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The above image is a representation of the Jesse tree. Isaiah tells us "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse". From the house of Jesse of Bethlehem, God chose the one who was to be king of Israel – David, the youngest of Jesse's seven sons. Through David, Jesse is the ancestor of Jesus. The Jesse tree is a traditional image found in mosaics and windows. Many of these are very ornate with branches depicting Jesus' ancestors and various prophets and other biblical figures.

Peanut Shell



November and December are looking like busy months at Advent. Please plan on supporting the ELW's Bake and Craft Sale on December 3 by donating and purchasing items. The church is probably the only place where you are asked to donate items and then buy them back.

We are happy to report that an adult discussion group will be starting on November 19. These will start at 9:00 a.m. and be held in the choir loft. We hope to hve some lofty topics this year.

The Lutheran Handbook is easy-to-read and chocked full of good information about the Lutheran Church. If you haven't got one, now would be an ideal time to get one.

Please check the Advent and Christmas worship opportunities. In addition, please plan to attend the Toronto Conference Christmas Concert on December 10.

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on February 11. Please consider serving on Congregational Council as we would like to have a complete Council again.

Sometimes we forget how good our life is in North America. Please remember those in areas of the world our church supports, particularly Chaman-culo where the ELW is focusing its efforts from 2004-2008.

Please remember to maintain your offering levels for the remainder of the year. There are various ways to contribute – please use whatever method works best for you. Please also remember to contribute your portion for *The Eastern Synod Lutheran*.

In closing, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Our January *Parish Visitor* will be available on January 7 and deadline for copy is December 31.

Judy

Advent to Christmas Worship



December 3 – First Sunday of Advent
 December 10 – Second Sunday of Advent
 December 17 – Third Sunday of Advent
 December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent
 Worship at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Services at 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

December 25 – Christmas Day

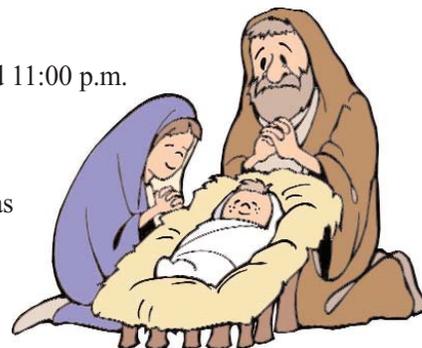
Service at 10:00 a.m.

December 31 – First Sunday of Christmas

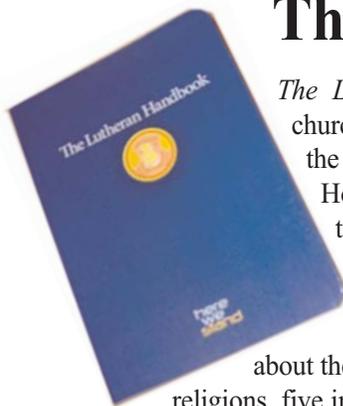
Service at 10:00 a.m.

December 31 – New Year's Eve

Service at 7:00 p.m.



The Lutheran Handbook



The Lutheran Handbook is a wonderful resource on our church that was published last year. It describes the icon of the "winking Luther", gives a lot of church stuff including How to Respond when Someone Sits in Your Pew, How to Listen to a Sermon, How to Stay Alert in Church, How to Pass the Plate, What to Bring to a Church Potluck and some important things that Luther said.

Included with the fun stuff are a lot of basic facts about the Bible, comparisons of the Lutheran Church with other religions, five important things the Lutheran reformers wrote (or translated) and why they're still important today, charts, maps, diagrams, a lot of how to's and Luther's Small Catechism.

This is one of the resource pieces being used by our confirmation class this year. It is available from Augsburg Fortress for about \$20. It would make a good Christmas gift for someone or a handy addition to your own reading material.



Adult Discussion Group to Begin

Adult discussion begins at 9:00 a.m. on November 19 with a five-week theme: The Birth of Jesus in Scripture, History and Art. Join us for conversation, reflection and fun. The discussion will be held in the choir loft. ♦

ADVENT LUTHERAN CHURCH
 2800 Don Mills Road
 North York, Ontario • M2J 3B6
 416 493 1435

The Rev. Michael Mills, Pastor
 Worship Service and Sunday School
 at 10:00 a.m.

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 for our members and friends.
 Judy Baribeau, Editor 416 264 4527
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Advent Lutheran Church
www.adventlutheranchurch.ca



A Word from Pastor Mike

It was a gift to be on sabbatical this year and I thank you for providing me this opportunity to grow, learn, pray, still my heart, reflect and laugh. The following article, the fifth since I left on sabbatical, is the first that tries to detail some of my journey with God over the last five years or so. The gift of a sabbatical has helped me understand more fully my own journey and has enabled me to begin to put it into words. I offer it, not as a template for all spiritual journeys (each of us has our own path to follow with God), but as a reflection on one person's journey. I hope that it opens doors of discussion with whoever finds it of interest.

*Blessings,
Pastor Michael*

A human being has so many skins inside, covering the depths of the heart. We know so many things, but we don't know ourselves! Why, thirty or forty skins or hides, as thick and hard as an ox's or bear's, cover the soul. Go into your own ground and learn to know yourself there.

Meister Eckhart

There is within each of us an entire universe. But it's not a universe that is always easy to explore. It's sometimes less demanding to concern ourselves with the news on TV or a library book or the coming and goings of our neighbours than it is to examine our own interior worlds – at least I have found this to be true for myself. Indeed, exploring one's self means being open to our own vulnerability. When the world of work and relationships and study is tough enough, this internal work can feel just too difficult. And yet the life of the spirit has always necessarily been an inward journey – it is the journey into the deepest regions of the heart.

A number of years ago, in the spring of 1999, I began to explore within myself what I can best describe as a vast emptiness. Since seminary I had sensed some sort of an interior cavern that refused to be satisfied with the usual entertainments, but in the spring of 1999 I gave myself permission to say out loud that I felt hollow to my core and had for some time. This experience, once I gave it a name, was so uncomfortable that I would try to avoid the feelings of anxiety it engendered as quickly as they arose. I began to read voraciously only to find words hollow and empty. I filled my life with busyness: I worked hard, I painted hard, I volunteered hard and yet I was

increasingly unsatisfied. I would go to a restaurant or the movies or the park, but these diversions proved only to be that: diversions. The emptiness remained. Indeed it grew. I could find no answers, nor anyone who was willing to talk about such profound barrenness, even though I am now convinced it is the condition of every human being.

During my sabbatical my search for understanding brought me into contact with many people who seemed to be on a similar journey and I began to explore new avenues of learning. I began to read in earnest the fourth century Christian monastics known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. I explored Taoism, Zen Buddhist philosophy and Indian Vedism, and I've re-read a good deal of the Bible, especially Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and the Gospel of Mark. More importantly, my search has brought me face to face with myself, and what I discovered has been even more startling than the original experience of emptiness. It is more exciting too. What I discovered is that the emptiness is nothing less than God. Here I was, for years, contesting, running from, and ignoring the very thing for which I thought I was searching: the presence of the divine. The words of Jesus, "If you lose your life, you will find it," have taken on deeper and richer meaning for me.

Catholic philosopher John O'Donohue writes, "Behind every face

there is something eternal going on, unfortunately, it sometimes takes deep suffering, grief, or loss to awaken us. It could happen one evening in the middle of your life, your routines, your roles. The phone rings. Someone you love is in the grip of a serious illness that could take their life within months. It only takes a few seconds to receive that news. Yet, when you put the phone down, you are already standing in a different world. All you know has just been rendered unsure, tenuous. And it is in that unknown, in that mystery place, that lies the invitation to awakeness."

Awakeness. What a lovely word. To be awake is to be aware of the present in all of its divine richness. It is to live in the moment, without regret for the past or anxiety for the future. How often have I missed the joy of the present by worrying about some small slight I received years ago? How much time have I consumed imagining some extraordinary thing that may or may not happen tomorrow rather than attending to the profound mystery of the here and now?

My experience of the loss of myself through emptiness unwittingly precipitated a new journey for me: a journey of learning to see the divine in the simplest of things. It's funny, I've preached on Jesus' words "The reign of God is in the midst of you" probably a hundred times in my life and I'm realizing now how true these words actually are. But there's a conundrum here, too. For, no sooner do I step fully

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A Word From Pastor Mike

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into the truth of Jesus' words then my mind drags me back to some past hurt or into some future worry. But the reality is: the past is over and the future has not yet come. The divine moment is only here, only now. One can experience this universal mystery even in something so simple as pouring oats into a saucepan for breakfast. It is in the beauty of the different textures of bran, berry and chaff; it is in the fragrance of the cardamom sprinkled on top; it is in the ability of one's body to be nourished and strengthened by this grain from the earth – grain which itself is nourished by sun and rain, pollinated by insects, harvested and collected and milled and distributed by so many human hands – each pair representing a person with her or his own internal universe. Such a miracle in simple oatmeal. Right here. Right now.

Ecclesiastes says, "God has made everything beautiful in its time, and has set eternity in the hearts of the people; yet they cannot fathom what has been done from beginning to end." And yet we still fill our lives with so much worry as we try to "fathom all things." We try to orchestrate the future to fulfill our desires and we have anxiety when it doesn't work. We invite stress into our lives by fussing about the past rather than forgiving and letting go. And all we have to do is attend to the beauty that is everywhere around us in each moment. The world, in this precise moment, is filled with God. Full stop. And when we still our busy minds, when we open our hearts, when we attend to the moment we are in, we discover eternity in each breath, in each word, in each interaction, in each person. When the human heart finally surrenders and lets itself know that it is utterly empty save for God, the spiritual journey begins in a new way. Because in emptiness there are no more illusions and God has room simply to be. ♦

Mission Report

The focus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is "Forward in Mission". For this quadrennial 2004-2008 the focus of the Evangelical Lutheran Women is "Walking in Faith". For these years the ELW's project is for the women of Chamanculo, Mozambique. These projects are decided in consultation with Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the Lutheran World Federation. In making these decisions, the needs of the community are considered. This is the way ELWomen are connected to the women of the world.

Chamanculo is a slum on the edge of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. These slums came into being as people fled from the countryside and the civil war raging there.

In Chamanculo the houses are little better than sheds – constructed of corrugated tin with a thatched roof. These huts are more for shelter than for living in as with a temperature of 40°C, one can imagine the temperature in the huts. The streets here are very narrow – just about enough room for one person to walk.

The Zambezi River which runs through this area, is used as a source for water, food and washing.

There are groups of local women (Akabeesta) who travel around to speak to the women in the villages. They act out their messages about domestic violence, use of water, as it is very precious and not easily available. They also tell the people if they are sick to go to a doctor; if someone is tested HIV positive, do not shun them; how to put on a condom. Most of the people are illiterate which is why all advice is acted out.

Water is a rare commodity in a lot of these countries. Just think how much water you use in a day, with no thought if there is enough or whether it is fit to drink. Water is a global issue – more wells need to be drilled and the water clean. In this area people can't just go

and draw their water at the well, they have to pay for it. Sometimes it is necessary for the young women and girls to walk six to seven kilometres, one way, to get water. The women are the haulers of water and caregivers in the home. In some cases it means a young girl has to quit school so she can go and get water – as after walking a total of twelve kilometres, cooking and cleaning, there is not much time for school. The men have left to work in the mines in South Africa and very often don't return.

The women here in Chamanculo can get a small micro loan to start a business. In this way they earn a little money to feed their families. Some of the women set up a small store, do tailoring, or become charcoal sellers which is used for the cooking fires.

The Akabeesta groups of women support sufferers from HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. They try to help people to dialogue and work out their problems. There are lots of orphanages due to HIV/AIDS. Grandmas are looking after young children whose parents have died. A whole generation is dying off. One grandma said, "The best way to care for orphans is to keep their parents alive."

A maternity wing was added to the medical centre which serves the people in a 27 kilometre radius. There are not enough doctors; a man is the midwife. A pregnant woman would either walk or ride a bicycle to get to this facility. She would have her baby and return home the same way.

Count your blessings.

Joan Fox
Mission Representative



Advent's Financial Position as at October 30, 2006

Summarized as follows is Advent's giving to October 30, together with other revenues received.

Our Revenues	Received to October 30, 2006	Received to October 30, 2005	Difference
Commitments			
Current/Loose	\$ 67,826	\$ 62,929	\$ 4,896
Mortgage	5,064	4,858	207
Sunday School	<u>160</u>	<u>369</u>	<u>(209)</u>
Sub-total	\$ 73,050	\$ 68,156	\$ 4,894
Facilities	49,824	40,477	9,347
Regular Benevolence	<u>9,033</u>	<u>8,643</u>	<u>390</u>
Total Received	\$131,907	\$117,276	\$14,631
Other Giving			
GHDA	\$ 4,070	\$ 4,137	\$ (67)
40th Anniversary	\$ 4,482	\$ 4,385	\$ 97

Current, festival and loose collections for 2006 to the end of October remain consistently above those for 2005, with an increase of 8%. I think we can pat ourselves on the back.

Notwithstanding, Facilities revenue remains the shining beacon of hope, significantly in excess of 2005 levels, with a year-over-year increase of 23%.

Our Expenditures

To the end of October, our overall expenditures were about 3.2% higher in 2006 than in 2005. Virtually all of this increase is attributable to Outdoor Maintenance, with a jump of \$3,176 this year.

Our Bottom Line

At the rate we are going, I anticipate that we can break even this year, even after a

\$6,000 transfer to the Reserve Fund. But remember, our deficit in 2005 was (\$5,600) +, so we cannot be complacent.

40th Anniversary

Collections to the end of October 2006 total \$4,481.77, as compared to \$4,384.92 in 2005. However, at this pace, we won't meet our \$10,000 collection target for the third year of our four-year term, so keep dumping your change (preferably Loonies and Toonies) in your coin banks.

We have now remitted \$15,000 of our total commitment for the assisted housing project of \$30,000, so we are half way to our goal.

*Fred Roth,
Treasurer*

The Eastern Synod Lutheran

You may have noticed an envelope for *The Eastern Synod Lutheran* in your October/November issue. The suggested donation is \$12. This newsletter is sent to all homes in our Synod and is a Synod budget item. However, each year they recommend that recipients contribute toward its cost so that Synod resources can be redirected to other needy projects. Please use the envelope provided or include your donation with your regular offering and mark it "Eastern Synod Lutheran".

Also, please remember to send any address changes to the Synod office. For each paper returned undelivered, the Synod has to pay the post office \$1.

Stewardship Matters

The Year is Ending

As you can see from our financial report, it looks like we will meet our budget by yearend – but we shouldn't be too complacent about it. We also need time and talent gifts from our members. Please consider serving as a reader, usher, coffee host, offering counter, Sunday School assistant, greeter, altar guild person and offering your help in other ways when you see a need arise. When we have more assistance, we won't always be seeing the same names on our schedule every month.

40th Anniversary

At the silent auction at our anniversary dinner on October 29, we raised \$208.30 for our 40th anniversary appeal. The coins that our members are bringing in the first Sunday of each month are also adding up. The offering in our pink Christmas envelopes is being designated to the appeal. We hope to reach the \$30,000 committed to the NUC-TUCT project by the end of next year, so if you can provide some additional donations for this project we would appreciate your help.

Gifts of Publicly Traded Securities

In 2006 the federal budget permanently reduced the taxable portion of Capital Assets donated to a charity. Now, when you transfer stocks to the church, you pay no tax on the capital gain. This inclusion rate applies to gifts of shares, bonds, bills, warrants, futures, and units of mutual funds that are listed on a prescribed stock exchange.

Because you also qualify for a charitable tax credit based on the asset's fair market value, a gift of securities to the church can be made for less than the net cost of an equal gift of cash. You will receive a charitable donation receipt for the fair market value of the securities as of the date they are received by the church.

This method of giving would be applicable for regular offerings, a

Worship Workshop



Evangelical Lutheran

Worship

On November 4, 165 people representing 25 Toronto Conference congregations gathered at Agricola to spend a day learning about Evangelical Lutheran Worship – the new cranberry coloured worship book for our church. Eight people from Advent attended the workshop. Pastor Eric Dyck and his team gave the group an overview of over 1,000 pages included in the new worship book. We sang a lot, both old favourites again included in a hymn book and some new music, looked at the liturgy (there are ten worship settings including Settings 1 and 2 from the LBW) – and even had some fun as we went through the busy day. Everyone who attended the workshop received

a free copy of the Worship book compliments of Augsburg Fortress.

The new Worship book will become the official worship book for the ELCA and ELCIC on the first Sunday in Advent this year. So far, 25 percent of the congregations have ordered 560,000 copies. In Canada, 170 congregations have ordered the new book representing 25,000 copies. The book is in its fourth printing and orders taken now will be filled in February.

At Advent our Worship committee has not yet made any recommendation to Council about adopting the book. In the meantime, if you have an opportunity please listen to a sampling of the music available on a CD. ♦



donation to the 40th anniversary fund, and contributions to the Endowment Fund. Please consider this option when planning your offerings to the church.

PAR

I'm just reminding you of another option for regular giving. Pre-Authorized Remittance is a plan where you can authorize a monthly transfer from your bank account to the church. Members who are away during the summer, or for other periods during the year, find it a useful way to make regular contributions. If you are interested, please see Claus Brandes, our financial secretary, for the required forms.

Benevolence

In closing, I'd also remind you to keep up your Benevolence offerings. These offerings support our Synod and National Church. Over the years donations to benevolence across the church have been gradually decreasing and causing programs and staff to be cut or eliminated. If we can improve our benevolence, our church will be better able to serve everyone.

Thank you for your assistance.

Judy Baribeau
Chair
Stewardship/Finance



All About our House

In Fran Brandes' absence, I am including an update on property matters that she made in her report to Congregational Council.

At a Special Congregational Meeting on September 24, the congregation approved the replacement of the windows in the kitchen, fellowship hall and Sunday School room. The windows have been ordered and will be installed before the end of the year. We will try to salvage the closures from the old windows to use as required when replacements are necessary in Cedar Hall.

The parking problem with St. Demitru has been discussed at length with the priest and their leaders. Three men have been assigned parking lot duty so if all goes well we will not have any more problems. Parking has been secured at the high school for their parishioners.

The contracts with all our regular users are being re-negotiated and will be completed soon. There has been no rate increase.

Judy Baribeau for Fran Brandes

Toronto Conference Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 10, 2006, 8:00 p.m.

Agricola Lutheran Church
25 Old York Mills Road, Toronto
(Yonge Street and York Mills Road)

The time for the concert has been changed from 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (8:30 p.m.?). This is necessary to accommodate the Lucia Festival by the Swedish congregation that begins at 5:00 p.m. The festival continues downstairs until about 7:45 p.m. To serve the refreshments at the end of the concert, we need everybody's patience and co-operation.

To make the Christmas concert reflect the celebration of the multicultural richness of the Toronto Conference, attendees are invited to bring baking of their own cultural background.

Congregational Council Update

As the year is coming to a close, at its October meeting our Congregational Council began making plans for next year. We set the date for our Annual Meeting as February 11. We are appointing a nominating committee to seek names of people willing to let their names stand to fill six vacancies on Council. We have had three vacancies all year. Two members are completing their first term and are eligible for re-election. I am resigning from Council and there is one year left on my term to be filled.

We also began preparing the 2007 budget and when finalized will make it available to the congregation to review prior to the annual meeting.

Council has approved designating the Christmas offering this year (in the pink envelopes in our boxes) for the 40th anniversary appeal.

On October 15 at a Special Congregational Meeting, the congregation approved the 2005 Audited Financial Statements. We thank Martin Gangadeen and Karen McDonald for their work in preparing these statements.

Judy Baribeau



The ELW will host its annual Craft and Bake Sale following the service on December 3.

Please bring your donations of baked goods (packaged in small quantities) and crafts for set up in the Fellowship Hall prior to the service...and then join everyone following the service to purchase samples of each other's donations. ♦

People and Events Summary

Worship Services and Meetings

Worship services and Sunday School are held every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

Adult Discussion will begin on November 19, 9:00 a.m. in the choir loft.

ELW meets Wednesday, November 8, 7:30 p.m. at the church.

Men's Breakfast Group – meets at 9:00 a.m. the first Saturday each month at the Wexford Restaurant, northeast corner of Lawrence Avenue East and Warden Avenue.

Seniors meet on November 7 and 21 at 1:00 p.m. and December 5 at noon for a potluck lunch at the church.

Congregational Council will meet Monday, December 11, 7:30 p.m. at the church.

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Baptism

■ On October 29 we welcomed Kevin James David Schweyer, son of Jim Morressey and David Schweyer.

Thank you

■ To Mercy De Silva for preaching on October 15.

■ To Brit Missirlian, the ESO committee and everyone who brought food and assisted with the dinner on October 29.

■ To everyone who brought items for the Silent Auction at the annual congregational dinner.

■ To Dr. Lloyd Carlsen for his inspirational presentation at the annual congregational dinner on October 29.

Significant Church web sites

Please check the following web sites frequently to keep in touch with local and national church news:

■ **Toronto Conference** – elcic-torontoconference.ca

■ **Eastern Synod** – www.easternsynod.org

■ **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)** – www.elcic.ca

■ **Lift up Your Hearts** – www.worship.ca

■ **Lutheran World Federation** – www.elca.org/lwf

Please remember to turn the ringer off on your cell phone while we worship.

November/December 2006 Volunteers

Volunteers assist with the worship services. The *Parish Visitor* lists those who have agreed to assist each Sunday as a reminder and a thank you for serving.

Altar Care	Greeter	Assisting Minister	Reader	Ushers	Counters	Coffee Hosts
November 5 Walter Rothenburger	Alfred Schurr	Carol Peck	Hildegard Weltner	Joe Hunt	Walter Rothenburger & Erika Day	Gangadeen Family
November 12 Cynthia Stewart	Mercy De Silva	Jackie Fromme	Martin Gangadeen	Hilton Beharry	Judy Baribeau & Gladys Ammattil	Mona Marcobelli & Sonja & Dave Brown
November 19 Judy Baribeau	Jenny Persaud	Robert Wraith	Joan Fox		Fran Brandes & Brit Missirlian	Wendy Ramassar & Waveney Kanhai
November 26 Sonita Dillon-Rhodium	Adele Buckley	Peter Buckley	Alfred Schurr	Mona Marcobelli & Hildegard Weltner	Rebecca Taylor & Gladys Ammattil	Phyllis & Mark Munro
December 3 Carol Peck	Yvonne Cumberbatch	Gabi Schickedanz	Martin Gangadeen		Judy Baribeau & Fran Brandes	Carlsen Family
December 10 Elizabeth Lancia	Cynthia Stewart	Lester McLean	Mona Marcobelli		Rebecca Taylor & Walter Rothenburger	Rosemarie Gardow & Hildegard & Heinz Weltner
December 17 Elizabeth Lancia	Joyce Strebel	Carol Peck	Ingrid Schurr		Fran Brandes & Brit Missirlian	Astrid & Torsten Walther Tracy & Marcus Walther
December 24 (10:00 a.m.) Elizabeth Lancia	Alex Otten	Erika Schurr			Judy Baribeau & Gladys Ammattil	Joyce Strebel & Susan Blumenauer
December 24 (7:00 p.m.)		Jackie Fromme				–
December 24 (11:00 p.m.) Brit Missirlian		Fred Roth				–
December 25 (10:00 a.m.)		Gabi Schickedanz				–
December 31 (10:00 a.m.)		Nalini Beekie			Judy Baribeau & Fran Brandes	Fran & Claus Brandes
December 31 (7:00 p.m.)		Peter Buckley				–