

About this December 2009 newsletter format:

This newsletter is in the same working format as the mailed version is laid out. What this means to you is that the opening cover page of the newsletter is on the final page of this document, so look for it there.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS DECEMBER 2009

All events are at the church building unless otherwise noted.

* Indicates an article is elsewhere in this newsletter.

- Choir practice – Wednesday evenings at 7:00pm.
- Dec 4 & 5 – Drive-Through Live Nativity at Crossroads College*
- Dec 6 – Rehearsal after worship for All-Church Christmas Pageant
- Dec 6 – Elders meeting after worship
- Dec 6 – Movie Night 6:30pm*
- Dec 8 – Dorcas Fellowship 1:30pm
- Dec 8 – Church Board Meeting 7:30pm
- Dec 9 – Youth Minister Search Committee meeting 6:30pm
- Dec 12 – Rehearsal for Christmas Pageant 9-11am*
- Dec 13 – All-Church Christmas Pageant 9:00am*
– No Sunday Bible Classes
- Dec 13 – Building Offering
- Dec 20 – Christmas Caroling*
- Dec 24 – Christmas Eve Service 5:00pm*
- Dec 24 – January newsletter articles due
- Dec 26 – Heart to Heart distribution*

LOVE AND RESPECT



Beginning on Wednesday, January 13 an exciting new Small Group Study will be offered here at the church building. Gary and Deb Guentzel will be facilitating a study called Love and Respect that focuses on developing marriages where both wives and husbands have their deepest needs met.

In this video series, we will explore many differences between men and women and see that if men would love their wives as the Bible instructs and women would respect their husbands as the Bible teaches we would have happier and healthier marriages.



This study is ideal for all couples. It is helpful for those contemplating marriage, for those in the early stages of marriage, and even those who have been married for decades. Singles are welcome and will find much information that is helpful in understanding the opposite gender.

We encourage couples particularly to block out Wednesday nights this winter to strengthen your marriages. Childcare will be provided.



CHRISTMAS EVENTS

 Christmas is just around the corner and  we are planning a number of events to celebrate Jesus coming to earth. On December 6 at 6:30pm, we will start the Christmas season by watching the powerful movie, *The Nativity Story*. On December 13, we are planning a Christmas pageant during the Sunday school hour. Using the mediums of drama and music, children and adults together will share the message of Christmas. On December 20, we will gather after the worship service to share a light lunch together, sing some carols here at the church and then go out into the community and sing for some of our elderly and shut-in friends. Finally, on December 24, we will gather here at the church building at 5:00pm for a candlelight service. We will sing together, hear the majestic story of Jesus' birth and share together in the Lord's Supper. Plan to celebrate Christmas with your brothers and sisters at the Cleveland Church of Christ.

LIVE NATIVITY

 Crossroads College invites you to share in the Christmas story by experiencing their 16th Annual Drive-Through Live Nativity. The Nativity will be open from 6-9 pm on both Friday, December 4 and Saturday, December 5. Twelve scenes will be depicted that are taken from the books of Isaiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The college is located at 920 Mayowood Road SW in Rochester, MN. Mayowood Road will be limited to one-way traffic during the Live Nativity, so you will need to enter Mayowood Road via County Road 8 those evenings. Visit www.crossroadscollege.edu for a map of driving directions to the college and how to enter the campus. 

ALL-CHURCH CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

 *Twas the Night Before Christmas* is a musical that shares what Christmas is really about – not presents and lights and Frosty – but the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Our children and young people, together with a few adults, will present this program on Sunday, December 13 at 9:00am. All participants are asked to be at the church by 8:30am. (We will have no regular Sunday Bible classes this morning.) 





UPDATE on OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



BRAVO – What a **TEAM!!!** Thank you so much for filling a box (or boxes) for Operation Christmas Child! We delivered **127** boxes to the Mankato drop off location and they will soon be on their way to children around the world. Remember to pray for the child who will receive your box. May the LORD use your box in an amazing way in the life of that child!



A CHRISTMAS GIFT



Still looking for a unique gift to give this Christmas? How about a chicken or a goat? Maybe some banana trees? In our foyer display area, we have several "Gift Catalogs" from various mission organizations that offer practical gifts to give to people in need. Items vary in price from a few dollars to thousands of dollars, so you are sure to find a gift in your budget. Picking out a gift can be a family project or something you do on your own. Either way, it can be a way to show God's love in a fresh way this holiday season.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Memorial money and special donations were used to have an enclosed cabinet built for our sanctuary soundboard equipment.
- Our youth minister search committee has met several times and is working on formulating a job description.
- Ken Krenik makes a yearly trip to deliver our OCC shoeboxes to the drop-off site in Mankato.
- Our church website has added desktop backgrounds for you to save as your personal computer's desktop.
- We have restocked our foyer literature racks with many booklets on a wide variety of subjects. Help yourself for yourself or pass one with a friend.
- Many prayers go to our Father God when our church prayer chain is activated. Thanks to our Heavenly Father for His prayer warriors!
- On Sunday morning 8:45am FROG Fun sessions for 2-years-old – 6th grade is proving to be a hit for many.
- 200 people attended the annual Cleveland Community Thanksgiving Service.
- Evan Koppelman earned his 1st Deputy Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do.

SNACKS are NEEDED for the 10:00am Sunday Fellowship Time. Sign up on the list on the church kitchen counter. Bring 6-8 dozen snack items. Volunteers are responsible for setting up, serving and cleaning up on your day of serving.



HEART TO HEART REPORT

When we began this project, we were initially going to collect Personal Need items to take to the Corrections Department of Le Sueur County. They were going to distribute the items to their clients as they had need for them. Le Sueur County Corrections, however, later declined our help due to legal issues in accepting donated Personal Needs items and taking charge of distributing them.

We were also collecting Personal Need items for people in our congregation who have fallen on hard times. We expanded that to our community and the surrounding area of Le Sueur County. We did some advertising by posting flyers and talking to other churches in our community. The Lutheran church of Cleveland has also donated items to our project and we are grateful for their participation.

During the first three months of distribution, we served two families each of those months. The number of families slowly increased month by month. Our last distribution in November, we served 9 families. The need is definitely out there and the availability of our gifts is spreading. The gratitude of those who receive a bag of the personal need items is very apparent.

Thank you to all who are involved in giving to the Heart to Heart Project. The project would not be possible without your generosity.

Donations are accepted and welcomed at the Church of Christ in Cleveland on Hwy 99; office 507-931-5924. Our distribution continues to be the last Saturday of every month at 10:00am to Noon. That time of distribution seems to be working out well for all involved.

Thank you again from the Heart to Heart Project.

MISSION SPOTLIGHT

2009 saw a great summer at Pine Haven Christian Assembly. 1433 campers attended the 17 different camp sessions in 2009. (We had 45 campers attend from Cleveland in 2009.) Over 300 volunteers helped make the camp sessions exceptional. There were 32 baptisms as well as many rededications to Christ. Many campers dedicated their lives to Christian Service. We are blessed to have such a great place to experience God's glory and grace. Thank you to all who help Pine Haven change lives by being a camper and by your gifts.

Plan to attend at least one camp session in the 2010 season. The 2010 camp dates are posted on the PHCA website — see www.pinehavencamp.org to plan your vacation(s) for next year!

LE SUEUR COUNTY
 **SANTA ANONYMOUS** 

Since 1977, Le Sueur County Santa Anonymous has helped Le Sueur County families of with items for Christmas for their children living at home ages 18 and younger. It depends on donations from community members and community organizations in Le Sueur County to offer this opportunity for parents.

The goal of Santa Anonymous is to coordinate donations in one central location in our county, so services are not duplicated and more families are helped. It provides a shop where parents can choose a new toy for their child free of charge. Each town in the county collects the donations and brings them to the shop for distribution.

The main focus of the program is to provide a new "main" larger toy for children living at home ages 18 and younger. Stocking stuffers, socks, mittens, hats, underwear, quilts, bedding and coats will be distributed as well.

Any item donated to Santa Anonymous is displayed for parents to select. This year's shop will be open at the St. Mary's Church Community Center in Le Center on Monday, December 14, from 12 noon to 6 p.m. Parents of children living at home 18 years and younger need bring proof of Le Sueur County residency. Donations need to be made prior to December 8 to allow SA volunteers have time to prepare for the December 14 "Shopping Day."

If you are unsure what to give, cash is appreciated so toys can be purchased. All contributions are tax-deductible; receipts can be requested. Any donation (toys or cash) can be made in Cleveland at Community Bank, Cleveland School, or any of the churches in town.

Santa Anonymous is planned by the Minnesota Valley Action Council and volunteers throughout the county. For further details, call the MVAC office on weekdays at 507-357-4246.



CHURCH OF CHRIST
900 State Highway 99
Mail to: PO Box 307
Cleveland, MN 56017

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

9:00 a.m. – Bible Classes for all ages
10:00 a.m. – Fellowship Time
10:30 a.m. – Worship Service

Church Website: www.clevelandchurch.net
Office Phone: (507) 931-5924
Office Email: clchurch@live.com
Prayer Chain: clchurchprayer@live.com

Our Head: Jesus Christ

Pastor: John Kester

Church Secretary: Lisa Koppelman

CONGRATULATIONS to Ryan & Krysti Brockberg for the birth of Zechariah on October 20, 2009. He joins big sister Annabelle. Proud Grandparents include Ken & Sandy Schmidt and Great Grandmother Darlene Schmidt.

OUR SYMPATHY to Pam Burns of our congregation. Her brother Harold Schultz died on November 8, 2009.

BIRTHDAYS: December 8– Evelyn Engelrup; 12– Sandy Krenik, Cindy Schmidt, Emma Smith; 13– Sheila Phillips; 15– Annette Swedberg; 18– Dale Rogers; 19– Billy Rogers, Deivi Esteban, teen youth sponsored child in Colombia; 22– Greg Schettler; 23– Annalisha Schmidt, 23– Mike Wobbrock; 25– Lois Tolzmann; 28– Lance Fahning; 29– Martha Nyamutora, missionary to Zimbabwe

ANNIVERSARY: December 31 - Dale & Linda Marshall, retired missionaries to Zimbabwe

**CHURCH OF CHRIST
MEETING IN CLEVELAND, MN**

DECEMBER 2009
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CUP PHILOSOPHY

By John Kester, Pastor

Two fundamentally different viewpoints form the framework that most people use to look at life. Most of us do not even know these ideas form the backdrop for our lives. But whether we know it or not, these ideas are a significant factor in how we approach life.

I like to think of a cup to illustrate these divergent outlooks. Some people approach life as if it begins with an empty cup. Each day God dribbles drops of His goodness into our cup so that we have enough living water to sustain us and even have some left over. Some days, God's grace and mercy are so generous that as the psalmist said, "Our cup overflows." When this happens, people around us catch a glimpse of God's goodness and they long for a taste of His refreshing living water. God pours His goodness into us in so many ways. He forgives our sins and calls us His sons and daughters. Drops of living water dampen our cup. He provides us with food and clothing and shelter and our cups begin to fill. He surrounds us with people who love us and care for us and the cup becomes fuller. He encourages our hearts with beauty and music and the cup grows fuller yet. Every day sounds and sights and tastes and smells enrich our lives and fill our cups until, almost without realizing how, we discover our cup overflowing. Even on days when the heavy burdens of this life threaten to overwhelm us and we need to drink great draughts of his living water, we have enough because He never stops pouring His grace and mercy into our thirsty lives.

This is a pretty hopeful way of looking at life. It is built on the assumptions that God has enough living water to go around and He is willing to pour His living water into our lives. I think this is a view of life that scripture supports.

But some people look at life as if it begins with a full cup and every negative thing that happens sucks a sip from the cup. Each day, as trials come and tragedy strikes and the heavy burdens of life press us down, a few more drops of water get sucked from our cups. We draw closer to the place where our cups have been drained dry and there is no living water left to sustain us. For people who approach life like this, life is seen as a cruel thief. We are constantly losing the things and people that sustain us and we do not know if there is enough life-giving water in our cup to sustain us. People who think like this always feel as if they are about to reach the end of their resources. They are always thirsty and, because they think they started out with all the water available to them, they fail to see that God continues to pour water into their cups. They live parched and desperate lives because they do not recognize that God shares living water with all who are thirsty.

Jesus told the woman at the well that if she asked, God would give her living water. Jesus said the water He supplies will become a spring that wells up to eternal life. God does not leave us dry and parched in a barren desert. God gives us living water, day by day, that is sufficient to sustain us through every dry and dusty place in life. We will never run out of his life sustaining water because He continues to fill our cup – even to overflowing – day by day.

I am so grateful that my need for living water will never exceed God's ability to provide the drops of grace and mercy and kindness and compassion that my heart craves. My cup will never become empty because God has an endless supply of living water.