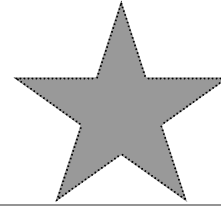


Bethlehem Star



February 2012
Issue 353

The Monthly Newsletter of the Bethlehem Covenant Church

from Pastor Eikenbary-Barber

Holy Kisses

"Greet one another with a holy kiss."

2 Corinthians 13:12

There sure is a lot of kissing in the Bible. The Prodigal Son is welcomed home by his Father's unexpected kiss. Mary Magdalene smothered the feet of Jesus with her kisses. Jesus reproached Simon the Pharisee for failing to greet him with a kiss. The Apostle Paul offers the quizical commandment that people in church greet each other with a holy kiss.



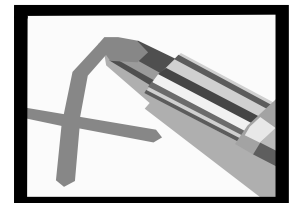
These days the only time we see kissing in worship is at the end of a wedding ceremony. It was very different in the early church. Ministers would welcome the newly baptized with a kiss. Right after going to the Lord's Table, Christians would greet each other with a holy kiss. Kissing was a public symbol of God's perfect love and the sharing of the Holy Spirit.

Somewhere along the way the kissing stopped. Maybe it was fear of germs; maybe it was just too scandalous; or maybe it was because Christianity moved outside the Mediterranean into cultures where public displays of affection were taboo.



Having bashful Scandinavian heritage, I'd probably stare at my shoes if everybody started kissing at church! Just because kissing has disappeared from our worship services doesn't set us free from Paul's wise command.

Kissing has transformed into the 'passing of the peace'. Every Sunday in worship we pause to greet each other and pass along the love of Jesus Christ. Most people just shake hands. Often they share a kind word or a smile. Occasionally you'll see friends hugging. In Mexico you still might get kissed on both cheeks! The display differs from culture to culture, but worship isn't the same without sharing affection.



But greeting each other with a holy kiss is not just for our church family. Just as elementary school kids are expected to bring a Valentines Card for every single kid in their class, so are Christians expected to share God's love with everybody we know. Save the actual kisses for your immediate family, but let the love of Christ be as obvious as your aunt's bright, red lipstick plastered on your cheek. Have a Happy Valentine's Day and remember to greet the world with the love of Christ!

HEALTH AND CHURCH

On the desk right now in the church office...an interesting article which shows the significance *of our dietary choices* as a complimentary adjunct to our Journey To Jerusalem active exercise program.

Check it out online at www.danielplan.com or request a copy from the office. This particular program has been created by three names most of us will recognize: Daniel Amen, a psychiatrist; Mark Hyman, a family doctor and Mehmet Oz, a TV host and cardiac surgeon.

The seed of The Daniel Plan comes from the Old Testament. If you think this idea might be of interest here at Bethlehem, please speak to Mary Ann Smith, Chairperson of the Adult Commission.

Sunday Morning Assignments

Refreshments:

February 5 Sylvia Bacon
12 Jami Nordenstam
19 Kaarina Kotkavuori
26 Theresa Lund

Scripture Readers:

February 5 Bennie Frykman
12 Carrie Hokanson (11 a.m.)
Gathering Service TBD
19 Madison Zieper
26 Cheryl Hunstock

Ushers: Marj Ramgren, Steve Ramgren, Evelyn Ramgren, Sue Johnson

Greeter: Kevin Legler

Child Care:

Nursery at 9:45 a.m.

Nursery at 10:45 a.m.

February 5	Carrie Hokanson & Nancy Lindquist	the Laudon Family
12	Jan Norman & Sue Johnson	Mary Ann Smith & Becky
Anderson		
19	the Clausen Family	Dave & Tessa Johnson
26	the Compton Family	the Christiansen Family

**We need volunteers to staff the nursery during the 9 a.m. Worship Hour on February 12th
Please call Derek VanderMolen.**

(When necessary, please arrange your own trade and notify the church office of the changes so that the Sunday bulletin will be correct. Office Phone number with voicemail (Administrative) : 612/721-5768. Thank you.)

Staff Lines

Jo Anne Taylor, Director of Music and Worship
joanne@bethlehemcov.org

The Gathering Launches!

On February 12, we begin our monthly 9:00 am more-contemporary style worship in Fellowship Hall, ***The Gathering***. Many thanks go to all who have invested time, work, and prayers to bring this endeavor to the launch pad! Thanks to Dan Cummings and Jim Clausen for their work to obtain and install new sound equipment, and especially to Jim and his “installation crew” (you know who you are!).

Thanks to our *Gathering* Planning Team, who sacrificed Saturday mornings to plan for this new worship time: Cindy Bergstrom, Liz and Paul Compton, Katie Elden, Lori and Matthias Frasch, Anthony Loudon, Steve Ramgren, Matt Ridenour, and to Hannah Hutchinson for providing child care during those meetings. Special thanks to our prayer team: Joanne Hansen, Bev Hinseth, MarJ Ramgren, Mary Ann Smith, Evie Swanson. Thanks to David Ryding and Becky Anderson for their work to give the Fellowship Hall a facelift.

Thanks to our volunteer musicians in the worship band: Stig Benson, Paul Compton, Matthias Frasch, Anthony Loudon, Matt Ridenour; and to Cindy Bergstrom, George Larson and Dick Sundberg for sharing their musical gifts.

Thanks to the Church Council, and to the those who have promised to bring friends to ***The Gathering***.

Thanks especially to Pastor Ryan, for casting the vision to grow in faithful obedience to God in the Longfellow neighborhood. Please continue to pray for ***The Gathering***, and remember to invite a friend to come worship with us at 9:00 a.m. on February 12th!

Lenten Läsare: “Love the Lord Your God.”

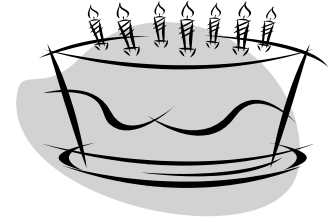
In the early days of the Pietist movement, Christians would gather in homes to read the Word aloud to one another, to discuss what they had read, and to pray with one another. These gatherings became known as Conventicles, and those who participated in them were called “*Läsare*,” Swedish for “*Readers*”. Sometimes the term was used derisively, but it became a badge of honor for Christians who sought a life of piety and devotion to God’s Word.

This Lenten season, you are invited to become one of Bethlehem’s *Läsare*. Each Wednesday evening, come at 5:45 for a light soup supper, then meet in the sanctuary at 6:30 to sing a hymn together and gather in smaller groups to read and discuss the Word and pray. May your Lenten journey bring you closer to Christ, as we read the Bible in community.

- 2/22 Ash Wednesday
Communion, imposition of Ashes
- 2/29 “Hear, O Israel!”
Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 12: 28-34
- 3/7 “Love the Lord your God
with all your heart...”
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; John 12:37-43
- 3/14 “... With all your soul...”
Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 42
- 3/21 “...with all your mind...”
Numbers 21:4-9
1 Kings 3:3-15
- 3/28 “... with all your strength.”
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Isaiah 12:1-6

(Not Swedish? Here’s a weblink that shows how to pronounce *läsare*: <http://www.forvo.com/word/läsare>).

February Birthdays



1	Mary-Juanita Leonard		
	Lars Ramgren	20	Barrett Clausen
3	Ann Swanson		Elaine Nygren
6	Dan Cummings	21	Sara Christiansen
7	Eric Fong		Chris Simon
	Diane Hutchinson	22	Mary Jones Morris
8	Claire Sokolski		Bonnie Viner
	Dominique Hlavac	24	Andy Lundheim
10	Jacob Jacott	25	Vanda Niemi
11	Linda Solie	26	Vanda Elisa Niemi
12	Linda Stenberg	27	Lois Balogh
	James Carlson	28	Steve Lindquist
14	Theresa Lund		Paul Compton
15	Roy Olson		Rachel Ridenour
	Heidi Stokes		
18	Amy Sokolski		

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 david@bethlehemcov.org

High School

www.six12.org
Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

Middle School

www.crossroadyouth.org
Fridays at 6 p.m.

Feb. 1: Winter Picnic at M.A. (North Campus) — 6 p.m. (Regular Youth Events Cancelled)

Saturday Feb. 11: CHIC Fundraiser
(Babysitting from 5 to 10 p.m.)

No Jr. High Activities on Fri. Feb. 10th

We are a grateful group — this page is full!

A big thank you for the beautiful poinsettia from my friends at Bethlehem Covenant Church. Thanks also to Pastor Ryan for his cheerful visit. It was greatly appreciated.

Esther Nosco

Dear Bethlehem Family,

I have deeply appreciated your cards, prayers and phone calls. It is comforting to have so many friends praying for my recovery and I look forward to returning and seeing you at Bethlehem.

For the past three years, my knee has been problematic. In late November and early December the knee infection was confirmed. In order to treat this infection completely, they took out the parts of the knee replacement (from 3-1/2 years ago) and put in a spacer (a good name for this part since it only takes up space with minimal bending ability). After six weeks of antibiotics and a few weeks without antibiotics, another knee replacement will occur, likely later in February. I get around slowly and when the sidewalks are clear, walk briefly outside. I am grateful for the brown winter. Becky has been a great nurse, providing great care, and has really kept things going around here! Spring will be welcome in many ways. Thanks again for your friendship and well wishes.

Sincerely,
Ralph Anderson



For Sale, Cheap!

**Used artificial
knee,
low miles.**

Dear Pastor Ryan and Bethlehem friends,

What pure joy to see so many of you, and so often, during our December visit to Minneapolis. For Steve, it was going home. For me (Barb) it was a dream come true—to actually participate in a Lucia fest. The joy of celebrating Christ's coming to earth was so evident on Christmas Eve as we worshipped together. And then, to celebrate communion and worship together on New Year's Day...what an absolute fitting way to start the New Year 2012.

My thanks also is shared with you for your generous Christmas gift that has shown up in my personal account with World Mission. We have so appreciated sharing some of our ministry story from Belgium. Your Christmas gift is another evidence of your ability to abundantly care for your missionaries. For that, we do say thanks!

Blessings on you as you anticipate God's richest blessings in this New Year.

With our thanks,
Barb and Steve Swanson

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

To all of you—the workers Friday and Saturday—the program participants, the in-charge people who took care of a myriad of details, our cookie bakers, our fruit soup women and to our guests for coming to share this festive day with us. God blessed us with a lovely winter day—no snow or ice—but beautiful sunshine and a temperature of 28 degrees.

We had international guests: Barb and Steve from Belgium, Sven from Sweden and Liz from the Netherlands. We had three generations of Frykmans—Bennie, Laura and Anna—singing in the choir.

Shall we put our "Lucia Day" on the calendar for 2012? It would be on December 8th!

Reading Scripture Together

As we complete the season of Epiphany and prepare for Lent, our readings remind us that Christ is the Light of the World, the long-expected Messiah. The Old Testament readings affirm the hope of Israel for Messiah, and the New Testament readings affirm the realization of this hope in Jesus Christ.

- February 1 - Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147
- February 8 - 2 Kings 5:1-14; Mark 1:40-45
- February 15 – Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:7- 4:6
- February 22 - Ash Wednesday Service at 6:30 p.m. (no study group tonight)
- February 29 - Lenten *Läsare* (Readers) Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 12: 28-34

Bible memory verse for February: John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

Going Deeper: To read through all four Gospels this Lent, follow these assignments, beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending with Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

February 22.....Matthew 1-2	March 15..... Luke 1-2
February 23.....Matthew 3-4	March 16..... Luke 3-4
February 24..... Matthew 5-6	March 17..... Luke 5-6
February 25.....Matthew 7-8	March 18..... Luke 7-8
February 26.....Matthew 9-10	March 19..... Luke 9-10
February 27.....Matthew 11-12	March 20..... Luke 11-12
February 28..... Matthew 13-14	March 21..... Luke 13-14
February 29..... Matthew 15-16	March 22..... Luke 15-16
March 1..... Matthew 17-18	March 23..... Luke 17-18
March 2..... Matthew 19-20	March 24..... Luke 19-20
March 3..... Matthew 21-22	March 25..... Luke 21-22
March 4..... Matthew 23-24	March 26..... Luke 23-24
March 5..... Matthew 25-26	March 27..... John 1-2
March 6..... Matthew 27-28	March 28..... John 3-4
March 7..... Mark 1-2	March 29..... John 5-6
March 8..... Mark 3-4	March 30..... John 7-8
March 9..... Mark 5-6	March 31..... John 9-10
March 10..... Mark 7-8	April 1..... John 11-12
March 11..... Mark 9-10	April 2..... John 13-14
March 12..... Mark 11-12	April 3..... John 15-16
March 13..... Mark 13-14	April 4..... John 17-18
March 14..... Mark 15-16	April 5..... John 19-20
	April 6..... John 21

Here is one of the best we've ever received!

Dear Bethlehem Church,

Thank you for all the support. I hope you had a good Christmas. I had a lovely time being in the Christmas play as an angel. I hope you liked the play. I loved the goody bag after the play. I wrote this letter because I didn't have anyone else (the correct name/s) to write to. I wanted to tell you how much I love your church. I had an amazing and wonderful time. I liked it when I came to dinner and we had pizza. I love to go to dinner and then go to club after. I love seeing my friends and family. I hope CHIC raises enough money. Is the church getting a lot of money? What is CHIC about?

Is CHIC like going to camp? Is CHIC about going to Tennessee? Please write back.

Love,

(If you care to reply to this gifted writer, call the office to get the name.)

Woman's Renewal Conference

"uniquely u"

March 23 and 24th in Redwing at First Covenant Church. The speakers will be Debbie Griffith and Meagan Gillan. Online registration is now open:

www.wmnwc.org

More information will be coming soon.

Inform the office if you would like to attend and cannot register online or have a desire to carpool.

Wintertime on the Picnic Route

We will camp out at Minnehaha North Campus, eat until we are full-up, talk until we are talked-out and play until we have taken enough combined steps to "journey" half-way across the Atlantic (on our "Journey to Jerusalem" endeavor. PLUS, we will all be warm while we do it!

The date: Wednesday, February 1st

The time: Help to set-up at 5 p.m. Arrive 5:30-5:45 p.m. We will eat at 6 p.m.

The address: Minnehaha Academy, 3100 W. River Parkway, Minneapolis. Please go in the doors facing the River Parkway (the door under the clock tower).

The drill: According to the first letter of your last name (or you may deviate if you insist!)

A-G Bring a SALAD

H-M Bring a DESSERT

N-Z Bring a MAIN DISH

Also bring: Plates and Utensils, a board game, a friend and a neighbor

Provided: Drinks and Cups

Need a ride? Call the church office—612/721-5768.



From the President:

2011 was a blessed year at Bethlehem Covenant Church. You may have noticed there were no reminders in the December bulletins indicating how much was still required to meet our financial needs for the remainder of the year. Instead, the finance commission was tasked to determine a plan for the over \$40,000 abundance. What a wonderful treat for them. The first decision was to tithe the amount by giving \$4,000 outside Bethlehem. The plan for the abundance was passed by the church council in January and will be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting on February 5. Another sign of blessing will be the welcoming of new members on communion Sunday, February 5. These members will push our membership to the highest number ever.

We know numbers and dollars are not the goal of church vitality but they certainly are signs of increased health of a congregation. Our Strategic Planning Committee recently met with John Kramka from the Northwest Conference. We were asked to each state one sign of vitality we have seen in Bethlehem. Our list included:

- New people
- New young families
- Increasing number of children coming forward for the children's sermon
- Healthy missional markers appear to be increasing
- The number of people sharing their gifts
- More children in Sunday School than anticipated at the beginning of the year
- Being blessed by financial giving from the congregation
- The joy experienced by stuffing Christmas stockings for homeless teens

We shared with John Kramka that the process of creating our strategic plan has been long and tedious. He pointed out several pluses in the work we have done at Bethlehem:

- We are not basing our plans on past information but have asked the proper questions again.
- We have been creating "new soil" to use in our growth process.
- We will need to repeat this process in the future but it will be easier the next time.

We created a long list of critical success factors and voted on our top four. They are:

- Bible reading
- Holy Spirit at work – sense the anticipation of what is next
- Faith – risk taking/reliance on God
- Small groups

We have been taught in our training the importance of measuring our successes. Therefore, our next step in the process is to create measurement options to be used to determine our success in these key areas. Please continue to remember this group in prayer as we move forward creating our strategic plan.

At our last council meeting, our new Mission and Vision statements were approved and they will be presented to the congregation at the February 5th meeting. I hope to see you there. As our new website states, "come and see" Bethlehem at work. The website is <http://www.bethlehemcov.org/>. Check it out.

In Christ,

Charlotte Sjoberg

STAR Articles for March

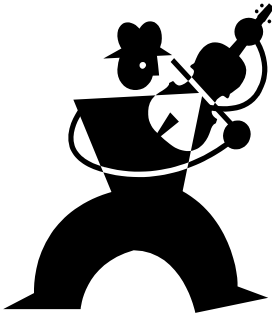
Please submit to the office by
Monday, February 13.

Articles for the *Longfellow Messenger*
are due the same day.



Oh, there are places to go...

Join us on a tour through the British Isles next September which will include London, Southern England, Wales, Ireland and Edinburgh, Scotland. Contact Diana Chynoweth for more information: 612-929-1876 or dianechy@juno.com



AMERICAN SWEDISH INSTITUTE SPELMANSLAG

Let's mark our Calendars
Make our Plans
And See You There!

The fiddling group will close their Mid-Winter Celebration with another concert here at

Bethlehem Covenant on Sunday Feb. 26, 3 p.m.

It will be another light-spirited time for us as about 25 fiddlers in their colorful clothes play authentic Swedish folk music for us to enjoy.

There will be a time to share coffee and cookies with friends and the fiddlers following the concert.

Free will donations will be received.
Call the church office if you need transportation. Again, See You There!

Welcome to First Fridays!!

Who: All Adults

When: February 3rd, 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 Community Room. 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. 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.

PERPETUAL SHOPPING LIST

The Wednesday Morning Bible Study has undertaken a *community service project* in an effort to grow in compassion and mercy. We are undergirding Courtney Stenseth, School Social Worker at MN Transitions Charter Schools, 2872 26th Avenue South, in order to help with the basic ongoing needs of students who are attending school and are homeless.

Items to bring to the church office are:
Sweatshirts and sweatpants (good, used ones)
Deodorant and body spray
Belts (again, used ones are fine)
Granola bars/crackers

These items will be delivered to
Courtney at the school each month.

\$5 Gift Cards to Cub, Target, McDonalds
Quarters for laundry

Write a check to Bethlehem: indicate
“Wednesday Service Project” and we will
buy cards/coins as we accumulate money
in the account. *Thank You Very Much!*

Faith, Fun and Fellowship

WHAT: Free breakfast at IKEA!

WHEN: Monday, Feb. 20th at 9:30 a.m.

WHO: All our wonderful retirees and anyone else who'd like to join us for warm, friendly fellowship!

QUESTIONS: Please call Carrie Hokanson

WHAT: The Performance
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our
Basement"

WHEN: Wednesday, March 21st at 1 p.m.

WHERE: Plymouth Playhouse

COST: \$21— pay Bennie Frykman
(We have 40 seats reserved)

There's Going to be **A PIZZA PARTY**



Sunday, February 19th at 12:30 p.m.

A Family Friendly Gathering after Worship

If winter arrives
we will sled, ice skate or snow-play.
If not, we will go outside and plant flowers
(i.e. other activities will be planned).

What would a *Lasting Valentine Gift* look like?

Give each other the best Valentine gift possible! Attend either the Marriage Encounter on February 11-12 or 25-26 at the Mt. Olivet Conference Center in Farmington.

Not married? Send an early Valentine invitation to a couple and offer to contribute toward the cost or offer child care for their children.

Visit www.marriages.org for a listing of retreats or call 651-454-3238.

Valentine Day is on Tuesday, February 14th

Join the group who prays each Tuesday here at church ~ 6:30 p.m.

Support the MTS homeless kids — see article Page 9.

Send valentines or call those who are homebound.

Bring a BAG of groceries to church for our local food shelf.

Call Derek and VOLUNTEER with the Children's Program.

(Any of the above will last longer than a box of chocolates—guaranteed!)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Telephone 612-721-2290
Website www.bethlehemkids.org
Email bethlehemchildcare@yahoo.com



We are trying to fill Jill's shoes while she takes a well-earned and much needed 3-day vacation. By the time you read this she will have returned, hopefully, refreshed and ready to greet the snow-covered munchkins she watches over devotedly. What we know for sure is that she would like this to be in 20-point print, bolded, italicized and underlined as follows:

Fall Preschool Registration Opens Monday, January 30th

With pen in hand, mark your calendar that registrations must be submitted by Wednesday, Feb. 15th. Use the contact information above to reference the forms or contact the Child Care Center to discuss the program. The allotted spots fill up fast so don't delay. The dead of winter is a hard time to be thinking of fall 2012 but smooth transitions for the little ones depend upon forethought.

The children have been sledding in the new playground even though the snowfall has been negligible. As long as it looks white, they are happy to slide down their hill any way they are able. The Pre-Schoolers have been to the Imagine Theatre. The school age kids have enjoyed two release days: one at Bethlehem and the other at Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield.

They are all anticipating Valentine Day (Tuesday the 14th) and the special activities that will bring. Seen last year—a drawing that was reduced in size, color-copied on glossy paper (same design, many repetitions per page), cut apart and folded into miniature valentine cards with to/from names added. Personal! Charming! Affirming! And cost very little money. No cutesy verses, no commercialism, no declarations of anything...JUST PURE ART for the joy of it! Probably lots more fun ideas for the small set online for do-with-mom/dad fun.

The children want to build snowmen — as you can imagine—so please, consider a prayer for snow.

Finally, we hope you will check the *lost and found table* very, very often. Outerwear is accumulating along with other miscellany. It would be nice to have all the items returned to their rightful owners. We do have the means to wash and donate them but much better to send them home again. Best idea ever: *put the children's names on their belongings*. (Are you a grandparent that is able to do this ?)

Happy Valentine Day to Everyone!

The Child Care Center Phantom Writer
For Jill Ravensborg, 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

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Contact the church at:

Telephone: 612-721-5768
 Web Address: www.bethlehemcov.org
 Email: office@bethlehemcov.org

W E E K L Y	SUNDAY	10:00 a.m.	Sunday School
		11:00 a.m.	Worship (Also at 9 a.m. on Feb. 12)
	MONDAY	7:00 p.m.	Community activities evening
	TUESDAY	8:00 a.m.	Breakfast at Bridgeman's (2nd and 4th Tues.)
		9:00 a.m.	Properties Work Day at church
		6:30 p.m.	Gathering for Prayer—Church Community Invited
	WEDNESDAY	9:30 a.m.	Women's Bible Study
	12:30 p.m.	Staff Meeting	
	4:00 p.m.	Hosanna Choir	
	4:45 p.m.	Alleluia Choir	
	5:45 p.m.	Wonderful Wednesday Meal *	
	6:30 p.m.	Adult Choir*, Sr. High*, Children's activities *	
			Confirmation * (Ash Wednesday Worship on Feb. 22)
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	

***Schedules change on Wednesday, February 1st: Winter Picnic**