

## Children's Ministry Calendar

December 24 – NO SUNDAY SCHOOL  
Christmas Eve  
December 27 – NO WEDNESDAY FW FRIENDS  
Christmas Break  
December 31 – NO SUNDAY SCHOOL  
New Year's Eve  
January 3 – NO WEDNESDAY FW FRIENDS  
New Year's Break  
January 7 – First Food Shelf Sunday  
January 21 – Camp Sunday

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## Minnesota Food Shelf

Thank you for responding to last month's request for food shelf donations. Your response was overwhelming! We not only surpassed last year's donations of **1844** pounds, we met our goal! Our 2006 goal was to collect a greater amount of pounds of food than our address of **1965**. We collected an additional **511** pounds of food, reaching a total of **2050** pounds. I had faith that our congregation would achieve our goal; however, I am awed by your quick response, to those in need. During this time of the year people are busily spending extra money, buying presents, decorations, and additional food and baking supplies. This stretches many budgets, making it is even more of a commitment to purchase additional food for the food shelf! Thank you again, to each of you who helped us to not only achieve our goal, but to once again surpass it! As always, anyone, adult, youth or child, is welcome to become involved with this ministry. Thank you, once again, for the congregational support of this ongoing service project.

## Toys for Iraqi Tots

Last year we collected toys for children in Iraq, in response to a request from a member serving there, and we had a wonderful response. I was told that the children especially loved the "Beanie Babies!" We have again received a request to collect toys, especially soccer balls and dolls, so The Children's Ministry Committee has approved this project as an ongoing service project; we will periodically be sending toys. Please send donations to class with your Sunday School children, or label them "Iraqi Toys" and bring them to the church office, or to Deb Nelson in the Children's Ministry Office. Please contact Deb if you are interested in helping with this ministry. We could use help to coordinate and publicize this project. We could also use a person willing to keep track of the donations to determine when we have enough to ship. We could also use help boxing and/or shipping the toys. Please consider supporting this project.

The next Steppingstone will go out on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Articles need to be turned in to the church office by Sun, January 7<sup>th</sup>.

## FLOWER CHART

The 2007 Flower Chart is up on the bulletin board in the narthex. If you would like to donate altar flowers for a specific Sunday in 2007, sign your name next to that date on the chart. The cost is \$15 per vase. You will receive a letter before that date with a donation envelope enclosed, to be returned to the church office with your payment.

## QUILTS FOR CHARITY

Come January, after the Christmas decorations are put away and our houses are in order, it's time to start a project. How about coming and helping make quilts for charity. The days for making quilts are:

Thursday & Friday - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
January 11, 12, 18 & 19

Thursday & Friday - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
February 8, 9, 15 & 16

Thursday & Friday – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
March 8, 9, 15 & 16

We need to get those sewing machines humming. See you there. Questions? Call Caroline Felland (651)777-7622.

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**The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Minnesota Lutheran Christmas Dinner** was held on Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. It is estimated that about 120 people attended. The food was wonderful and the fellowship was great. Thank you to Jodie Millard for the fantastic meal, and to Donna Rechtzigel for the decorations and for helping Jodie with the preparations.

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## The Tree that Returned to Church

Thanks to John & Jeanine Farmer for the beautiful Christmas tree! The huge tree gracing our sanctuary was cut from their yard this fall. It started out as a seedling one of the Farmer sons brought home from Sunday School many years ago. It grew and grew, and nearly outgrew its space. It has returned to church this Christmas season – a sign of growth and life!

## PUPPET MINISTRY

Anyone interested in joining this new ministry is welcomed to join us, starting January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m., in Classroom D. 4<sup>th</sup> graders to adults are welcomed to join. For more information talk to Karron Tarr or Bill Krannich.

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## Don't Miss This!

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> – we will have Lennart & Emma Johansson (from Luleå, Sweden), here with us for an evening mini-concert from 6:15 – 7:00. A door offering will be received.

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New Evening Bible Study  
beginning on Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>  
See Pastor Larry's article for details.

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Confirmation Overnighter with  
Watermark Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>.

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## 2007 ENVELOPES

Please pick up your 2007 offering envelopes in the narthex. If there isn't a box with your name on it, and you would like one, please call Mary Beth Skunes at 426-4301.

## SIMPLY GIVING

If you give your offering through automatic giving (Simply Giving) and you would like "special service" envelopes, please see Mary Beth Skunes. If you made a change in your pledge, you need to fill out a new authorization form and turn it in to Mary Beth.

## Financial Update – Entering 2007 with Strength!

As of mid-December, we still need approximately \$45,000 to end the year with a balanced budget. This is not because of overspending, but instead is due to a significant shortfall in giving toward the 2006 budget that was approved at last year's congregational meeting. We want to finish this fiscal year with a balanced budget so we don't need to carry a deficit into the 2007 fiscal year. Based on past experience, we can accomplish this with everyone's help.

If you are behind in your 2006 pledge, please make every effort to catch up. And if you have met your pledge, we ask that you prayerfully consider giving an extra amount to help meet our goal. Remember that in order for gifts to be applied to this year's budget they must be received by Sunday, December 31st.

Thank you for being good disciples of St Stephen's.

Ted Field  
Stewardship Committee Chairman

### FROM THE IRINGA TASK FORCE **Help Needed to Alleviate Hunger**

Many in the Iringa region are experiencing famine because of crop failure. In some areas there has been complete crop failure—nothing harvested—and in many others, the harvest was 10-20 percent of normal. The area around Ilula has been most heavily hit. Pastor Lambert Mtatifikolo writes to let us know that 16,876 households (more than 100,000 people) in two districts have been identified as having acute shortages. While this is less than 10 percent of the population of the region, it's very real to those going hungry. The Tanzanian government is providing some food aid, but cannot begin to meet the need. Without help, most affected children will be stunted physically and their mental development affected. Adults may lack strength to properly work their fields, even if it rains during the rainy season, December through March. We can provide effective and immediate help. The government will sell the Iringa Diocese maize (corn) at a very preferential rate from the depot in Makambako. In recent years, the diocese has learned a lot about how to distribute emergency food efficiently and fairly. If congregations and individuals in the Saint Paul Area Synod could quickly raise \$30,000, ten thousand families would get three buckets (15 gallons) of corn, enough food to help a family through one month. Moreover, our assistance helps encourage the Tanzanian government and aid agencies to do their part. Gifts should be given directly to the Saint Paul Area Synod and marked Iringa Hunger Relief Fund. Mail to Saint Paul Area Synod, 105 West University Avenue. St. Paul, MN 55103-2094.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our gospel lessons for the church year will primarily be from the Gospel of Luke. We began the new church year in Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>) and will conclude the church year with Christ the King Sunday (November 25<sup>th</sup>).

I would like to invite you to join me in a 6 week Bible study of the book of Luke on Tuesday evenings from 7 to 8:30. I would encourage you to read the gospel in its entirety prior to our first study session. Make a list of your questions and insights as you go along.

We will meet on the following dates: January 9, 16, and 30; February 6, 13, and 20.

Please let me know if you are planning to come so that I can prepare an adequate number of hand-outs. Thank you. I look forward to studying the gospel of Luke with you.

Your brother in Christ and partner in ministry,

Pastor Larry