

January 2014



Breeze Thru the Leaves

Tree of Life Lutheran Church

A New Year, A New Start, A New Beginning

Another new year! Time to get a new calendar, make some resolutions, and maybe go on a diet! Time for new beginnings. Our society has made January 1st into a fresh new look at the world and at life. And well it should. The start of a new year means 365 days stretching out in front of us waiting to be filled. So what will the New Year mean for you? What do you hope to accomplish? What would you like to see happen?

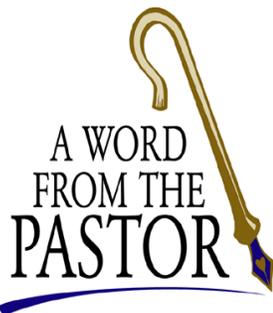
God is in the business of new beginnings. On the last day Jesus declares: "Behold I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5) Because of the forgiveness brought for us through the death of Jesus, the past is behind—over and forgiven. Whatever you wish to leave in 2013 (or even before), it is over, it is gone. Now it is time to step out by faith and face the opportunities and challenges in front of us.

That is important for us here at Tree of Life. During 2014 a new pastor will be installed. He will come with a freshness and newness that is eager to confront the future. He will come with some new ideas and some new challenges for us. He will come as God's representative to equip us for the ministry God has given us. How exciting that is! How wonderful to be given a new start and a new beginning.

When the children of Israel completed their long wandering in the wilderness and their even longer captivity in Egypt, they finally stood on the banks of the Jordan River ready to enter and possess the Promised Land.

Joshua told the people: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you, wherever you go!" (Joshua 1:9) Now there's a powerful new year's resolution!

Go forward! Confront the year with optimism and hope. Take heart that God is making all things new again. And with the promise that God will be with you, then be strong and courageous, not terrified, not afraid. You've got God's word on it.



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Special Points of Interest:

- *Wednesday Morning Bible Class, pg. 2*
- *Islam Conference, pg. 3*
- *Thank You Notes, pg. 4*

New Bible Study - “Come And See” The Gospel of John

Starting Sunday, January 5 at 9 a.m., Pastor Don will lead the Sunday Bible Class through a study of the Gospel of John. Entitled “Come & See” the study will follow John’s invitation to “come and see” who this Jesus really is. John’s style and content is far different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke and presents many interesting insights to the your study of the life of Jesus. You are encouraged to attend. No previous Bible knowledge necessary!

Installation of Officers and Board Members

All new officers and board members will be installed during services on Sunday, January 5th. We invite your prayers for these fine people as they assume their responsibilities in service to the Lord, His church, and to you.

Thursday Morning Bible Class Switches to Wednesday

In order to assist Pastor Don, the members of the Thursday morning Bible class have graciously agreed to switch to Wednesday mornings at 10 a.m. The class will conclude their study of “The Story” on January 8th. The new class beginning on January 15th will be “The Odyssey Of St. Paul” by Dr. Paul Maier. Filmed entirely on location in Israel, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, this tour covers the life of the Apostle Paul from his birth in Tarsus to his schooling in Jerusalem and conversion on the road to Damascus. All the stations on his mission journeys follow, as well as his arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment, and shipwreck voyage to Rome. A running commentary by Dr. Paul Maier makes this both a visual delight and an extremely vivid learning experience.

Texas Church Extension Fund

INVESTMENT	FIXED RATE◇		FLOATING RATE◇	
	Rate	APY	Rate	APY
One Year Note*	.750%	.75%	0.250%	0.25%
Three Year Note*	1.250%	1.26%	0.750%	0.75%
Five Year Note*	1.750%	1.76%	1.500%	1.51%
Flex Savings			0.500%	0.50%
ACCOUNTS FOR CONGREGATIONS				
Congregation Savings			1.000%	1.00%
Building Fund Savings			1.750%	1.76%

◇-Rates subject to change. * Subject to penalty for early withdrawal. Rates Reviewed Monthly

From the Congregational Chairman

Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

New Year's Resolutions!!!!!! Does anybody else, other than me, have a hard time keeping them? I had all but given up on making one this year since the many times I had resolved to eat healthier, exercise and lose weight had not worked so well for me in the past. But then as I was sitting in church on December 15th my resolution for this year came to me. In the past I had always looked at the "Daily Readings" section of the green bulletin insert and thought that it would be a great guide for me to use to beef up my bible study (I must admit that I have neglected my personal study time, seeming too busy to fit it in). Unfortunately, I would come to church the next Sunday and realize that I had not pulled out the green sheet at all that week and once again put it on my "to do" list for the next week. This continued with the same results for quite some time until December 15th when I decided to not only put it on my agenda, but actually do it. My thought was that I would start on January 1, 2014, but God had other plans for me (I felt compelled to start on that very Sunday). You see, I had decided that I didn't have any idea what I was going to write for the January newsletter and so I would forego writing an article this time. THIS IS WHERE "THE GOD THING" HAPPENED.

As I was reading the passage for that day a particular verse jumped out at me. In John's letter to the Church in Philadelphia found in Revelation 3, he writes, ***"I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name"***. Wow, this sure does seem to describe us at

this point in our ministry. He goes on to encourage them and writes, ***"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown"***. As we continue on with our search for our new full time Pastor, I pray that we all "hold on to what we have", and stay patient as we wait to see who God has planned to be our shepherd that will be "coming soon". Hold each other up in prayer and encourage each other in whatever resolutions may have been made this year. I hope all of you will be blessed with your "New Year's Resolutions" as I have.

The reading for December 17th had a wonderful prayer in it. ***"O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress"***.

In His Service,

Linda Hill

North Texas Free Conference

"Who is the Real Enemy - Islam or Christianity?"

Friday—Saturday...January 24-25, 2014

At Faith Lutheran Church

1701 East Park Blvd., Plano, TX 75074

www.faithplano.org

More details about this event are located in the Information Center in the Fellowship Hall



Jeanette Green 1-1
 Jeff Matzek 1-1
 Stacey Williams 1-4
 Allen Becker 1-5
 Denise Dalrymple 1-7
 Kimberly Denton 1-7

Ben Lewis 1-11
 Carloyn Priebe 1-11
 Dale Hunter 1-12
 Sara Lewis 1-14
 Wesley Johnson 1-21
 Devin Becker 1-23
 Linda Hill 1-23
 Caren Pankonien 1-23
 Shirley Matzek 1-25
 Jon Hunter 1-26
 Ken Warren 1-26
 Lauren Woolery 1-26
 Carly Dixon 1-28
 Keith Melton 1-29
 Andrew Estilow 1-30



Happy Anniversary!

Glenn & Doreen Watson 1-19

Lutheran Hymn Festival

As a result of strong ticket sales and generous donors, the Lutheran Hymn Festival will be supporting the Lutheran Music Program with twelve \$500 scholarships toward their 2014 Lutheran Summer Music Academy. These scholarships are for Texas students. For more information about the summer academy go to www.lutheransummermusic.org and click on Prospective Students.

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation will occur in 2017. The Lutheran Hymn Festival Board of Directors wanted to be "first in line" to launch this celebration. The festival will take place in 2016, hopefully one of the last two Sundays of September according to our regular three year schedule. By having the festival in 2016, congregations will have time to plan their own Reformation Celebration in the anniversary year of 2017. Mark you calendars!!!

Thank you!

Thank you all who have given gifts to Tree of Life in memory of Ellie Silbernagel. Your kindness and generosity are greatly appreciated.

*God's Blessings to each of you,
 Art & Don Silbernagel*

Offerings and Attendance for November

DATE	SS	Worship	General Offering	Growing To the Future	Mission Tithe
11/3/13	29	78	\$6,755*	\$500	\$676
11/10/13	37	81	\$4,013*	\$400	\$401
11/17/13	24	83	\$3,726*	\$300	\$373
11/24/13			\$5,263*	\$1,000	\$526
Total for November			\$19,757*	\$2,200	\$1,976

*Planned for each week—\$4,738; Planned for in November—\$18,952

Special Voter's Meeting January 19, 2014

Purpose: The possible calling of a Seminary Graduate as the full time Pastor of Tree of Life

Greetings from the Call Committee,

We have completed the initial phase of the call process, the self evaluation of Tree of Life. The next phase is generally to get a list of candidates from the district and start evaluating those candidates for a possible call to TOL. We are however, at a unique time of the year. The time of the year when the seminaries start the process of placing May graduates into their first congregations.

Most seminarians graduate in May of each year, and are placed as full time Pastors in vacant congregations. Congregations must state their desire to make themselves available, and seek to have a new graduate as their full time Pastor.

The timing is such that the Seminary needs to know if a congregation wants to make itself available for a candidate by February, 2014.

That is why we are having a voter's meeting in January to determine if we want to make our congregation available for a new seminary graduate.

Some things to consider in making this decision:

There is no guarantee that we will have a new Pastor out of this process, but there is a very good likelihood that we could have a new full time

Offerings and Attendance for December

DATE	SS	11:00	General Offering	Growing To the Future	Mission Tithe
12/1/13	39	83	\$5,854*	\$1,250	\$585
12/8/13	28	52	\$2,985*	\$200	\$299
12/15/13	47	98	\$4,678*	\$800	\$468
12/22/13			*		
12/29/13					
Total for December			\$13,517*	\$1,120	\$1,352

*Planned for each week—\$4,738; Planned for in December—\$23,690

Pastor in place by June or July of 2014.

There are many vacant congregations at this time. There is the possibility of a lengthy vacancy going through the traditional process. Some congregations are vacant for periods of many months to several years.

While we love Pastor Berg and his service to our congregation, there may come a time when he may no longer be able to serve us as our vacancy Pastor, especially so, if we have an extended vacancy.

The Seminary tries to match Pastors skill sets with congregational needs. They do not just pick names out of a hat. There is thought and reason in placing these men.

New graduates while not having a lot of ministerial experience usually have a great deal of passion and energy for serving their new congregations.

If we choose to accept a new graduate as our new Pastor we are providing a service to those men, the seminary, the districts and the LCMS as a whole in providing a place for the new graduates to start their ministries.

We will be happy to answer any questions you may have either before or at the voter's meeting.

Please plan to attend.

In Christ,

J.P. Hill

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The loving family of Tree of Life, rooted in God's Word, exists to share the joy, love, and peace of Jesus Christ with you!



From the Rasch Family Missionaries

Ivan and Jennifer Rasch are leaving the Mission Field to be home to assist with Ivan's brother who has Duchene Muscular Dystrophy. Please keep the family in your prayers during this transition. Also, you may read more of their work, transition and plans as they move forward in "The Rasch Report" which is posted in the Information Center.

Thank you!

Thank you for your support and partnership with us. God has heard your prayers and answered them in ways beyond our understanding, caring for us and permitting us the opportunity to share the Gospel with people who need to know about the Messiah. God has used your letters and notes of encouragement to help motivate us and encourage us at even our lowest times. He has used your financial support as a means for us to reach out with His Gospel as we served Him in the ministry to which He called us.

As we transition off the field, we encourage you to begin looking at opportunities to transfer your support to other missionaries serving or preparing to serve on the field. Information about such opportunities is available through Mission Central in Mapleton, IA, as well as through the Office of International Mission in St. Louis. The following (found on our LCMS Missionary Prayer Cards) explains the LCMS policy for handling any funds left over in our ministry account at the conclusion of our service:

"Gifts received for LCMS missionaries are deposited in an account restricted for the support of eligible missionaries. Any gifts received in excess of a missionary's requirement for a given year are held for that missionary until needed. ***Should a missionary's service conclude for any reason, the funds remaining in the restricted account will be transferred to one or more eligible LCMS missionaries who most closely fulfill the restrictions of the original gift. With documented donor permission, a restricted gift can also be utilized to support missionary-related work authorized by the LCMS.*** Your gift is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law."

Thank you for the many ways you have personally shown us love and care. As much as we have depended on your partnership for ministry, we have depended even more on your friendship to minister to us through our personal struggles and challenges. What a blessing you have been to us!