

Bethlehem Star

A Message from Pastor Gary

“...so [Christ] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

The power of the Christmas story is made perfect in human weakness. The babe born in lowly circumstances is proclaimed by his followers as “king of Kings.” Bethlehem was no big city with bright lights, but a sleepy village. The baby’s mother lacked celebrity status, yet this birth drew the attention of angels. The baby’s earthbound father had to lay his newborn son in a feeding trough, and centuries later we still sing the story of the manger. Shepherds neglected their duty to satisfy their curiosity. Human weakness in the shadow of God’s power still draws our interest, still captures our imaginations.

What might this story mean for us today? The bright lights and plethora of gifts, symbols of the season, satisfy our longings for only a short time. The deepest sighs of our hearts can only be satisfied by the one who comes to us unadorned, without ceremony, in the outback of a cattle shed. The message, unadorned as it is, is this: human life is more than an accumulation of gifts, things, presents. Our possessions do not define us, things cannot declare our names!

But if human life is more than the accumulation of things – the one with the most toys at the end wins! – it is, nevertheless, feeble. If our possessions cannot define us and if life is feeble, then what? What about this Christmas story? What can it mean for us?

During the darkest days of the year Christians celebrate the light that has come into the world. At graveside we declare life. In the midst of war and turmoil we speak passionately of the peace that passes all understanding. What can this mean for us? In God’s presence is life, light and peace.

(continued on page 2)

November 30
First Sunday in Advent

December 7
10:00 Annual Mtg. I
5:00 p.m.
Ethnic Christmas Dinner

December 11 9-1
Poinsettia Deadline

December 6 & 27
2:00 p.m.
Holiday Movies

Pastor's Message *(continued)*

Christmas remains one of the most celebrated days of the year because its message is not one of gloom, but gladness. Its message is not one of fear, but courage. The Christmas story is not one of the failure of human weakness, but God's triumph over sin, death and decay in spite of human weakness.

Our celebration of Christmas is not, for Christians, the celebration of things. It is the celebration of God's power made perfect in the weakness of the infant born at Bethlehem. May your celebration of Christ's birth be a reflection of God's goodness, grace and mercy.

Amani (Peace),
Pr. Gary Erickson

**Mark your calendars now for December 7, 2007
Annual Ethnic Christmas Dinner Party at 5:00 p.m.**

Saturday Afternoon Movies at Bethlehem

Join us for Holiday Movies at Bethlehem on the following
Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.:

Saturday, December 6 Favorite Holiday Hits (viewers choice!)
Lucky movie-goes get to pick their favorite Christmas movies this month.

Saturday, December 27 Favorite Holiday Hits (viewers choice!)

*Please note we have changed the usual dates to the first and fourth
Saturdays in December due to scheduling conflicts.*

Popcorn and soda pop will be provided.

Membership Updates, Concerns and Thanks

The 2009 Coffee & Fellowship calendar is up on the bulletin board. Please check the dates to see which is a good Sunday for you to bring goodies!

Send Christmas Greetings to Dave in Iraq at the following address:

**Sgt. David Tracy
509th Eng. Co.
APO AE 09391**

Our deepest sympathies to the family & friends of Florence George on her recent death. Funeral services were held at the church on November 3.

**DON'T FORGET:
DEADLINE FOR ORDERING
POINSETTIAS IS DECEMBER 11!**



*It's a busy time of year . . .!
Need to borrow something from the church? Don't forget to tell Marilyn or the church office.
Thanks!*

Dear Friends,
My sincere thanks for all the cards, visits, and prayers that I received being ill. Special thanks for Pastor Gary's prayers.

Blessings, Helene Riihimaki

**ANNUAL MEETING—PART I
DECEMBER 7 10:00 A.M.**

Have you moved???????????

Do you have a new phone number? Don't forget to update the church office so we can change our records. Thanks!

Note: Deadline for the Star is the 15th of the previous month. Deadlines for other publicity is usually Tuesday morning. Also, don't forget to put your meetings on the big calendar in the church office so we can avoid scheduling conflicts in 2009!

Altar Flowers Scheduled for . . .

December 7 Ed & Judy Sisler

December 14 Gladys Erickson

December 21 Anna Fischer

December 28 FLOWERS NEEDED!

A Big Thank You and Appreciation . . .

For the ladies helping to fold and stuff the Bethlehem Star each month.
For all those decorating for the Christmas Season.
For all those helping with the Ethnic Christmas Dinner.

Star Seminarian Greetings!

Wishing you a Merry Christmas ...

are the following people who made donations to the Star Seminarian Fund. This fund was established to support seminary students who are studying for pastoral ministry.

Elmie Carey
Genevieve Davis
Irene Ekstrom
Gary & Pat Erickson
Gladys Erickson
Frank & Rose Mary Garcia
Laura Hammes
Carl & Marjorie Hargrave
Anne Hietikko
Elvi Humo
Patricia Humo
Kathleen Hunt
Lauri Koski
Toini Koski
Don & Sherry Krehl
Irene Kuusisto

Dee Maki
Eldon & Helen Miller
Gordon & Virginia Rasmussen
Helene Riihimaki
Doris Riippi
Jay & Betty Ruby
Marlene Schoonmaker
Ed & Edna Schramm
Ed & Judy Sisler
Dick & Laurel Stokke
June Whitney



Church Council Highlights

Pastors Report: Bethlehem received a thank you note from the Growing Place for using the building. A gratuity accompanied the note.

DeKalb County Court is seeking additional places to handle community service projects. This involves persons that have been assigned by the court to do community service in lieu of fines or being confined. Pastor Gary thinks it is a project we could assist with and would be willing to supervise the individuals and the work.

Mary Lasit's Report: The committee, Planting Seeds, which will be developing long range plans for Bethlehem has met. They are looking over a questionnaire that would measure one's response to change as a beginning. Mary felt it would be useful for individuals to know their comfort level with "change."

Committee Reports: 436 households received assistance from the Food Pantry in October. This involved 1,376 people. There has been a good response by the congregation in buying turkey dinners for Thanksgiving. Fifty dinners were ordered, all have been signed up for, and according to our church office, donations have been received for all the dinners.

Finance: Our expenses continue to exceed income. We are currently using money earned from the sale of the parsonage to pay the bills.

Property:

G's R Plumbing showed committee members how to turn on the boilers. They recommend that in any emergency that we call G's R and let the experts do it. The final cost of the boiler project was \$33,795.

The bid from Andy Velez to handle snow removal and salting as needed was approved by the committee.

The old pews in the chapel were removed by Bill Gulke.

A tree that was dead was removed on the west lot by Bill Gulke, Wayne Coffman, and Eldon Miller.

The committee is working on additional bids for the lighting project for Fellowship Hall and information will be submitted at the next council meeting. The property committee requested that the approximately \$1,700 that will be available from the settlement be used for lighting. This money with some designated Thrivent funds, and perhaps undesignated memorial funds could pay for the project.

Budget Review: The council spent considerable time going over the proposed budget for 2009. The budget will be mailed to the congregation in preparation for the Annual Meeting, Part I, to be held December 7, following the worship service.

Meeting adjourned.

Special Holiday Concert

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

PRESENTS

10TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT

ERIC A. JOHNSON, D.M.A.,
DIRECTOR OF CHORAL ACTIVITIES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7
3:00 P.M.

BOUTELL MEMORIAL CONCERT HALL

With performances by the NIU Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, University Choir, Graduate Brass Quintet, and Philharmonic. Special appearances by the DeKalb Festival Chorus, NIU Alumni Choir, and Community School of the Arts Children's Choir.

Christmas Decorating Assistance Needed

**SAVE THIS DATE:
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2008
9:30 A.M.**

I'm looking for assistants to help with decorating the hallway, fellowship hall, and sanctuary for the Ethnic Dinner celebration and the Christmas season.

With many hands, arms, and legs carrying items up from the basement storage area, climbing step ladders, and hanging decorations, it won't take long to complete this task.

Contact Gordon Rasmussen (815)895-8956

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY
(First Saturday of each month)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER
6
8:30—9:30 A.M.
(Mark your calendars for January 3)

We spend an hour reading Scripture and talking about issues important to faith, life and the issues that face us publicly and personally.
Come once, or come each month, the

Weekly Men's
Breakfast

This group meets Friday mornings just before 8:00 a.m. at the Lincoln Inn in downtown DeKalb.

Come as often
as you can!

Christmas Poinsettia Order Form

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDER FORM 2008

Remember a loved one and help to make the Sanctuary beautiful for our Christmas Eve Service! To order your plant, please complete this form and give to an usher; place in the offering plate, or leave in the church office no later than **Thursday, December 11**. Please make your check payable to Bethlehem Lutheran Church and include with your plant order.

_____ plant(s) @ \$11.50 each



Name of Donor _____

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

I will take plant(s) home after Christmas Eve services

I will share my plant(s) with a shut-in.

Ushers for Sundays in December

December 7	Kathleen Hunt Virginia Luedtke Maria McMillion Lou Meinert	December 21	Ed & Edna Schramm Dick & Laurel Stokke
December 14	Eldon & Helen Miller Betty Ruby Ray Steinbis	December 24 <i>Christmas Eve</i>	Ed & Judy Sisler Harry & Mona Theisen
		December 28	Larry & Joan Vandre June Whitney Norma Wiegartz



Greeters for Sundays in December

December 7	Frank & Rose Mary Garcia
December 14	Evelyn Hoffman and Maria McMillion
December 21	Pat Humo and Elvi Humo
December 24	Eldon & Helen Miller
December 28	Don & Sherry Krehl

Lectors

December 7	Bob Hongisto
December 14	Kathleen Hunt
December 21	Annette Johns
December 24	Christina Vandre
December 28	Frank Luedtke

Communion Assistants

December 7	Kathleen Hunt Edna Schramm
December 14	Judy Sisler Ray Steinbis
December 21	Dick Stokke Valerie Talsma
December 24	Wayne Coffman Loren Hayes
December 28	Myron Bond Bob Hongisto



Kid's Fun Page

Yuletide

GAMES

Enjoy the Christmas season with these games, centered around the theme of Jesus, our greatest gift.

JESUS' BIRTH FROM A-Z

What you need:

- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Bibles (optional)



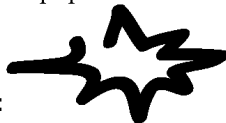
What you do:

Instruct players to think of as many Christmas-related words as they can that start with each letter of the alphabet. Start with A and give everyone a minute to brainstorm words for each letter. For example, M words include manger, Mary and miracle. If you get stuck, look at the Nativity accounts in Matthew 1 and 2, and also Luke 2. Players get a point for each word not repeated by others.

PIN THE STAR ON THE MANGER

What you need:

- Butcher paper, poster board or plain wrapping paper
- Markers, paint or crayons
- Construction paper stars
- Tape
- Blindfold



What you do:

On large paper, draw a picture of a stable. Give each player a star cutout. Put a small + above the manger where the star led the shepherds and wise men to baby Jesus. Like in Pin the Tail on the Donkey, the blindfolded person who puts his or her star closest to the + wins.

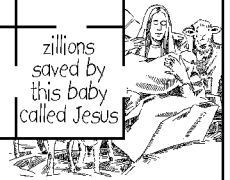


The Story of Jesus' Birth

Jesus' birth is recorded in three New Testament chapters: Matthew 1 and 2, and Luke 2. Follow some important words about our Savior's birth by starting at a word beginning with the letter A and finishing with a word starting with the letter Z.



	angels	Bethlehem	car	dance	easel
cat	bear	child	donkey	egg	fast
holy	glory	flocks	Earth	feathers	gap
inn	jacket	grapes	peace	quiet	hat
Joseph	king	Lord	only	righteous	shepherds
kelp	loop	Mary	night	unique	tidings
last	maze	paper	wise men	virgin	water
open	nest	word	excitement	young	zillions saved by this baby called Jesus



Answer: angels, Bethlehem, child, donkey, Earth, flocks, glory, inn, Joseph, king, Lord, Mary, night, quiet, peace, shepherds, tidings, unique, virgin, wise men, excitement, young, zillions (saved by this baby called Jesus)

The Barnyard

"People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them."

Mark 10:13

The Frogpond (Senior and Junior High)

Announcing DeKalb Area Youth

The more the merrier!! It's the phrase that best fits what is happening in DeKalb lately. First, Trinity, Salem and Bethlehem have been in conversation and are currently working together to do more together. After a series of meetings we have planned out the rest of the year together. So keep your eye out for what is happening around town.

Mark Your Calendars:

Annual Northern Illinois Synod Ski Trip

Everybody in Senior and Junior High is invited to go to Chestnut Mountain in Galena, for the Northern Illinois Synod Ski Trip, on January 19, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The cost is \$45.00 per person for the lift ticket, rentals, and lessons. The cost is \$25.00 if you only need a lift ticket. The deadline for signing up is January 11. To sign up turn in the money to Mary Lasits!!!

If you have questions please feel free to contact Mary Lasits at mlasits@yahoo.com or 815.758.3203.

For the Rest of the Barnyard

Christmas/Epiphany Program

Here we go once more. Reminder: it's time to think about Christmas! This, however, is Good News! This year the children's program to share the story of the birth of our Lord will be "Live from Bethlehem" on January 4, during worship at 9:00 a.m.

Epiphany Program Volunteers

There's always plenty of tasks both large and small to put this program together. Some of the ways we could use help are: **Costume Coordinator:** Helping to make sure every character has a costume. We have tons of costumes on hand. **Costume Dresser:** Helping on the morning of the program to make sure everybody is suited up and ready to go, **Stage Hand:** Helping to guide children to be at the right place at the right time during the program. Contact Mary Lasits 815.758.3203, Ann Brooks 815.754.7574 or Barb Luchsinger 815.754.4879

Teacher Training Tips

Bethlehem is known for its hospitality and for participation! This wonderful involvement has lead to a new addition in the *Star*. Many people participate in Sunday School in various ways and in October the people who participate on Sunday morning began receiving take home tips to make their ministry with children more enjoyable for both the volunteers and the kids. These tips are so good that they are important to share with all who are a part of the Bethlehem family because while we all don't teach a class or plan an activity we serve as the support system for all this to happen. Enjoy reading the tips and activities provided on the second page. These activities are a great quick devotional! Enjoy and thanks for the support!!

“Thank You” Letters Received

To Bethlehem’s Mission Endowment Fund:

“First of all I would like to thank you for inviting me to join you in worship on October 26. It was an honor to be selected by your congregation to be a part of your support of mission work in our community.

Christian Senior Ministries relies upon contributions such as yours to support our ministry to the nursing homes and senior housing facilities in DeKalb and Ogle Counties. Again, we thank you for your contribution of \$500, and we welcome you as a partner with us in reaching out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Deacon Charles Ridulph
Director, Christian Senior Ministries

Dear Friends,

“Thank you so much for your very generous gift of \$500 from the Mission Endowment Fund of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Your support of our efforts is very gratifying to all of us.

We love to talk about Hospice and the services we provide to this community. If you would ever need a program please let me know.

Thank you again for your support over the years.

Warmest wishes,
Karen Hagen, RN,MS, Executive Director

Dear Church Members:

On behalf of all the homeless men, women, and children we serve at Hope Haven, thank you for your recent donation. Your contribution of \$500 will help us provide much more than basic food and shelter to those who find themselves without a place to live.

Your generous support represents an investment in the strength of our community. Our staff works with each family and individual to help them set and reach important personal goals which will aid them in ending their homelessness and move toward secure independence.

We truly appreciate the compassion you have shown for the homeless in DeKalb County. Thank you again for your contribution.

Lesly D. Wicks, LCSW, MSW, Executive Director

Christmas for Residents at DeKalb County Rehab

You can help support the residents at DeKalb Co. Nursing and Rehab this holiday season by purchasing a gift for a specific resident or with a monetary donation. If you would like to do the shopping yourself, call the Activity Department and they will send you suggestions and sizes. Please include a card addressed to the resident and a gift bag. If you would like the Activity Department elves to do the shopping, a monetary donation may be sent to DCRNC —attention Activity Dept. (They are able to order clothing that is adapted to the needs of their residents.) If you need more information, contact Kathy Vickers at (815) 758-2477 ext. 166.

PLANTING SEEDS: By the time you read this the Fall leaves will have fallen and our minds will be preparing for Winter and the Advent and Christmas seasons! So why is there talk of “Planting Seeds”? Well, the Church Council spent some time talking about the future, and an outcome of that talk, was planning for the future and visioning for the future. A new group has been formed to vision build and help a long-range plan process. Everybody is invited to begin praying about what they want Bethlehem to look like in 3-5 years and if the Spirit moves you to be a part of the process. Part of this process will be collecting ideas/thoughts from as many members as possible. While it won’t be possible to take on every idea for the planning process it is important to look at all the possibilities. We are “Planting Seeds” to go where the Spirit is guiding us and to see that harvest down the road. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Mary Lasits @ 815-758-3203 or mlasits@yahoo.com. Our next meeting will be December 6 at 10:00 a.m.



Thrivent Project Fundraiser

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____ Env. # _____

Name _____

Funds raised will be matched by Thrivent Financial up to \$1600.00.

- The new boilers
- Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
- Safe Passage

Please contribute to the project of your choice!

Food Pantry Needs & Updates

The Food Pantry is able to help feed men, women and children thanks to your commitment. Thanksgiving is a fitting time to acknowledge with great appreciation all you have done and continue to do.

Thank you for:

- Giving money to purchase food and Thanksgiving boxes
- Bringing in plastic bags, seasonal clothing, and other items
- Volunteering in the pantry
- Helping to unload and stock food
- Crushing cardboard boxes and recycling them
- Doing other things to help

A Christmas Letter from Iraq

Dearest Congregation,

"I hope this letter finds you all doing well and making a joyful noise that I might even hear from so far away. Lord, how I miss the sound of all our voices on Sunday morning. It still fills me with joy to remember sitting in the pews being part of something so much greater than myself. Pastor Gary, I will never forget your warm smile and blessed teachings. They have helped keep my mind right so far, and continue to do so for the duration. I only feel sad because I do not see the same glow in the eyes of many around me. They have not had the fortunate experiences I have with so many wonderful people.

Ft. Leonard Wood was nice because so many people shared in the grace of Jesus, but it is easy when home and safety are so close at hand. Know that despite my current surroundings and company, I am at least the lone sheep watching this flock from a distance and keeping them safe from afar. One day I hope to be their shepherd and walk amongst them, more active in their lives.

If you can't tell, I am doing well and enjoying my time here. It rained awhile ago, now it is hot and humid. The buildings look run down, but still make adequate homes and offices.

Please pray for me and give me strength, as I hope and pray to see you again. It take 10 days for mail to travel, so don't worry if the next letter is later on."

*God Bless,
Sgt. Dave Tracy*

Send Christmas Greetings to Dave at the following address:

**Sgt. David Tracy
509th Eng. Co.
APO AE 09391**

Our Ethnic Christmas Party is December 7 at 5:00 p.m.

It's almost time for our Ethnic Christmas Party! For those of you who are new or have never attended, this is our congregation's Christmas Party and everyone is invited.

It started out as a Finnish tradition called *Piisku Joulu*, or Little Christmas—a party to both start the Christmas season and to help let off some of the “steam” of hyper-excitement that builds-up in the children.

Now it has developed into a party where everyone brings a dish to pass from his/her own ethnic roots—and it's fun to see how many countries are represented. If, however, you're not in touch with your “roots,” or your family doesn't care to try “something new or unusual,” bring a dish for the American table.

We begin at 5:00 p.m. with English Wassail in the Lounge while the food is set up on the tables in the hallway. Table service beverages are provided. When all is ready, we choose our food from the tables and eat in Fellowship Hall. There is also a short program and carol singing, ending in time to get the kids home to bed.

If you have a folk-outfit, please wear it!

=====

Please check below and return to the church office.

Now, I need some helpers—if you can help out with one of the following, please let me know. Either call me at 895-8956 or drop off this form in the church office or offering plate. Hope to see you December 7!
Gin Rasmussen

- 1) _____ Kitchen Helpers: Set up food in hallways and service beverages.
- 2) _____ Table Decorators: in Fellowship Hall — after coffee on Sunday.
- 3) _____ Furniture movers: Remove pews from hallway and set up tables — then return all after the party.
- 4) _____ Clean-up committee: “Many hands make light work!”
- 5) _____ Program: If you have something you can share, i.e. a song or instrumental music, a poem, prayer, brief story, an interesting tradition, even jokes, we need you. We'd love to have many countries represented here! (Please don't be shy, but be brief!)

Name _____ Phone _____

Phone _____



For Your Information

FUNDS & TOILETRIES ALWAYS NEEDED

The Good Samaritan Fund continues to need funds for those having financial problems. The Good Samaritan toiletries cabinet in Pastor Gary's office also needs new shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant and bar soap. If you could donate some of these items occasionally, please see Pastor Gary or the church office.

KISHWAUKEE AREA CONCERT BAND

The Greater Kishwaukee Area Concert Band will present a Christmas Concert on Wednesday, December 10, at 7:00 p.m., in the Boutell Memorial Concert Hall. Zach Harris will be the vocal soloist on "White Christmas" and will also lead the audience in a Sing-a-Long. The concert is free and handicapped accessible.

A SPECIAL HOLIDAY CONCERT

The DeKalb Festival Chorus along with the Prairie Brass Band conducted by Jennifer Whiting and Dall Niermeyer present a Holiday Concert on Sunday, December 24, at 4:00 p.m. at Boutell Memorial Concert Hall-NIU. This year's concert will feature many holiday selections and featuring Dean Ludden's dramatic reading of Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales." Tickets are \$8 at the door and students/seniors \$5.

CHRISTMAS AT CARTHAGE

It is nearly time to join Carthage again for their very special community tradition "Love Has Come—a light in the darkness . . . A Festival of Readings and Carols." Come, share in the celebration of Christ through spectacular choral and instrumental music, readings, and the beautiful Service of Light. This year's programs will be held December 5 & 6 at 7:30 as well as Sunday, December 7 at 4:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday evenings also include a wonderful Holiday Buffet prior to the concert. For more information, contact Debbie Clark at (262) 551-5810.

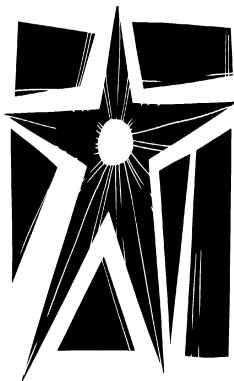
WORSHIP FOR SHUT-INS

This Lutheran TV program can now be seen every Sunday on a new station, Comcast Channel 138 at 11:30 a.m. (which is still TLN). It is also seen at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays on DIRECTV Channel 377 on the Total Christian Television Network (TCT). For more information, you can call toll free 1-888-286-8002 or go to their website www.worshipforshutins.org and even view recent programs online.

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE AT BETHLEHEM

CHRISTMAS EVE DECEMBER 24 7:00 P.M.

Bethlehem Star



Bethlehem Evangelical
Lutheran Church
1915 N. First Street
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Phone: 815-758-3203
Fax: 815-758-1411
Email:

bethlehmlutheran1@verizon.net

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
DeKalb, IL 60115
Permit #121

Address Label Here

New e mail: belcdekalb@comcast.net

Birthday List for December

Birthday Greetings to:

1	Dick Stokke	13	Gordon Rasmussen
	Hem Lach		Russell Bloyd
2	Chandy Lach	15	Randy Huffman
	Doris Nordstrom		Ariel George
4	Christopher George Holley	20	Molly Humes
8	Elizabeth Luchsinger	22	Noah Brooks
	Joe Inboden	24	Perry Spohn
9	Helen Vlahakis	24	Julie Clark
	Andrea Joyal	25	Christina Vandre
10	George Siebens	26	Kristin Olson
12	Genevieve Davis	26	Margaret Hayes
	Chong Zheng	27	Sue Huhta
		29	Greg Stokke
			Sally Davis

If you don't find your name on the Birthday Lists, please call the church office at 758-3203.