progress to "full-blown AIDS" in just a few years, but today, if treatment is begun before the disease advances, they may have nearly a normal life expectancy. HIV affects specific cells of the immune system, called CD4 cells ("T-cells"). Over time, the virus can destroy so many CD4 cells that the body can no longer fight off infec-

tions and cancers which normal immune systems control. When this happens, HIV infection advances to AIDS.

STAGES OF HIV DISEASE

Within 2 to 4 weeks after exposure and infection, HIV may cause symptoms similar to flu (fever, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, rashes). This is called **acute retroviral syndrome** or **primary HIV infection**. During this time, the virus is multiplying rapidly, using CD4 cells to make copies of itself and destroying these cells in the process. Because of this, the CD4 numbers can fall quickly, and the vast amount of virus in the body increases the risk of spreading HIV to those who come in contact with infectious body fluids.

Latent HIV infection follows with HIV becoming dormant and an infected person in this stage may have few or no symptoms. People who begin anti-retroviral therapy early in the infection may live with latent HIV for several decades. It is most important to remember that HIV can still be spread to others during this phase though proper treatment reduces the risk.

If the "viral load" begins to rise and the CD4 cell count begins to drop, symptoms of HIV infection may appear as the immune system becomes too weak to protect the infected person from other infections or cancers called opportunistic illnesses. When CD4 cell counts fall below 200 cells per cubic millimeter of blood (200 cells/mm³), a diagnosis of AIDS is made. Regardless of CD4 count, AIDS diagnosis may also be based on the appearance of one or more opportunistic illnesses.

IMPACT OF HIV IN AMERICA

- In the USA, there are over 1 million people living with HIV, and one out of every seven of these people are unaware they have HIV infection.
- There are approximately 50,000 new cases each year.
- Since the beginning (mid-1970's) of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the US, 659,000 people have died of AIDS-related illnesses.
- Ignorance, stigma and disparity in access to healthcare continue to fuel the cycle of new infections.
- HIV/AIDS affects some populations more than others: higher numbers of sexual partners (especially sex without protection of condoms), greater numbers of sexually transmitted diseases ("STDs") and injecting drugs using shared needles are well-known factors; also Black and Hispanic populations have been disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (language and education barriers, cultural factors and fear of deportation of illegal immigrants are key barriers to reaching these communities)
- young people (ages 13 - 24) account for 17% of the US population but make up 21% of new HIV cases; 81% of these infections occurred in the 20 - 24 year age group; a sense of complacency, attitudes such as "it doesn't affect me" or "medications can cure it" attitude prevents young people from testing for HIV or accessing care promptly.

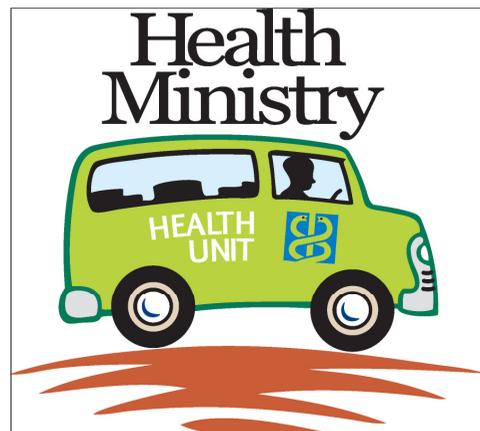
PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- **Know your status by getting tested for HIV:** ask your healthcare professional to

test you, find testing centers near you through <https://gettested.cdc.gov/>, or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) to learn of free HIV/STD test sites in your area

- **If you're not infected**, practice abstinence or commit to only one, uninfected partner (think husband or wife...) and "get clean" from injecting drugs; if your spouse or partner is infected, discuss pre-exposure prophylaxis ("PrEP") medications with your healthcare provider to reduce the risk of becoming infected (doesn't entirely eliminate the possibility...)
- **If you are infected**, notify your healthcare professional, your past sexual partner(s) and needle-sharing partners; get started on anti-retroviral therapy as early as possible (to have the greatest effect); join a support group and take responsibility for preserving your health as long as possible
- **Get accurate information**, then use it to educate others, and to support those dealing with HIV infection.

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/>



(Continued from page 8)

My friends, we have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled and ground into the dirt by decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless but no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. Dirty, clean, or crumpled, you are still priceless to those who love you.

The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by WHO WE ARE AND WHOSE WE ARE. You are special! Count your blessings, not your problems, and remember: Amateurs built the ARK, professionals built the TITANIC. If God brings you to it - He will bring you through it.

(Continued from page 5)

...those who are contemplating an abortion and those burdened by an abortion in their past.

...prospective participants for our Spring Adult Information Class which begins Sunday, February 14.