

Bethlehem Star

A Message from Pastor Gary

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.”

[1 Corinthians 13:11]

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We know our nation's economic system well: needing a loaf of bread, we trade money for the finished product. Wanting to bake our own bread, we do the same. Our economic system is based on the buying and selling of goods, labor, commodities and luxuries.

As a child I remember hearing my relatives talk about a change in the worship service at church. The new pastor instituted a change in the placement of the offering. The change meant the offering would be taken following the sermon, rather than before the sermon. Some of my relatives quipped, “That's a good change, I can wait until the sermon is over to decide how much to give!”

While congregations engage outside enterprises for heat, electricity, worship supplies and the physical maintenance of our houses of worship, congregations are not businesses. It can be said that congregations do business but are not businesses in the sense that they sell a product. The jest my relatives told was based in the misunderstanding of the church as a commodity. Overcoming this misunderstanding forms the basis of most stewardship programs and stewardship education.

Worship is not a product to be consumed or a set of instructions to be purchased. Worship is a giving of self, time and possessions in response to God's grace made known to us through faith in Jesus Christ. When one worships in response to all that God has done, then the offering of self, time and possessions become spiritual matters and not business matters.

To put this idea another way: when the cost of utilities, or worship supplies, or personnel increases, congregations cannot charge more for goods and services to cover those costs. A business, for example a restaurant, might be

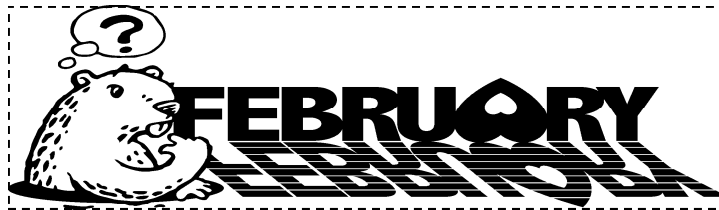
(continued on page 2)

Pastor's letter (continued)

able to pass increased costs on to customers. Businesses are not looking for the generosity of the customers but rather their willingness to purchase the goods and services for sale. It is a good system for business, it is tragic for congregations. The congregation has no customers, only members who gather in response to God's grace. Congregations do look for the generosity of the members as they give self, time and possessions to support the congregation's mission. Generosity in all areas of giving generates the ability of congregations to engage their communities with saving faith in Jesus.

Stewardship committees and programs struggle to help congregation members understand this crucial difference between congregations and businesses. Perhaps another word from St. Paul will assist Bethlehem's Stewardship Committee, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." [Romans 12: 2]

Amani,
Pastor Gary



BRRRRR...

Saturday Afternoon Movies in February

Come in from the cold and enjoy a good movie!

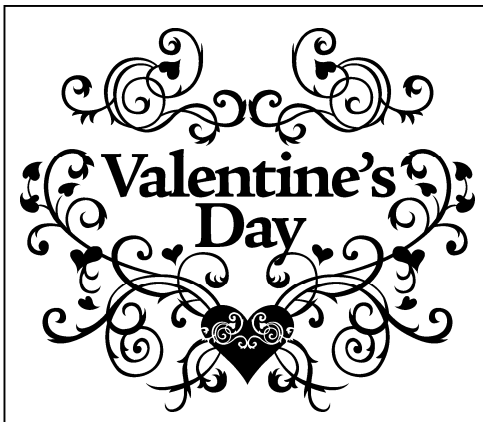
February 7 "Dave" with Kevin Kline and Sigourney Weaver. 1993/Color/110 minutes

February 28 "The Fugitive" with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones. 1993/Color/131 minutes

Popcorn and soda pop will be provided!

Ash Wednesday
February 25

Membership Updates, Concerns and Thanks



Dear Friends,

"On behalf of the Safe Passage Board of Directors, staff and clients, I want to thank you for your generous donations. Community support like yours is vital for us to be able to meet the increasing needs of victims of domestic violence in our community. We truly appreciate your support and your donations."

Sincerely,

Pam Wiseman, Executive Dir.

Dear Friends,

"Your congregation has played an important role in helping Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) bring hope to people. Everyday across Illinois, LSSI gives children loving homes, helps senior citizens live independently, connects families separated by incarceration, and helps people with addictions move toward recovery. These are just a few of the ways LSSI reaches out to those in need. We are faithful in our mission: responding to the Gospel, LSSI brings healing, justice and wholeness to individuals and families. Your partnership is vital to the work we do. I am grateful that your congregation recognizes the importance of responding to the needs of people who face difficulties in their lives. Thank you!"

Warm regards, Rev. Frederick Aigner, President

Dear Bethlehem Family,

"Thank you so much for allowing us to use the Fellowship Hall and kitchen for our annual Christmas gathering. The accommodations were perfect and all 60 of us appreciated it."

God Bless, Ron & Lorna Bemis & Family



A special thank you to Eldon Miller for making the rack to hold the candle snuffers in the sacristy.

Dear Friends,

"I am writing once again to say how much I appreciate all the cards and prayers that I have received. Thank you also for the visit from Pastor Gary and giving me communion. God's blessing!"

**In Christ's name,
Rose Mary Garcia**

Need help paying your home heating bills or know someone who does? Call LIHEAP (Illinois Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) at (815) 758-3835. Don't delay! You don't need to be behind on your bills. You can be a homeowner or renter and all ages are eligible.

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY

7 8:30—9:30 A.M.

(Mark your calendars for **March 14, 8:00**)*

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 coffee's always on!

***Please note date/time change.**

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!

Adult Education for February

Christian Education for Adult Learners "To the church of God that is in Corinth..."

Adult learners are invited to join the conversation about Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Sundays at 10:40 in the church lounge. The Christians at Corinth struggled with issues of faith, hope and love in the midst of a prosperous, thriving and cosmopolitan city. During this study we will ask the question: How do Paul's words to ancient city dwellers make sense for us today? On the second and third Sundays of February we shift gears. February 8, participants at Lutheran Campus Ministry will be with us to discuss their upcoming trip to Guatemala. On February 15 we will not hold the adult class to make space for participation in the commemoration of the Feb. 14, 2008 shootings on the NIU campus.

February 1: To know nothing except Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1-6

February 8: Lutheran Campus Ministry discussion of Guatemala trip.

February 15: No class due to Lutheran Campus Ministry events commemorating the February 2008 shootings at Northern Illinois University.

February 22: Faith, Hope, and Love. 1 Corinthians 12-16

Ushers for Sundays in February

February 1	Leland & Evelyn Hoffman Bob Hongisto Pat Humo	February 22	Eldon & Helen Miller Betty Ruby Ray Steinbis
February 8	Kathleen Hunt Jerry & Annette Johns Maria McMillion	February 25 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	Dick & Laurel Stokke
February 15	Sandy & Matt Dumdie Elmie Carey Lou Meinert		



Greeters for Sundays in February

February 1	Lou Meinert and Gordon Rasmussen
February 8	Doris Riippi and Betty Ruby
February 15	Eldon & Helen Miller
February 22	Alice Saari and June Whitney
February 25	Norma Wiegartz and Carole Asbell <i>(Ash Wednesday)</i>

Lectors

February 1	Dick Stokke
February 8	Laurel Stokke
February 15	Valerie Talsma
February 22	Christina Vandre
February 25	Gordon Rasmussen

Communion Asst.

February 1	Myron Bond Kathleen Hunt
February 8	Jerry Johns Annette Johns
February 15	Barb Luchsinger Ray Steinbis
February 22	Valerie Talsma Wayne Coffman
February 25	Margie Hargrave Bob Hongisto

Kid's Fun Page

HEARTS in the morning

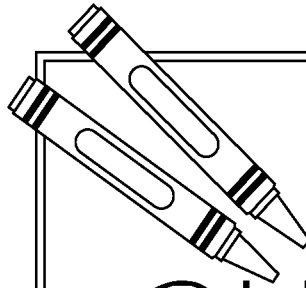
Start your morning with heart. Enjoy this special breakfast with someone you love!

What you need:

- Your favorite pancake recipe and syrup
- Pan or griddle
- Cooking spray
- Liquid measuring cup
- One 5-inch heart-shaped metal cookie cutter
- Wooden clothespin
- Spatula
- Adult help

What you do:

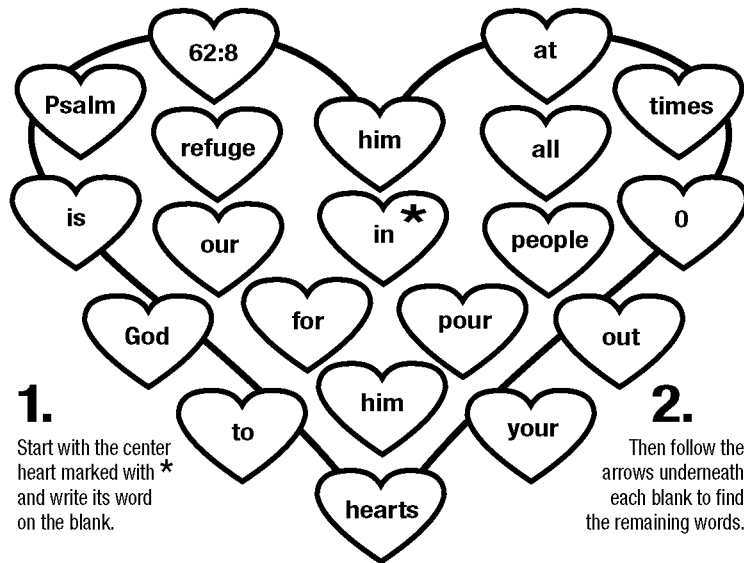
1. With an adult's help, follow your recipe to make your favorite pancakes.
2. Spray cooking spray onto your pan or griddle.
3. Pour pancake batter into a liquid measuring cup. (This helps with pouring individual pancakes.)
4. Place the cookie cutter on the pan or griddle. Then clip the wooden clothespin onto the cookie cutter to act as a handle.
5. Pour batter (about 3-4 Tablespoons) into the cookie cutter.
6. Cook until the top is bubbly and the pancake is dry around the edges.
7. When the heart is ready to flip, use the clothespin to lift and remove the cookie cutter.
8. Turn the pancake with the spatula and cook until golden on both sides. Enjoy with your favorite syrup or fruit.



Just for **KIDS**

OUR HEARTS

This special Bible verse from the NIV describes what God wants us to do with our hearts.

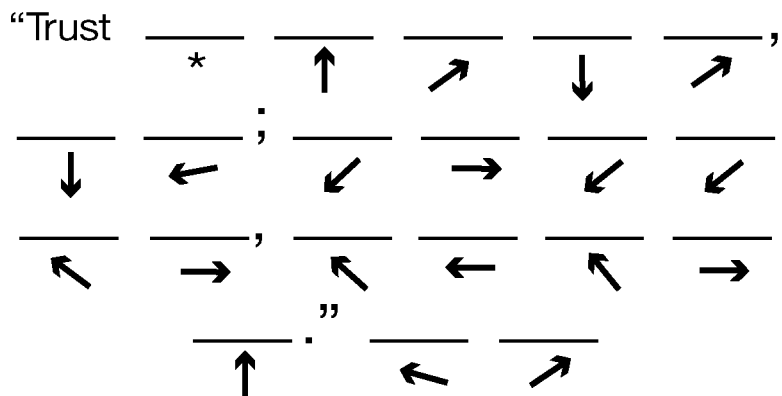


1.

Start with the center heart marked with * and write its word on the blank.

2.

Then follow the arrows underneath each blank to find the remaining words.



Answer: “Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.” Psalm 62:8

The Barnyard

The Frog Pond

Ski-Trip Update:

It's only been a day since the Junior and Senior High students, Pastor Gary, and Mary have returned home from the ski trip and already lots of questions have come our way about how it went and how many. We had a great turnout with 11 students, 8 from Bethlehem and 3 friends. They all embraced the slopes and consensus was to return again next year.

Senior High:

Keep an eye out in the bulletin or look on the bulletin board outside of Mary's office because the planning process for a combined event is underway for February with First Lutheran just down the street.

Junior High: Scavenger Hunt

We are going on a scavenger hunt on March 15, from 1pm – 3pm, with our friends from First Lutheran. We will be having pizza here at church at 12:30pm and then carpooling down to First. Your parents or guardians may pick you up at 3pm from First. Please sign-up with Mary if you are interested. Any questions please feel free to call 815.758.3203 or email at mlasits@yahoo.com

The Rest of the Barnyard

Vacation Bible School:

The snow isn't even thawing yet but it is never too early to plan for summer. Ah, those days of warmth! This year Vacation Bible School will be held from August 10 – August 14, 2009. We had such a great turnout doing VBS the second week of August last year; why mess with a good thing. Continue to look for details as time goes on.

Sunday School: Come and See Invitation

Bethlehem's Sunday School Program has so much fun when we are together and we wanted to share all that fun with the whole church. We are inviting the different groups to come and help with a portion of Sunday School if they are interested. There are many opportunities that are not overwhelming and a great way to see the action and be a part of it. You can volunteer as a group or as an individual. Below is a chart of opportunities. If one interests you or your group please pick a Sunday and which opportunity you would like and we'll schedule you in.

Game Leader: The students third grade through fifth grade play a game relating to the lesson for the month. This game is usually played the first 15 minutes of Sunday School, beginning at 10:30am, downstairs in the large two classrooms.

Music Leader: The music leader teaches traditional and new songs to the youngest of our students, ages 3 through second grade. This, like the game time, happens the first 15 minutes of Sunday School, from 10:30am – 10:45am.

Shepherding: Shepherds are the teachers who introduce the story of the month and they meet the second 15 minutes of Sunday School, from 10:45am – 11:00am. The teachers are provided curriculum which is age-appropriate and usually with a small activity to help cement the story into the minds of the students.

Rotation Time:

This is probably the part of Sunday School most of you are familiar with, the portion where volunteers help to teach the story of the month through hands-on activities. Each week the students go to a different activity site and experience the story with different senses. We have a **computer time**, **puppets/story time**, **food experiments**, and **art**. In each of these categories the multiple ideas are provided so the leaders of each unit can pick one that best suits their strengths and personalities.

We invite you to come and experience the fun with us!! If any of these opportunities interest you or your group, please contact Mary Lasits at 815.758.3203, mlasits@yahoo.com.

Planting Seeds

The collection process is almost complete and some themes are coming to light. The most popular suggestion has been making improvements to our building to make all areas of the church accessible to everybody so that we all can be part of every aspect of our congregational life. Other themes that have surfaced are in the areas of fellowship and outreach. They are all some variation to help people want to be a part of our mission and to help people feel welcome. In the coming months the Planting Seeds committee is going to break down suggestions into categories so they can be acted upon easily. Look for the itemized updates in the coming *Star* and bulletins!

We are praying about where God is calling Bethlehem. Please give us a few moments of your time and share where you see the Holy Spirit working and calling us. Thank you!! (The Planting Seeds Committee will also be going to different groups to ask a few questions and get feedback.)

What needs are being met here at Bethlehem?

What needs are not being met here at Bethlehem?

What programs would you like to see for your family and yourself?

What programs do you not like that we are doing and why?

Save the Date!

Members and Friends – We need you to make our Bethlehem photo directory complete.

Our Directory Committee has chosen *Lifetouch* to help us put faces with names and tell our story.

Tentative photo dates are:

Tuesday, April 28, through Saturday, May 2.

Ash Wednesday and Lenten Schedule

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

Lent 2009

February 25 – April 1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. [Hebrews 12:1-2]

Wednesday, February 25, 7:00 pm:

Ash Wednesday worship with Holy Communion.

“The brand new old thing called the Church.”

Wednesday, March 4, 7:00 pm:

“The congregation as household.”

Wednesday, March 11, 7:00 pm:

“The congregation as one expression of Church.”

Wednesday, March 18, 7:00 pm:

“Congregation + Congregation = Church”

Wednesday, March 25, 7:00 pm: “We are what we do!”

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 pm: “All together, now!”

Planning Ahead

Maundy Thursday, April 9: Worship at 7:00 pm.

Good Friday, April 10: Prayer vigil from 5:00 – 6:30 pm.
Worship at 7:00 pm.

Easter Vigil, April 11: Worship at 7:00 pm.

Easter Sunday, April 12: Festival Worship at 9:00 am.

Notes from David in Iraq

“Thank you!

Your Christmas cards were most heartwarming. It is difficult around the holidays to be away from friends and family. Letters and packages lessen the blow greatly and give us something to look forward to.

The weather here is somewhat cold and windy and we had a terrible sand storm today. For the most part though, the weather has been quite nice.

People decorate a lot for Christmas around here but it just kind of makes me a bit more homesick. I guess it just means I miss you all so much and care about you deeply.

Know that over all I am doing well and could deal with far worse living conditions than I have. Have a blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year.”

Sincerely, Sgt. Dave

Dear Bethlehem Lutheran,

“I would like to begin by saying how grateful and blessed I am to be part of such a wonderful group of friends. I have enjoyed the letters from everyone and the packages have been tremendous. I plan to write everyone individually as well, but I have been quite busy as of late.

It has gotten much colder recently. The nights and mornings are terrible, but midday is tolerable. The food has been pretty good here too. I must say I never go hungry, and I do a good job of working it off as well. Sometimes I have a hard time sleeping, though, whether it's anticipation, nerves, or just wanting to get on with another day, I can't say. I feel fine and most of the time. My schedule isn't difficult. We work six days, either early mornings or late evenings, and then we have three days recovery and maintenance. Sometimes we have classes on different paperwork or skill sets as well to keep us alert and up-to-date. I actually like it here for the most part and feel I have found my true calling. My only regret is it takes me away from friends and family. I hope to see you all again.”

Sincerely, Sgt. Dave

The Northern Illinois Synod Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) will take place Saturday, March 7, 2009, at Kishwaukee Community College in Malta, Illinois.

Congregational Resourcing Event Theme:

“Word of God. Word of Life.”

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Matthew J. Marohl

Dr Marohl is an Associate Professor of Religion at Augustana College and a member of the ELCA Committee on the “*Book of Faith*” Initiative.

Please see Pastor Gary for more information on this event and an event flyer with classes available.

Highlights of Church Council Meeting—January 6

Tammie shared a communication from Bishop Wollersheim regarding a trip to Israel to meet with other Bishops regarding peace talks. The Bishops are asking for an immediate cease fire. She also read a letter from Bishop Hanson, head to the ELCA. See bulletin board for letters.

Eric Armstrong sent a request that he be replaced on the council. Pressing needs at work make it difficult for him to serve Bethlehem at this time. A replacement will be appointed by the council.

Pastor's report: A program called "Buy a Degree" has been developed to pay back the Mission Endowment Fund for the \$34,000 that was borrowed from the fund to pay for the boiler project. Council unanimously endorsed the project which provides for people to contribute to the repayment by "Degrees." See the complete description in this edition of the *Bethlehem Star*.

Mary Lasits' Report:

Youth: A ski trip is planned for January 19. Youth meet Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. after Confirmation.

Evangelism: New members joined Bethlehem in December.

Christian Ed: Mary shared with the group periodicals she uses for information and ideas.

Planting Seeds (Long-range planning): The committee developing this process is Van O'Brien, Edna Schramm, and Mary. The responses from the questionnaire are continuing to come in. Large numbers of responses stress the need for accessibility to the basement.

Lysa Wright, Pat Erickson, and Mary are planning to organize a new picture directory.

Committee Reports:

Finance: Tammie went over the current budget with the goal of making the listed items fewer and to gather information into a general category. The current budget is difficult to read. The goal is to make it easier. Lots of time was spent going over the "In and Out" items to demonstrate the complexity of the current system.

Worship & Music: Council reviewed the contract that will be presented to Jim Nerstheimer, the newly employed organist.

Property: Anna Fischer reviewed the proposal for the Fellowship Hall lighting project. The project will be voted upon at the Annual Meeting, Part II, on January 25. Copy of the estimate, picture of fixture and the plan for payment can be seen on the bulletin board.

Election of officers for the congregation: Tammie is the unanimously elected President, Bill Gulke elected as Vice President, and Deb Perian will be the recording secretary.

The next meeting will be held on the second Tuesday in February at 6:30 p.m.

Anna Fischer, unofficial recorder.

Thank You Notes from our Food Pantry Clients

"Thank you so much for your assistance and for the help that I have received this year from the pantry. May your New Year be blessed with all that God has in store for you. I also thank your staff. Peace and joy to your church family . . ."



"Thank you so much for all you've done. It's people like you that make this place a better place to live in. On Thanksgiving I was able to feed 5 more people in the trailer park (for 2 days). I even made turkey soup. They were grateful as well. My family and I say thank you and much appreciated. We hope you and your family are as blessed as we are to have you!"

Men's Breakfast/Bible Study Saturday, March 14, 2009* 8:00 am

Calling all men! Come, join us for breakfast followed by Bible study on Saturday, March 14. A great breakfast will be served! A free will offering taken to cover the costs will be received. At 8:30, we will begin our men's Bible study. We'll finish up around 9:30 a.m. so you can go about your day fed in body and spirit!

*Please note: The Congregational Resourcing Event is on March 7 so the Men's Study for March will be one week later on March 14.

AA Sweetheart Banquet— February 14

Buy A Degree Fundraiser

To repay the Mission Endowment Fund for the purchase of the new heating system.

Vision: The congregation borrowed \$34,000.00 from the Mission Endowment Fund for the replacement of the building's old heating system. The Mission Endowment Fund made the money available to the congregation without interest. This program is designed to repay the Mission Endowment Fund.

Goal: The goal of this program is to raise the temperature on a thermometer from 0 degrees to 95 degrees, representing the warmth provided by the new heating equipment. If all 95 degrees are raised the Mission Endowment Fund will realize \$34,200.00.

Details: Each degree on the thermometer represents a gift of \$10.00 per month for a 3 year period. Degrees may be purchased over the three years, or paid off at a faster rate. Each degree on the thermometer cost \$360.00 ($360 \times 95 = \$34,200.00$).

Methods: Individuals and families will be encouraged to buy as many degrees as they feel comfortable buying. Pledges may be paid off over three years, or any other way that suits the pledging party. Individuals and families are encouraged to be creative in meeting their pledge. Some suggestions are:

- Host the Coffee Fellowship after worship and designate the funds to "Buy a Degree".
- Plan and implement a fellowship meal with proceeds going to the fundraiser.
- Pack a lunch one or more times each week and set aside the money for the fundraiser saved over purchasing a prepared meal.
- Set aside \$2.50 each week to meet your pledge.
- Save loose change (33 cents per day will pay a full pledge).
- Share one or more degrees and split the pledge with others.

Please be sure that all money given to the fundraiser is clearly marked so that it can go to the Mission Endowment Fund.

+++++

Buy a Degree Pledge form:

(I)(WE) plan to buy _____ degree(s) at \$360.00 per degree. This pledge will be paid:

(Please mark the appropriate line)

In one payment: _____ Annually: _____ Quarterly: _____ Monthly: _____ Weekly: _____

Name: _____

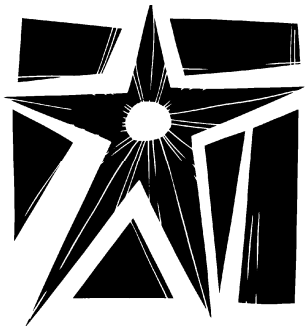
Offering Envelope # _____

Pledges may be placed in an envelope, dropped in the offering plate, dropped off at the office, or mailed to:

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
1915 N. First St.
DeKalb, IL 60115

(You may use the "Boiler Fund" envelope in your offering envelope box to meet your pledge. Look for "Buy a Degree" envelopes in bulletins and future newsletters.)

Bethlehem Star



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U.S. Postage
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DeKalb, IL 60115
Permit #121

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

Phone: 815-758-3203
Fax: 815-758-1411
Email: belcdekab@comcast.net
website:
www.bethlehemdekab.org

Address Label Here

Birthday List for February

February 2009

Birthday Greetings to:	18	Richard Newtonson
	19	Elvi Humo
1 Nancy Jackson	20	Don Krehl
Susannah More	21	Mark Domroes
2 Justin Zak	22	Meagan Newtonson
Hilkka Itkonen		Martha Miller
4 Judy Sisler		Joe Ross
5 Tony Denny	23	Dan Clark
6 Mary Lasits		Mia Gabrielle Drake
Brian Vanderweele	24	Loren Hayes
11 Erica Schoonmaker	25	Ellen Hampa
Justin Huffman		Helene Riihimaki
15 Ray Killham		Jerry Trostle
Lori Grubbs	27	Tom Inboden
17 Van O'Brien	28	Heather Breuer



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