

# Bethlehem Star

December 2011  
Issue 351

**The Monthly Newsletter of the Bethlehem Covenant Church**

**from Pastor Eikenbary-Barber**

## **WANTED: A God for the Holidays**

*'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'* Matthew 2:2

A 28 year old man in San Francisco caused quite a ruckus on the internet this month by advertising on Craigslist for a girlfriend for the holidays. He writes, "Let me be clear. I want a girlfriend. But, I don't really want a girlfriend. I just want one for the holidays." In his ad, the surfing/cycling/snowboarding enthusiast contends that it is hard to be alone for the holidays. As couples break off to go to dinner parties and snuggle by the fire, their single friends are left in the dark. So, this young man is advertising himself as someone "to get fat and keep warm next to" and "to accompany you to your friends' couple holiday parties so they don't keep thinking you're a loser destined for permanent solo status." The deal he proposes is that "we'll date until 11:59PM, January 2nd, 2012. After that we can still be friends." San Francisco Weekly called him "insufferable" but at first report the man already had 120 applicants to be his holiday girlfriend.

It's not just the single women of San Francisco who feel desperate for some company for the holidays. No one wants to be alone at Christmas time. That undeniable longing for human connection can provoke a person to do something totally out of their comfort zone, like respond to an ad in Craigslist, or even more outrageous, perhaps even show up at church.

I don't like the idea of a friend securing a god for the holidays anymore than I like the idea of that friend securing a part-time lover. But let's be honest, the church is packed on Christmas Eve in a way we rarely duplicate the rest of the year. We all know someone who is looking for something divine, mysterious and transcendent to get them through the holiday season. And while we don't want to be satisfied with just packing the building as we are decking the halls, there is a chance that hearing some Good News on Christmas Eve might make a neighbor want to hear a little more. Just as the "Holiday Boyfriend" might accidentally find himself in love with an applicant, our Christmas guests might want to stick around and discover a God who is so much more than a holiday staple.

The wise guy on Craigslist reminds me of the wise men who followed a star to be a part of the royal festivities when Jesus was born. They started their journey as astrologers and magi, but they went home by another road, permanently changed by the voice of God. That sort of thing happens when strangers encounter Jesus. I encourage you to invite someone to our Christmas celebration this year. Who knows? They might even want to stick around and develop a sincere relationship with Jesus.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/21/craigslist-holiday-boyfriend\\_n\\_1105868.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/21/craigslist-holiday-boyfriend_n_1105868.html)

Not surprisingly, the "Holiday Boyfriend" uses crass language in his post.

## Reading Scripture Together

The suggested Bible passages for December are:

December 4 (for the Nov. 30th informal Bible Discussion)

Isa. 40:1-11; Ps. 85: 1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15; Mark 1:1-8

December 11 (for Dec. 14)

Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps. 126; 1 Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 18 (for Dec. 21)

2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

December 24 (no Wednesday discussion)

Isa. 9:2-7; Ps. 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14



The suggested December memory verse is John 1:9

*“(Jesus) The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”*

## Sunday Morning Assignments

### Refreshments:

December 4 Ruth Dahlgren  
 11 Deb Shold  
 18 Becky Anderson  
 25 Nancy Lindquist

### Scripture Readers:

December 4	Priscilla Carlson
11	Carol Epp
18	Jerry Erickson *
24 (4:30pm)	Anya Eikenbary-Barber
24 (10pm)	Ted Erickson
25	Jo Anne Taylor

### Ushers:

December 4, 11, 18, 24 (10pm), 25	Carrie and Dale Hokanson. Bill and Cheryl Hunstock
December 24 at 4:30pm	Steve and Becky Ramgren, Sara and Blake Christiansen

### December Greeter:

Lowery Smith (also December 24 at 10pm)  
 Kevin Legler (December 24 at 4:30pm)

### Child Care:

December 4	Becky Anderson, Carrie Hokanson
11	Mary Ann Smith and Nancy Lindquist
18	The Christiansen family
25	No Sunday School

### Nursery at 9:30 a.m.

### Nursery at 10: 30 a.m

Chris and Maya Simon
Matthias & Lori Frasch
The Hunstock family
(11 a.m.) To Be Determined

December 24 at 4:30pm

To Be Determined (contact Derek if you are able to help)

December 24 at 10pm.

Please note that Child Care is not provided at this service.

# Staff Lines

*Jo Anne Taylor*  
*Director of Music and Worship*  
[joanne@bethlehemcov.org](mailto:joanne@bethlehemcov.org)

## New Worship Planning Team

The New Worship Planning Team is meeting regularly to plan and prepare for adding another worship service, beginning February 12, 2012. Please continue to pray for this team, and for the opportunities a new form of worship might make available to people who live near Bethlehem, but do not yet attend church. Feel free to contact any member of the team to learn more, offer your suggestions, or make the team aware of your concerns. Members of the team include Matthias and Lori Frasch, Paul and Liz Compton, Anthony Landon, Katie Elden, Cindy Bergstrom, and Pastors Ryan and Jo Anne.

## Christmas Carol Jam Session December 11, 7 pm

Would you like to help spread a little musical cheer before either service on Christmas Eve – or maybe even Christmas Day? Bring your instrument to church at 7 pm on Sunday, December 11 to play through several Christmas carols. All ability levels welcome! The more, the merrier! The goal is to put together a couple of groups of musicians to play carols in the narthex before each of the Christmas Eve services, as people arrive.

## Christmas Day is SUNDAY This Year!

.... and that means we get to sing all those carols you love, that we didn't get to sing the night before! Come join in worship at 10:45 am on Christmas Day, as we raise our voices together to worship the newborn King of Kings and Lord of Lords! *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

## Christmas Eve Services

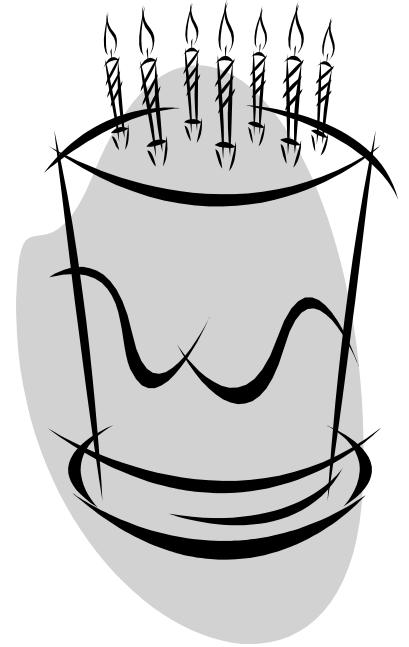
We want to make room on Christmas Eve for all who would worship at Bethlehem, so we will again offer two different services that evening. The first, at 4:30 pm, will be more casual in style, and will include familiar carols, accompanied by piano and guitar, with children from our congregation reading the scripture lessons of Christmas. The 10:00 pm service will feature the Choir and organ in a more formal service of Lessons and Carols. Plan now to attend either worship service on Christmas Eve, and be sure to invite friends!



Christmas Caroling on December 18th at 4 p.m. Meet at church.  
Sing to the home-bound friend and, new this year, also our “neighbors.”

## December Birthdays

1	Ron Monson	17	Kevin Frolen
3	Joanne Hansen	18	Charlotte Sjoberg
4	Arne Christiansen		Nancy Nordenson
	Jackie Kingsley (Karbowski)	20	Emma Johnson
	Gloria Tamte	21	Meta Swanson
5	Al Anderson		Eleanor Fong
	Deanna Carlson	22	Debra Brinkman
6	Michael Tamte		Bert Schipper
	Vanji Bratt	24	David Martinson
7	Dave Boucher	26	Julie Dahl Doran
8	Jim Frykman		Lindsay Johnson
9	Heidi Hallsten Hitzeman	27	Vanessa Johnson
10	Carol Cooksley	28	Dana Johnson
11	Philip Stenberg		Charlie Sokolski
13	Jim Clausen	29	Mary Quinn
14	Carol Elde	30	Peter Kerl
	Gordon Andersson	31	Finn Christiansen



### Youth Calendar—From David Johnson, Director of Youth Ministries

(Postcards, phone calls and emails to the youth will follow-up as the dates approach.)

Cell 952 994-2213 ~ Email dsjohnson2@gmail.com

#### High School

www.six12.org  
Wednesdays at 6 p.m.  
December 7, 14, 21

#### Middle School

www.crossroadyouth.org  
Fridays at 6 p.m.  
December 2, 9, 16

Spaghetti dinner for all  
(Youth Fund Raiser for CHIC)



Saturday, December 3, 6-8 p.m.  
Fellowship Hall



### Advent Sunday School ~ Community Room at 9:30 a.m.

December 4th, 11th and 18th

“The Christmas Spirit,” based on Dickens’ A Christmas Carol.

(There’s a Scrooge in all of us to be repented of.)

~With Clyde Lund reading from A Christmas Carol.~

## Finance Commission

We are thankful to God for the stable financial position of the church.

So far in 2011 both revenues and expenditures are below budget with donations received by the church covering our expenses. To ensure that we end the year with adequate funds please check your recent donations statement and bring your giving up-to-date with your pledge. Here are the numbers with two months left for the year:

Total income (through 10/31)	\$ 329,629
Actual contributions	317,664
Budgeted contributions	324,882
Deficit of 2.2%	(7,218)
Estimated 2011 total expenses (on 12/31)	399,747
Revenue needed in Nov. and Dec. to cover expenses	70,118

If you would like to reduce the paperwork for yourself and the church in processing donations, please consider a direct transfer of funds from your account to the church. You can learn more about this at

[www.bethlehemcov.org/giving/shtml](http://www.bethlehemcov.org/giving/shtml)

or by contacting me directly.

Chris Simon, Chairperson  
Finance Commission

## Thanksgiving Notes

Thank you so much for your gracious hospitality during Bill's service. Our family was greatly blessed during our years of membership there and it was comforting to enjoy the fellowship once again.

Pastor Ryan, may the Lord continue to bless you, your family and the Bethlehem family in the days and years to come!

With loving appreciation,  
Karen Rosselit

Thank you so much for your donations to Refugee Services. We, and the refugees we serve, deeply appreciate your abundant support.

It's amazing how something as simple as a warm coat or a nice cooking pot can contribute so much to a family feeling secure and at home in a new place. Thank you!

The Minnesota  
Council of Churches  
Refugee Services

(This is in response to the delivery of donated household goods collected all during the summer and fall months.)



## DECK THE HALLS

Come and help Becky and Sylvia decorate the church

*Wednesday, November 30th, beginning at 4 p.m.*

Take a Wonderful Wednesday dinner break.  
Return after dinner to help finish the decorating.



## Lucia Fest

Saturday, Dec. 10

**Come**

**Celebrate**

**With Us!**

## The 2011 Lucia Committee

Boutique	Beth Dahl
	Rhonda Isaacs
Dining Room	Deb Shold
Kitchen	Mary Jones-Morris
	Mary Ann Smith
Program	Vanda Niemi
Publicity	Phyllis Lundin
Tickets	Joyce Hanson

It's Lucia time again! In which Swedish province or city will you celebrate Lucia this year? Have you noticed the name on your ticket?

Your hostess will want to know where to seat you so keep your ticket with you until you are seated at your *reserved table*. Our "callers" will remind you when it is time to go to Fellowship Hall. You may go down either stairway near the back of the sanctuary. Until called for your seating, you may wait in the Boutique, the Narthex or the Sanctuary.

(If our performances are sold out, you can usually view the festivities if you are a part of the kitchen volunteer crew or a host or hostess—a good reason to sign up to help right away. New to Bethlehem?...You will receive on-the-job training.)

### We need 200 dozen cookies!

That sounds like a lot but nearly 700 people walk through our doors on Lucia, counting our guests, program participants and all our workers. If there are any extras, they will be sold in the Gift Room.

### Set-Up Volunteers Needed

#### Friday, December 9th

At 9 a.m. we will begin to decorate Fellowship Hall and the Community Room in our Lucia tradition. Come and experience the transformation with us!

Sign-up sheets are on the table in the atrium.

Men and women are needed.

### Help Needed for Lucia Day

A sign-up sheet on the table in the atrium awaits your name and your choice of a designated job—in the gift room, the kitchen or the dining room. Men, women, Junior and senior High students all are needed! Choose a time slot between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m. Volunteers for the 12-1 p.m. clean-up are especially appreciated. We are all tired at that point and many hands make for quick work.

### Lucia Singers

The second rehearsal is scheduled for Monday, December 5 at 7 p.m.



### Decorative Items

Scandinavian (or otherwise suitable) tablecloths, runners, squares, wall hangings, candleholders and center-piece items should be brought to Fellowship Hall by 9 a.m. on Friday.

### Gift Room Items

Artisans should bring their crafts, priced and labeled with consignee number, to the Community Room by 9 a.m. Friday. Food items, donated crafts and "older treasures" may be left in the office prior to that, labeled for Beth Dahl.

### Don't Forget

In keeping with the spirit of Lucia...please note that your ticket requests that you bring along a non-perishable item for the food shelf. These will be collected at the door on Lucia morning.

## **Journey to Jerusalem**

### **For Our Physical and Spiritual Well-Being**

This year's stewardship theme emphasized "Healthy Body, Healthy Spirit." The Spiritual Life and Adult Commissions want to continue that theme into 2012 by inviting everyone (from 1 month through 101 years) to "travel to Jerusalem."

Choose your mode of movement (walking, cross country skiing, swimming or...) then lace up your shoes, strap on your skis, get on your treadmill or whatever you choose and keep track of your miles.

Each week, starting January 1st through Easter on April 8th, we will report our weekly miles and record our collective effort on a U.S. map (in the Community Room). It will be fun to see our progress as we watch the marker move along the route from Minneapolis to the coast and then on to Jerusalem!

Let's pray daily as we journey together; there will be a prayer calendar available to help guide us.

Look for more information in the January STAR as we start off the New Year encouraging one another in this endeavor to promote a "Healthy Body, Healthy Spirit" by exercise and prayer.

**YES,  
We have no  
bananas...  
Yet.**



**PLEASE  
HELP US  
BAKE**

**We make the banana breads on  
Saturday,  
December 3rd  
9:30 a.m.**

Lots and lots of help is needed to produce the gift loaves for all the Child Care families and visitors to Bethlehem. Contact Tim Lilla if you can help.

## **Shamelessly Begging**

We need the following volunteer help:

### **JOB 1**

One or two persons:  
January 23-27  
March 26-30

This involves organizing the Meals-On-Wheels drivers and picking up the meals from Nokomis Square ~ a couple of hours. If you cannot commit to both months, please let us know if you could volunteer your time for one month.

### **JOB 2**

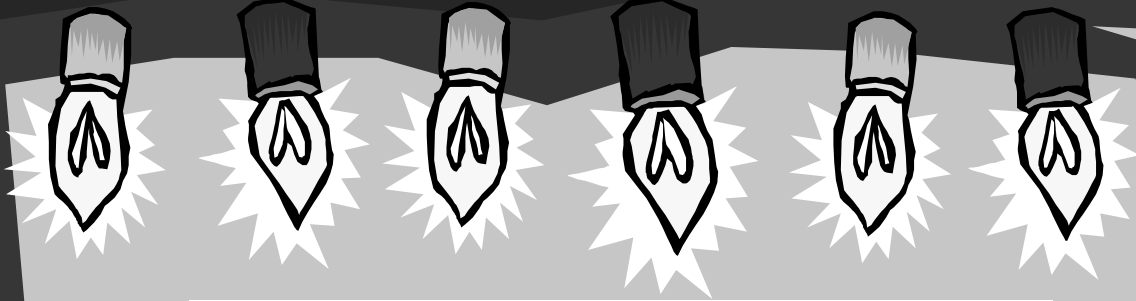
One day per week. One hour.  
Two volunteers needed.

This is more important than it may seem. The only information we can regularly present to the un-churched neighborhood is the small sign at the corner that absolutely needs to be updated on a weekly basis with current (even compelling) information. Easy to do April through November; a bit of a "slippery slope" December through March.

The second person would function as a substitute for vacations or illness.

If you could take on this responsibility or assist as a substitute please call the church office and we will arrange for you to receive instruction.

**Thank You Very Much**



*Welcome to First Fridays!!*

Who: All Adults

When: Dec 2 – 6:30–9:00 p.m.

If you are looking for an opportunity to spend time with other adults in a casual, relaxing setting, please join us in the Fellowship Hall (east end). It will be an evening of conversation and/or games (for those seeking the thrill of friendly competition). Feel free to bring a favorite snack or game to share. Beverages will be provided.

Note: The first “social night,” held in October, was great fun for all who participated. Everyone agreed it would be helpful to have a consistent meeting time. Thus, December begins the new schedule - the first Friday of the month.

Spread the word, come when you can and bring your friends. All are welcome!! Also, let us know if you are interested in being part of a core group to help organize future Friday night gatherings.

Phil & Juli Swanson (612-724-1318)

Rhonda Isaacs (651-646-1790)

## Advent Devotionals

The 2011-2012 Advent Devotional is complete and has been distributed by way of the mailboxes in the atrium. Thank you very much to Deb Shold (of the Celebration Commission) and also Joyce Hanson as well as the rest of the STAR crew who came to collate the large number of pages to be assembled and stapled.

Deb invested around thirty hours carefully going over each and every entry to coordinate the artwork with the subject matter and to triple check each one of the texts. Please note her careful editing and consistency as you read from page to page. In every way, her concentrated effort has resulted in a very professional looking publication. . Thank you, Deb.

If you would like to have an Advent Devotional mailed to your home, please don't hesitate to call the church office:

## Bless The Children

Has your child outgrown his/her winter clothing? The Minnesota Council of Churches has an urgent need for children's outerwear for the refugee families. (Note the thank you message that we received, see page 5.) Please leave the coats, scarves, hats, boots, and mittens in the boxes located in the atrium hallway.

If you are a second-hand shopper, check the store racks for any gently used items that could be donated as well.

### New Year's To Do List

Sunday, January 1st

**SLEEP IN**

Worship Begins at 11 a.m.

(No Sunday School)

Steve Swanson will join us that morning and will be preaching during Worship.

Wednesday, January 4th

(NO CONFIRMATION)

Wonderful Wednesday resumes

## Christmas Pageant Sunday, December 18th 10:45 a.m.



Here is how your child can be involved:  
3-year-olds to Kindergarteners  
(sheep or other stable animals)  
1st through 5th graders  
(shepherds or angels)  
6th through 12th graders  
(actors, readers, spotlight operator)

**PLEASE let Pastor Derek or Cindy Bergstrom know as soon as possible how your child would like to be involved.**

**Pageant Rehearsals**

**Sunday 12/4, 12/11, 12/18**

**Sunday School (9:30—10:00 a.m.)**

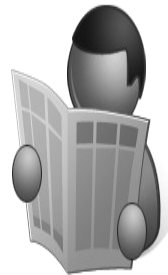
**Sunday 12/11**

**During Children's Church**

**(11:15—noon)**

**Saturday 12/17 (9:30—11:30 a.m.)**

**Dress Rehearsal in Sanctuary**



### **STAR Articles for January**

Please submit to the office by  
Wednesday, December 14.

Articles for the  
*Longfellow Messenger*  
are due on Dec. 9.

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

### **December 2011**

I would like to give you an update from what I am calling the Strategic Planning Committee. This group consists of the Vitality Team, the Long Range Planning Commission and other congregational volunteers who have expressed an interest in the strategic planning process. This is a dedicated group that meets the first and third Thursday of each month. We have allowed ourselves a vacation day for December 15.

The group has been following the suggested step by step process for creating a strategic plan that was presented to us at a daylong workshop back in September. It is a challenging process but by following the specific tasks, the group is beginning to see a much clearer mission and vision for Bethlehem. We will be presenting new mission and vision statements early next year.

At our last meeting we worked hard on defining the core values for our church. By the end of the evening we realized these core values strongly supported our new mission statement. We should now be able to move forward with work on a vision statement.

Our training guide says a vision statement should address the following questions:

- Does it clearly state the ideal future picture—what your church is going to become when your mission is being accomplished?
- Does it indicate what needs might go unmet or how the world might be a different place without your church?
- Is it clear? (Do the words chosen convey the meaning intended?)
- Is it easily repeatable? (Is it concise and easy to remember?)
- Is it believable, challenging, inspiring and compelling?

Please continue looking for information about our meetings via the posted sheets in the community room.

Along with this activity, the planning efforts for a second service continue. You will be hearing more and more about this as we approach February 12 when the once monthly second service will begin. Each of us can support this effort with our prayers. In addition we need to be considering what service we can offer to make this a successful venture. We will need child care volunteers, additional ushers and greeters just to name a few.

All the Veritas materials remind us this is a process backed by biblical statements. Adding a second service is not the end of the process. God is asking us to look at our neighbors and plan where we can meet the needs of those around us. We have learned much this year. Now it is time to put this knowledge in action. With change we should expect some conflict and with conflict some pain. However, through all of this we will be blessed for being faithful servants.

We have moved into Advent. As we await the celebration of Christ's birth may we also await what God has planned for us as a church if we are willing to serve as we are called to do.

In Christ,

Charlotte Sjoberg

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Telephone**            612-721-2290  
**Website**             [www.bethlehemkids.org](http://www.bethlehemkids.org)  
**Email**                [bethlehemchildcare@yahoo.com](mailto:bethlehemchildcare@yahoo.com)



As I was reflecting on the upcoming season and things I am thankful for I wanted to share some that are relevant to not only the child care center but to the health of our community as well: Thankful for giggles, twinkles in eyes, smiles half hidden behind a mitten and rosy red cheeks bursting out from under warm hats. Thankful for children who love to run through the playground playing tag and soccer, building forts with sticks, biking around the track and swinging from the monkey bars. Thankful for parents and grandparents who spend time snuggling with children, imagining stuffed animals have come to life, reading stories over and over, and taking time to make healthy lunches day after day. Thankful for families who take time off of work to stay home with their children who are not feeling well and for families who come to read or volunteer in our rooms. Thankful for Bethlehem Covenant Church's commitment to support our center and their prayers for our families and staff. Thankful for our staff and their commitment to great lessons that engage the children and caring hearts that nurture these tender children.

This year we again shared with the church families in the joy of preparing Operation Christmas Child boxes to donate. The families from BCCC have donated many items for us to pack and the children are looking forward to beginning the process with their classmates. Besides packing the boxes we are looking forward to decorating the rooms with Christmas and winter crafts as well as using the opportunity to share more of the facts surrounding Jesus' birthday.

The Beginner and Pre-K children are in the beginning stages of preparing for their Christmas Program, to be held in the sanctuary December 15 at 7:00 p.m. It is lovely to hear the voices drifting down the hallway to the office carrying the familiar Christmas tunes. You are welcome to join us for the program and share some "Happy Birthday Jesus" cake after the performance.

The school age staff have been taking suggestions from the children as to what activities they would like to participate in during the two week Christmas Break from school. The children have come up with a number of exciting activities and are in the process of voting as to which are the most popular. Here is a list of their ideas: ice skating, cookie baking (my personal vote as I know they'll need a taste tester and I'm highly qualified), movie at the Riverview, glow in the dark party, acting workshop, Children's Theater, sledding, Children's Museum, Roller Garden, hip hop dance class, bakery tour, Humane Society guest, p.j. party, bowling, Christmas Caroling, karaoke, & a tour of Excel Center. The staff are very good at planning unique field trips and the children enjoy the variety so I'm sure this will be another fun break for everyone.

May each of you have an abundance of peace and joy in your hearts!

Jill and the BCCC Staff



Bethlehem Covenant Church  
 3141 43rd Avenue South  
 Minneapolis, MN 55406

Rev. Ryan Eikenbary-Barber  
 David Johnson, Dir. of Youth Ministry  
 Derek VanderMolen, Dir. of Children's Ministry  
 Jo Anne Taylor, Dir. of Music and Worship

PRSR STD  
 US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 TWIN CITIES  
 MN  
 PERMIT NO. 386

Dated Material: Return Service Requested

Contact the church at:

Telephone: 612-721-5768  
 Web Address: [www.bethlehemcov.org](http://www.bethlehemcov.org)  
 Email: [office@bethlehemcov.org](mailto:office@bethlehemcov.org)

<b>W</b>	SUNDAY	9:30 a.m.	Sunday School for all
		10:45 a.m.	Worship
<b>E</b>	MONDAY	7:00 p.m.	Community activities evening
	TUESDAY	8:00 a.m.	Breakfast at Bridgeman's (2nd and 4th Tues.)
<b>E</b>		9:00 a.m.	Properties Work Day at church
		6:30 p.m.	Gathering for Prayer—Church Community Invited
<b>K</b>	WEDNESDAY	9:30 a.m.	Women's Bible Study
		12:30 p.m.	Staff Meeting
<b>L</b>		4:00 p.m.	Hosanna Choir
		4:45 p.m.	Alleluia Choir
<b>Y</b>		5:45 p.m.	Wonderful Wednesday Meal (No meal on Dec. 28)
		6:30 p.m.	Adult Choir, Confirmation, Sr. High, Children's activities (Check information printed inside for Dec. 21 and 28)
	THURSDAY	9:45 a.m.	Bible Encounter
	FRIDAY	6:30 a.m.	Men's Breakfast and Bible Study
		9:00 a.m.	Walk and coffee at Mall of America