



The Love Letter

Volume 39

December 2011

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Worship Schedule

Sun. 8:00 a.m. Worship Service
Sun. 9:15 a.m. Sunday School
Sun. 10:30 a.m. Worship Service

Mission Statement: Created by God's gracious love, we are called, as a community of faith, to be witnesses and servants of Jesus to the world.

A Look Ahead

Happy Holidays! December is a month of preparation and anticipation for the birth of Jesus, the real reason for the season. There are several ways in which Lord of Love is preparing, as highlighted below, and you are encouraged to participate!

On December 7, 14, and 21, attend our **mid-week Advent worship services** (see page 4, Worship).

On December 10, bring 2 to 3 dozen cookies and help fill **goodie containers** for our elderly, shut-ins, and those with special needs as well as for military personnel on LOL's prayer list (see page 14, Women of Love). Then, on December 11, enjoy the **Sunday School Christmas Program** at the 10:30 a.m. worship service (see page 11, Nurture). Stay for a chili lunch and then go **Christmas caroling** (see page 11, Nurture).

On December 18, spend the Sunday School hour listening to a presentation by **Lutheran Family Services**; the special offerings for Advent and Christmas are designated to go to Lutheran Family Services (see page 7, Nurture). Then the **youth group** will meet following the 10:30 a.m. worship service (see page 7, Nurture).

Finally, on December 24, attend one of two **Christmas Eve worship services**, and on December 25, attend one **Christmas Day worship service** at 10:30 a.m. (see page 4, Worship).



In This Issue

Pastor's Page	2	Council Report	12
Monthly Calendar	3	Women of Love	13
Worship	4	Just for Kids	16
Nurture.....	6	In Our Prayers	19
Outreach.....	9	Love Notes	19
Resources	11	Mark Your Calendar	20

Prepare (or Repair) Ye the Way by Pastor Brad

The street in front of our house was torn up last week. Repairs were being made to large cracks in the concrete. We were fortunate; the only challenge was to carefully back out of the driveway trying to avoid the hole and the construction barriers. Our neighbors, however, at times had to drive around the block to get home because construction trucks and broken concrete blocked their way.

We know the repairs were needed, and when it was done, the road was smoother and easier to negotiate. We also know that our lives will be better for it, but the repairs were no fun.



When John the Baptist said, “Prepare the way of the Lord,” he meant we are to smooth the path for Jesus’ arrival—to ask God for guidance and help in filling the potholes and smoothing the rough patches of our lives so Jesus’ journey to us can be smoother and faster. It’s no fun, especially at Christmas when there is so much going on, but it is necessary.

As we prepare for the arrival of the Savior and infant King, what is it that we might try to repair in our lives? Is it our prayer life? Is it our patience with others? Is it our attentiveness to the needs of those less fortunate? The list goes on and on and on....

but through all of these “repairs,” we can experience the presence of God and continue to have a deeper and fuller relationship with Him.

The coming of the Savior, and our preparation for His arrival, might take some work on our part as we respond to the call of John the Baptist to “Prepare the way of the Lord.” It’s no fun, but your life will be better for it.

Prayer: “Forgive me, O Lord, and show me what I need to repair so I can prepare for your arrival.”

Peace and a Blessed Advent and Christmas season!
Pastor Brad



Prepare Ye
the Way
of the Lord

MONTHLY CALENDAR

December 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9:30am Text Study @ Guthrie's 7:00pm Boy Scouts	2 7:30pm AA	3 7:00am Men's Breakfast & Bible Study
4 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship & Communion 6:00pm & 7:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal	5 6:00pm "Gather" Bible Study 6:00pm AA Potluck & Al Anon	6 9:00am Quilters 7:00pm Vision & Coordination	7 5:00pm 7th & 8th grade Confirmation Class 5:30pm Supper 6:00pm Luther Kids 6:00pm "Gather" Bible Study 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 7:15pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	8 9:30am Text Study @ Guthrie's 7:00pm Boy Scouts	9 8:00am Laughing Ladies @ Crane Coffee 7:30pm AA	10 7:00am Men's Breakfast & Bible Study 8:00am Worship Planning 9:00am Cookie Prep
11 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Christmas Program Worship & Communion 6:00pm & 7:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal	12 11:30am Secretary Group Christmas Lunch 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	13 7:00pm Strategic Planning Comte	14 5:00pm 7th & 8th grade Confirmation Class 5:30pm Supper 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 6:00pm Women's Ministry Team 6:00pm Luther Kids 7:15pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	15 9:30am Text Study @ Guthrie's 7:00pm Boy Scouts	16 7:30pm AA	17 Sanctuary Reserved for Novak 7:00am Men's Breakfast & Bible Study
18 8:00am Worship & Communion 9:15am Intergenerational Sunday School 10:30am Worship & Communion 6:00pm & 7:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal	19 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	20 9:00am Quilters	21 5:30pm Supper 6:00pm Brass Rehearsal 7:15pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	22 9:30am Text Study @ Guthrie's 7:00pm Boy Scouts	23 8:00am Laughing Ladies @ Crane Coffee 7:30pm AA	24 7:00am Men's Breakfast & Bible Study 4:30pm Family Worship Service 10:30pm Prelude Music begins 11:00pm Candlelight Worship
25 10:30am Worship & Communion	26 Church Office Closed 8:00pm AA & Al Anon	27 Pr. Brad out of office	28 Pr. Brad out of office	29 Pr. Brad out of office 9:30am Text Study @ Guthrie's 7:00pm Boy Scouts 7:00pm Swingtones Rehearsal	30 Pr. Brad out of office 7:30pm AA	31 7:00am Men's Breakfast & Bible Study

Advent Worship Schedule

Our **Advent worship** will focus on the anticipation of the birth of Jesus as we hear about those who led the way to his birth. Those who preceded Jesus—Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist—all led the way for His wondrous birth. Join us for Advent worship on Wednesdays November 30, December 7, December 14, and December 21 at 7:00 p.m.



Reminder: **Christmas Day and New Year's Day** occur on Sundays this year, and we will have only one worship service at 10:30 a.m. on these mornings.



Lord of Love's Worship Servants

	December 4	December 11	December 18	December 25
Greeter(s)				
8:00 a.m.	Doug and Cathy Aden	Josh and Carissa Combes	Harry Naasz, Mary Boyd	No 8:00 a.m. service
10:30 a.m.	Barb Haskins, Kathy Christiansen	Tom and Beth Olson	Claude and Sandy Hall	Doug and Rose Roberts
Liturgist				
8:00 a.m.		Doug Aden		No 8:00 a.m. service
10:30 a.m.		Sunday School program		Shawn Lorenzen
Communion Servers				
8:00 a.m.		Doug and Cathy Aden		No 8:00 a.m. service
10:30 a.m.		Sunday School program		Shawn Lorenzen
Nursery Attendant(s)				
10:30 a.m.	Anne Yarger	Sarah Horan	Lisa Rieff	Pat Brewer
Altar Care				
8:00 a.m.	Cathy Aden, Dayla Miller, Deb Quadhamer	Doug and Rose Roberts	Vandeventer girls	No 8:00 a.m. service
10:30 a.m.	Diana Haye, Marcia Roads	Debra Gillispie, Karen Armitage	Brenda and Suzanne Mac	Rowen family
Ushers				
8:00 a.m.	Kenn Garder, Matt Garder, Paul and Deb Christenson, Craig Pennell			
10:30 a.m.	Rett Messerschmidt, Rob Anderson, Paul Barnett			

The Faith Journey of Pauline Shaffer by Karen Pickens

This month I have the privilege of bringing you the life and faith story of Pauline Shaffer. She has been a faithful member of Lord of Love since 1972 and has served us well in many capacities. I know that her friendship has been a comfort and blessing to many in our church; she has certainly been my strong support. Here is her story.

Pauline's parents, Anna Hanson and Severin Nelson, were born in Sweden and confirmed there in the Lutheran church. In the early 1900s, they came to America but they didn't come together. They weren't acquainted until they had settled in Omaha; it was here in the Swedish community that they first met. On December 15, 1909, at Augustana Lutheran Church (then Zion Lutheran Church), they were married. Seven children were born to Anna and Severin; Thure, Marian, Sylvia, Clarence, Hilder, Alice, and the baby of the family, Pauline. Sylvia did not survive, and Thure was accidentally shot at the age of 16 by his friend while they were shooting birds.

Neither of Pauline's parents attended church once they were in the United States. Pauline thinks that her father never got over losing his son, especially since the gun belonged to Pauline's family. This may have had something to do with his not attending church. Her mother, however, encouraged Pauline to go to church, and at a very young age, she started riding the streetcar from her home at 43rd and Emmet to Augustana, which was at 36th Lafayette. Her sister Marian also went to church. Pauline's first memory of being in church was sitting on the pastor's wife's lap and occupying herself by going through the lady's purse. Her second memory was being offered an Easter lily if she would recite her piece during the Easter program. She was very self-conscious because she stuttered...she didn't recite her piece and she didn't get the Easter lily. Her third memory was singing in the children's choir at about the age of 8. She has sung in the choir ever since.

Pauline belonged to Augustana until she met her husband, Paul, and at that time, they transferred to Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church. Four children were born to Pauline and Paul—Jane, Dan, Kristine, and Greg. All of the children attended Sunday school and church. When they grew up and moved away from home, even away from Omaha, Pauline found herself looking for a new church. She was suffering from "empty nest syndrome." She visited three or four churches but did not feel comfortable in any of them. Finally, she came to Lord of Love. The music was one of things that appealed to her at our church, but it was her curiosity that brought her back the following Sundays. What would they do next? She knew what to expect from her former church because it was always the same, but not so at Lord of Love. After a year, during which time she took over the Altar Care, she became a member. Lord of Love became her new home and has been so ever since.

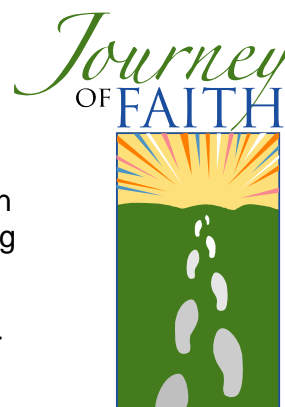
Pauline's husband Paul died in November 1983. Pauline has remained in their home along with her son Greg. Greg moved back home when his girls were 7 months, 2, and 4. They all grew up there, and they still come and go. Pauline has an open door policy. She learned this from her mother, who was a shining example of how to live. Her Mother mostly stayed at home, except for the times she met with a small group of friends. She kept her home warm and cozy. She cooked meals, especially on Sunday, and there were always guests at the table. Pauline has followed in her mother's footsteps, always opening her door to family and family's friends. She is grandma to 12 children and great-grandmother to 12 with number 13 on the way. At Christmas time, they all enjoy Pauline's cooking, which includes Lutefisk, Swedish meatballs, and Swedish rye bread among many other delicious dishes.

Continued on the next page

WORSHIP

The Faith Journey of Pauline Shaffer, continued

Pauline enjoyed 27 years of altar care and considers it the most important part of worship. It was always important for her to get God's house ready for the Lord's Supper just as you would get your own home ready for company coming to supper. She has taken part in the liturgy. She may not have gotten the Easter lily when she was 8 years old, but over the years, she has read to us from God's word, without prompting. She faithfully shows up on Tuesday mornings to work on the quilts, she participates in Bible study, and she is involved in just about anything going on at the church. Pauline is our shining example of how to live and how to share God love. Pauline has never questioned God. When problems occur, she gets upset but she doesn't blame God. Sometimes she says, "Why me?" But her daughter Jane tells her, "Why not you?" In closing, Pauline says that church has always been a big part of her life...she was and still is...always there.



NURTURE

Sunday Morning Donuts

Did you know that rolls/donuts cost Lord of Love 75 cents for each roll or donut and cookies cost 45 cents each?

Please help keep the donut/coffee fund out of the "donut hole" by giving at least a \$1.00 for each roll/donut and 50 cents for each cookie that you or your family eats!

Please sign up to pick up the donuts or to clean up after the Sunday School hour. You can choose one or more weeks at a time.

Thank you for your support!



Wednesday Night Suppers

Wednesday night suppers will continue on the first two Wednesdays this month: December 7 and 14. Because of the holidays, **there will be no suppers served on December 21 and 28.** Wednesday night suppers will resume on January 4, 2012.

Sunday School Christmas Program

The Sunday School Christmas Program will be held on **December 11** at the 10:30 a.m. worship service.



There will be no Sunday School classes on **December 25** and **January 1**.

Christmas Caroling on December 11

Singers of all ages are encouraged to gather on **December 11** and sing for Lord of Love folks who are not able to get to the church often. Following a chili lunch after the 10:30 a.m. worship service, we'll get organized and depart in groups to bring God's word to people in song. Depending on the number of participants related to the number of homes that will be visited, groups of carolers should be back to

the church no later than 3:30 p.m. Please sign up on the large bulletin board in the Narthex, and indicate if you are willing to drive, as well.



Christmas Caroling Party

Lutheran Family Services

Lutheran Family Services will have a representative talk during the Sunday School hour on **December 18** and will give a short Temple Talk during the 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. worship services as well. The special offerings for Advent and Christmas are designated to go to Lutheran Family Services.

Youth Group Events

Be sure to mark your calendars for upcoming youth events! Our next youth gathering will be held on **December 18** after the 10:30 a.m. worship service.

Starting in January, the youth group will be meeting together every other Sunday after the 10:30 a.m. worship service for learning, service, and fun! Look forward to seeing everyone there!



Piano Lessons

Interested in music and the piano? I've taught piano lessons for over 10 years to both children and adults. I live close to Lord of Love. If interested, call Jane Hawkins at 402-343-1680.

Living Your Strengths Returns!

The next Living Your Strengths Journey is scheduled for January 2012! Living Your Strengths is an opportunity for you to discover your God-given talents! Living Your Strengths is a wonderful adventure to identify and affirm your innate gifts and how they can enrich your faith community.

Join Pastor Brad on five consecutive Monday evenings—**January 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30**—from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The cost of the book is \$15.00, which includes an ID code that gives you access to StrengthsFinder.com, a personality assessment that reveals your top five talents. We will spend time together learning about our unique talents and how they are revealed throughout our lives.

Space is limited to 8 participants! Talk with Pastor Brad to sign up or to ask any questions.

90th Birthday Celebration!

Ann Christiansen turns 90 on **January 8, 2012!** Her family would like to extend an invitation to the Lord of Love family to help celebrate her special day at an open house on January 8, 2012, in the Fellowship Hall from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Your presence would be a gift.

Weekly Education Opportunities at Lord of Love

Sunday

9:15 a.m. Sunday School (Preschool – High School) @ LOL Classrooms
Adult Studies @ LOL Abraham, Mary, and Joseph Rooms

Monday

6:00 p.m. *Gather* Bible Study @ Old Country Buffet (first Monday of month)

Wednesday

5:00 p.m. Confirmation (7th & 8th grades) @ LOL Abraham Room
6:00 p.m. Luther Kids (1st – 6th grades) @ LOL Preschool
6:00 p.m. *Gather* Bible Study @ LOL Mary Room (first Wednesday of month)

Thursday

9:30 a.m. Text Study @ Guthrie's

Saturday

7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast and Bible Study @ LOL Fellowship Hall

FIESTA!

The Fall Festival—the Fiesta!—was a great success. We enjoyed the Mexican food prepared by Iglesia Cristo Rey, the wonderful music of Mariachi San Juan who strolled throughout the program and serenaded each and every table, and the wonderful silent auction items. A special thanks goes to all who helped in any way: the planning committee; the men who set up and took down the chairs and tables in the sanctuary; our emcee, Shawn Lorenzen; and our amazing youth group. About a dozen kids served the meal, cleaned up the tables, and washed the dishes. We served 83 people, the second largest group for a fall festival dinner.



And here's the rest of the story. After expenses, we raised enough money to provide \$622 to Iglesia Cristo Rey; \$1,157.23 to Food Pantry of the Heartland; \$588.60 for our "Women on a Mission" trip (planning to financially assist two women from LOL on a trip to Argentina with the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization in 2013), and \$558.60 to our Women of Love treasury for operating expenses, including additional mission support.

Thanks again! Many will be blessed by your financial support.

Preschool Update by Michelle Petersen

We have been busy bees so far this school year! I am excited to report that I have completely full classes Monday through Friday! We have been working on our letters, numbers, shapes, colors, seasons, and days of the week. We have taken field trips to the arboretum, pumpkin patch, and Lauritzen Gardens. In addition, the kids have enjoyed monthly visits from Pastor Brad for stories and sharing time.



The preschool board and I have decided to only have one garage sale each year. The date has not yet been set, but the garage sale will be held in March or April. Save your donations for our spring sale! Stay tuned for the date and plan to shop then.

Nebraska Synod Lay Leadership Academy by Brian and Deb Lund

We had the pleasure of attending the Nebraska Synod Lay Leadership Academy at Camp Carol Joy Holling in November. Lutherans from all parts of Nebraska came to participate in this event of sharing, discussion, and fellowship. The theme was "Incarnate Leadership," led by Bill Robinson, President Emeritus of Whitworth College in Spokane, WA, and author of a book by the same name. The academy focused on basic leadership lessons from the life of Jesus. There were five lessons from Mr. Robinson's book: Minding the Gap, Leading Openly, Bending the Light, Living in Grace and Truth, and Sacrifice. Additional detail was given around the paradoxes of leadership and the traits of effective leaders. Bishop deFreese spent Friday evening with us. He first talked about Luther's definition of sin as being curved in on one's self. He corrected a misquotation of Luther; we are not to be "little Christs," but rather we should "be Christ" to others. Overall, the conference provided much to think about so that we can become more effective leaders and for our congregation to be a more faith affirming place that welcomes and embraces all who come into our community.

OUTREACH

Red Cross Blood Drive



Lord of Love is hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive on Sunday, February 26, 2012, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. To schedule your donation time, please see Gary Ramsay or Paul Christenson. If you would like to help with this event, please contact Paul or Gary ASAP.

“Feed the Roots” Update

Last year, the congregation voted to support the “Feed the Roots” program. It is part of the “Feed the Roots, Strengthen the Tree, Grow the Forest” campaign. We have a 3-year commitment to support this campaign through the Nebraska Synod.

By the end of October, we have given \$2,266.63 to the Nebraska Feed the Roots Campaign.



Mission Possible Update

The Mission Possible Team met recently to determine where our mission dollars should be spent for the rest of 2011 and into 2012. Roughly one third of remaining 2011 contributions (congregational mission funds—2.5% of giving revenue) will go to Lutheran Family Services (est. \$2,000). Another third of the remaining 2011 funds will go to needs in Northern Tanzania: \$500 to Bob Kasworm’s “Boot Fund” (for spontaneous spending on immediate needs when he encounters them) and \$1,500 to help with a new roof for Pastor Anna’s School in Tanzania. The final third of 2011 funds will be divided: \$1,000 will go to the Food Bank, and the remaining monies of our 2011 Congregational Mission Project will go to the ELCA Disaster Response.

Thanks to Lord of Love’s generosity and faithful stewardship of our financial resources, many lives are touched by our special mission funds. So far in 2011, the following funds have been designated and spent:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| \$1,400 | Tuition for one student at Machame Lutheran Hospital Nursing School in Tanzania (Easter 2011 offering, plus some congregational mission project funds) |
| \$3,621.01 | Scholarship money for Maimu children (Advent and Christmas 2010 funds, plus 2011 Lenten monies) |
| \$ 250 | Special offering for Nebraska Synod camp scholarships at Synod Assembly (Congregational Mission Project funds) |
| \$1,462.90 | ELCA Disaster Response (Summer Breakfast monies) |



Lutheran Family Services & Diaper Derby

Pastor Brad spent some time at the Center for Healthy Families in Omaha, one of the programs offered through the Nebraska Lutheran Family Services, at the 24th and Lake location. Points are earned by parents taking parenting classes, which have a high number of participants. The points earned in attendance can then be ‘spent’ in their shop. Disposable diapers are very popular and in high demand. Lutheran Family Services is promoting a Diaper Drive (aka Derby) and has asked eight congregations to kick this off in February to promote an inter-congregation challenge to collect and contribute diapers or funds for diaper purchases, as they can get better pricing in bulk purchases. The Mission Possible Team voted to support the program and support a LOL drive for diapers. The 2011 advent and Christmas offerings were designated to go to Lutheran Family Services in support of its programs such as the Healthy Families. The Thanksgiving offering will go to Together, Inc.

ELCA Disaster Response



As you are well aware, natural and manmade disasters happen throughout the world every day. Because the ELCA has folks stationed in all parts of the world, the ELCA Disaster Response provides immediate help to people in the US and throughout the world in times of great needs due to floods (US-East Coast, Central America, Malawi, and Southeast Asia); hurricanes (US-East Coast); drought (Horn of Africa); and other chaotic events such as the violence in Sudan. Thanks so much to everyone who so generously supports this arm of the ELCA with their gifts, and remember to keep those affected and the responders in your thoughts and prayers.

Mission Investment Fund by Doug Aden

A small group of Lutherans began worshiping together in a small town in Florida. They had no church, so they began holding worship services in each other's homes. Soon they decided a more prayerful environment was needed, so they began looking for a place to build a church. They found a 5 ½-acre location, but it was beyond the congregation's budget.

The Mission Investment Fund agreed to purchase all 5 ½ acres and sell two acres back to the congregation and hold on to the remaining 3 ½ acres. When the congregation had the resources, they bought back the remaining acres from the Mission Investment Fund and then built a Learning Center and Preschool. The Preschool is now filled to capacity, and some of the Preschool families are starting to join the church. The Learning Center also comes to life with Confirmation classes, Sunday school sessions, adult education center, and as many as nine 12-step recovery programs.

What is the Mission Investment Fund? The Mission Investment Fund is a ministry of the ELCA whose mission is "To help build the church—and share God's love with the world—by providing loans, investments, and related services to the ELCA congregations, members, and ministries.



Mission Investment Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The fund works in two ways:

- By providing loans and supporting services to new and established ELCA congregations and related ministries.
- By providing investments that are similar to savings accounts, checking accounts, money market accounts, and CDs to ELCA members, congregations, and ELCA-related ministries.

Essentially the Mission Investment Fund provides loans to congregations and ELCA-related ministries, with funds provided by members of the congregation that make investments in the fund.

During the next few months, we will provide more information on how the fund works, the results of their programs and how ELCA members can invest in the fund, and the types of investment opportunities that are available.

Stewardship Pledge Update by Doug Armitage

On October 9, we “Celebrated our Faith,” and many of us made a financial pledge or commitment to the church. Making a faith-filled financial commitment to the church has been a part of my church life my entire life. I remember my parents always made a pledge to the church every year. I also know that it was not easy for them to do.

So why does the church ask its members to make a financial commitment to the church and put it on paper? First, I want to assure you that it is NOT part of the budget process. The budget process is done entirely using historical giving data. Not everyone feels comfortable making a pledge. In fact, several of our tithing members do not turn in a written pledge. So what are some of the benefits of making a written financial commitment?

Here are four reasons why we as a church request a written financial commitment:

1. A written estimate of giving represents a conscious commitment between us and God.
2. A written estimate of giving is an effective communication tool, providing an opportunity to discuss our financial commitment as a family.
3. A written estimate of giving is done at a precise timeframe in our church calendar to call specific attention to the financial part of stewardship.
4. A written estimate of giving is an educational tool through which we challenge ourselves to grow our faith.

The Stewardship committee reviewed historical pledge and actual giving data for years 2010 and 2011. Here are some of the statistics from that data:

- There were 87 giving units who pledged in either 2010 or 2011 or in both years. In 2010, the total amount pledged was \$229,612. Actual giving was \$257,291.63 to the general fund, with an additional \$38,769.85 in “second mile” giving.
- In 2011, the total amount pledged was \$214,332.00. Actual giving so far is \$227,717.48 to the general fund, with an additional \$45,534.10 in “second mile” giving.
- To date for 2012, we have received 68 written pledges totaling \$205,440.24.

God has truly blessed our congregation. He continues to work his wonders through our congregation and our mission.

I want to take this opportunity to thank every member for their continued commitment to God’s mission. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Yours in Christ,
Doug Armitage

The logo for the Annual Stewardship Campaign features a large, stylized teal cross on the left. To its right, the word "ANNUAL" is written in a purple, serif font. Below "ANNUAL", the word "Stewardship" is written in a large, teal, cursive script font. At the bottom, the word "CAMPAIGN" is written in a purple, serif font, matching the style of "ANNUAL".

ANNUAL
Stewardship
CAMPAIGN

RESOURCES

Stewardship All Year Long: Encourage by Paul Kroll

The stewardship word for this month is “encourage.”

Once while I was eating a grapefruit, I came across a seed that had already grown a root completely around its outside. I thought that anything trying so hard to survive should receive a little help. Therefore, I planted the seed.

I do not know if the seed encouraged me to plant it, or I encouraged the seed to grow by planting it. The result was the same. I have a forty-inch grapefruit tree growing in my living room.

As it is written in Matthew 9:16-17, “By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.”

The grapefruit tree has yet to produce any fruit. It is my hope that it will in a few years, even if they are small and insufficient in number. We can encourage good fruits from others by delivering good fruit from ourselves.

Paul recognized the need to encourage one another for the glory of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-8, “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

God wants us to encourage one another. We need to plant and water so that the entire congregation can bear good fruit. Your giving of time and money does this. Thank you.

COUNCIL REPORT

Our Giving Status by Barb Haskins, Council Treasurer

Our financial picture for the month of October 2011 is as follows:

- Income: \$25,076.65
- Expenses: \$26,585.00

Thank you for your continued support of Lord of Love.



2011 Lord of Love Church Council

Executive Committee: Brian Lund, President; Kenn Garder, Vice-President; Brian Walther, Secretary; Barb Haskins, Treasurer

Nurture: Lori Vandeventer, Paula Foster

Outreach: Paul Christenson, Jeri Morgan

Resources: Doug Armitage, Josh Combes

Worship: Karen Mullen, Randi VenHuizen



COUNCIL REPORT

From the Council President – December 2011 by Brian Lund, Council President

Isaiah 40: 3-5 (NIV) *A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together."*

Another year is roaring to a close. When I look at the calendar, I cannot believe that it is already December. How did the past months fly by so quickly?

We have entered the season of Advent, a time for preparation and waiting for the birth of Jesus. I am so ready for the waiting part of Advent. I want to slow down, take time to think about the meaning of this season, and enjoy the anticipation of Christmas.



Waiting is never easy. Life seems to want to pull us quickly from the old to the new, from the past into the future. Society seems to have conditioned us into identifying our wants, turning them into needs, and going after them right away. Patience has really become a virtue and for many a lost art.

Maybe we all can carve out a little spare time this Advent and Christmas season to slow things down a bit. Make time to attend the mid-week Advent services as a time of preparation. Take time to listen to God's word and to hear about the good news he brings to us through the birth of Jesus. Use your time to reflect your faith through words and actions to, for, and with those you meet each day. Celebrate the time you have with family and friends in worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for the many gifts he provides to each of us.

Romans 8: 38-39 (NIV) *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I am thankful for our members and the time we share in our faith journey. Thank you for your continued prayers for our congregation and our ministry together. May God continue to lead us in faithful service to those in need.

Blessings in faith and service,
Brian Lund

WOMEN OF LOVE

Gather Bible Studies

Session 4 of the *Gather* Bible study is "Beyond Boundaries," based on the theme verse, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." (Mark 6:38)

The Monday group will meet on December 5 at the Old Country Buffet, 145th & West Center Road, at 6:00 p.m. The Wednesday group will meet on December 7 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mary Room. All women are invited to attend either of these groups.

WOMEN OF LOVE

Help Fill Cookie Containers!

Each year, Women of Love are asked to provide cookies for containers for our elderly, shut-ins, and those with special needs. This year, we've added a new twist. We will be shipping boxes to those military personnel on LOL's prayer list who are deployed. They will not be receiving them in time for Christmas, but we're sure they will be enjoyed later.



Please bring 3 to 4 dozen cookies to LOL on Saturday, December 10, by 9:00 a.m. (If you can't stay and pack cookies, you are welcome to drop them off earlier.) Bill and Janet Baker will host a brief coffee/goodie session before we begin to pack the containers. Those going caroling the next day will deliver the containers to our LOL members.

Women's Epiphany Celebration

Join us for the 2012 Epiphany Dinner on January 8 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. It will be a potluck meal, 2011 Secret Angels will be revealed (sign-up sheets for 2012 will be available), a short program will be presented, and the 2012 women's ministry team will be installed.

Now IMAGINE... if there had been Three Wise Women. They would have asked for directions, arrived on time, helped delivered the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts. With that in mind, we are asking you to bring gifts to be given to babies, sons, and daughters of homeless women at Stephen Center Shelter. They are in need of baby diapers, baby bottles, baby wipes, wash cloths, twin-sized blankets (new or used), and towels (new or used).



Ladies' Soup Lunch

Ladies' Lunch is meeting again for a soup special at home of Amy Kragnes, 309 S. 155th Avenue. Call if you need directions: 402-697-9165. Please sign up on the sheet at the Information Desk so I know how many pots of soup to make!



LOL Women's Ministry Team

You are invited to participate in the monthly women's ministry team meeting, which meets at 6:00 p.m. in the Mary Room on Wednesday, December 14. There will be a review of the November 18 planning session, and ministry team members will choose their assignments for the coming year. Newly elected to the ministry team is Lynda McGraw. Re-elected were Brenda Thom, Val Florea, Ruth Manning, Beth Olson, Rose Roberts, and Pauline Shaffer. Non-voting members are Gwen Edwards, our CWO representative, and Randi VenHuizen, from the NSW0 board.

Lord's Laughing Ladies

The coffee group will meet on December 9 and 23 at 8:00 a.m. at Crane Coffee at 76th and Cass. All women are welcome, so please come and join the fun! Teachers who are on winter break—we hope to see you!

Winner of Magazine

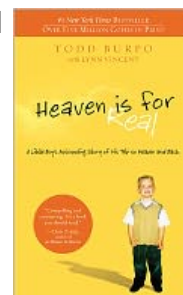
Congratulations to Ann Kroll for winning a 1-year subscription to *Gather*, the official publication of the Women of the ELCA. Registration was held from October 26 through November 6.



WOMEN OF LOVE

NSWO Winter Retreat

You won't want to miss the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization retreat scheduled for Saturday, January 14 in Grand Island. Featured speakers will be Rev. Todd Burpo and his wife, Sonja, who will tell the amazing story of their son Colton's trip to heaven and back. The story is written in the New York Times bestseller, "Heaven is for Real." In addition, Joan Naber, Ms. Wheelchair Nebraska 2010, will share her story of hope.



Other events include walking a labyrinth and practicing prayer and devotional techniques to deepen your walk with the Triune God. There will be music, skits, and information on NSWO programs.

Refreshments will be served at 8:30 a.m., and the retreat begins at 9:00 a.m. and will end at 3:00 p.m. Once again, St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1515 South Harrison St., in Grand Island will host us. Offering will be received to support the ELCA Malaria Initiative and the ELCA Disaster Response designated for domestic disasters.



Registration forms will be available at the Information Center in the narthex. Lunch is included in the \$18 registration fee. Registration deadline is January 3, 2012.

Quilts Shipped

Although there are fewer Lord of Love quilters, they still were able to make about 90 quilts this year. Approximately 80 were shipped, along with 22 personal care kits, to Lutheran World Relief. In addition, 10 quilts were donated to Project Hope, and 3 were donated to the Fall Festival silent auction.

Additional helpers are needed the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 9:00 a.m. for the quilting ministry. You don't need to be a quilter. Workers are needed to cut fabric, to lay out and pin the quilts together for machine sewing, and then to tie the quilts. According to Marilyn Thomsen, "We train!"

Dates to Remember

December

5	6:00 p.m.	Gather Bible Study, Old Country Buffet, 145th and West Center Road
6	9:00 a.m.	Quilters, Fellowship Hall
7	6:00 p.m.	Gather Bible Study, Mary Room
9	8:00 a.m.	Coffee Fellowship, Crane Coffee, 76th and Cass
10	9:00 a.m.	Prepare Christmas containers for elderly, shut-ins, and deployed military
14	6:00 p.m.	Women's Ministry Team, Mary Room
20	9:00 a.m.	Quilters, Fellowship Hall
23	8:00 a.m.	Coffee Fellowship, Crane Coffee, 76th and Cass



Women of the ELCA

Coming Soon

January 8	11:30 a.m.	Epiphany potluck luncheon and program
January 14		Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization Winter Retreat




God put love in Santa's heart


Some shepherds were in a field nearby.



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PUZZLE



A PROMISED RULER

Prophets told of Jesus' birth hundreds of years before it happened. Never had a baby's arrival come with such a promise.

Directions: To read what one prophet (Micah 5:4, NIV) said about Jesus, complete the math problems below. Then fill in the words, using the math solutions as your guide.

$7+6$
strength

$9+1$
shepherd

$30-5$
the

$7+5$
ends

$50-26$
live

$21-10$
will

$27-24$
reach

$10+7$
flock

$40-20$
stand

$15+4$
securely

$8+8$
his

$35-31$
LORD

$17-3$
greatness

$10-3$
earth

$10+5$
will

$5+1$
will

"He _____ and _____ his _____

in the _____ of the _____ And they _____

_____, for then _____

_____ to the _____ of _____."

MICAH 5:4, NIV

SAVIOR ORNAMENT

This Christmas, celebrate Jesus' birthday by making this keepsake ornament.

What you need:

- Wooden clothespin with round end
- Black permanent marker
- White cloth or felt
- Small wooden star (available at craft stores)
- Yellow paint
- Paintbrush
- Gold glitter (optional)
- Glue gun (and an adult)
- Straw-colored raffia
- Palm-size wicker wreath (available at craft stores)
- Ribbon

What you do:

1. On the clothespin's round knob, draw two dots for eyes.
2. Wrap the white cloth around the clothespin, like a swaddled baby.
3. Paint the star yellow; add glitter, if desired.
4. With the glue gun and adult supervision, glue the raffia to the bottom inside of the wreath. Then glue the swaddled clothespin atop the raffia and glue the gold star atop the wreath.
5. Tie a ribbon around the top, near the star.
6. Hang the ornament on your Christmas tree or tie it on a gift.

IN OUR PRAYERS & LOVE NOTES

In Our Prayers

Adrienne (staff member/friend of Rose Roberts)
Karen
Dick Bell
Marty Beutler (son of Gary and Connie Beutler)
Ruth Cooley
Janet Duckworth (friend of Marilyn Thomsen)
Brian Flores (friend of Brenda Mac)
Claire Foral (friend of Dave and Lisa Rieff)
Patty George (friend of Dave and Lisa Rieff)
Keith Gillespie
Kaye Haar (friend of the Novaks)
Cheryl Jones (friend of Nancy Shinrock)
Gene Jordan (uncle of Paula Foster)
Jude Konvalina
Lisa Lueders (sister-in-law of Dave Lueders)
Jim Mahler (brother of Jane Hawkins)
Marj Mahler (mother of Jane Hawkins)
Ruby Mathis (aunt of Lynnette Nore)
Debbie Michalak (co-worker of Jackie Combes)
Charlotte Peters (sister of Karen Mullen)
Luana Salerno (friend of Sandy Hall)
Doyle Sones (father of Dayla Miller)
Phyllis Strasser

Karen Swanson (sister of Marilyn Thomsen)
Brenda Thom
Marilyn Thomsen
Duane Williams (friend of the Lueders family)
Agnes Wilson

Those affected by the flooding
Children waiting to be adopted & those seeking to adopt
Men's servant ministry
Stephen Ministers and their care receivers
Those deployed around the world
Those seeking employment
Those who mourn



IN NEED OF PRAYER

If you would like to add a name to the In Our Prayers section of *The Love Letter*, please contact the office at 402.493.2946, send an email to marylou@lord-of-love.org, or fill out a prayer request note available in the narthex and place it in the basket. **Please help keep this list current by informing us when a name can be removed.** Thanks!

Love Notes

Thank you for the many cards and tokens of appreciation extended to me throughout the month of October for Pastor Appreciation Month. Lord of Love is a blessing in my ministry, and I am grateful to be serving a community on a mission to share Christ's love with others. Please know that all of you are greatly appreciated as well!

Peace,
Pastor Brad





The Love Letter
 Lord of Love Lutheran Church
 10405 Fort Street
 Omaha, NE 68134-1298

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Mission Statement: Created by God’s gracious love, we are called, as a community of faith, to be witnesses and servants of Jesus to the world.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

This Month

- December 10 Preparation of goodie containers for elderly, shut-ins, and those with special needs
- December 11 Sunday School Christmas Program @ 10:30 a.m.
Christmas caroling
- December 18 Youth group gathering
- December 24 Worship at 4:00 and 11:30 p.m.
- December 25 Christmas Day (10:30 a.m. worship only, no Sunday School)

Upcoming Events

- January 1 New Year’s Day (10:30 a.m. worship only, no Sunday School)
- January 2 Living Your Strengths journey begins
- January 8 Ann Christiansen’s 90th birthday celebration
- February 26 Red Cross Blood Drive



Articles for The Love Letter can be submitted to the editor, Kim Gust, in the Love Letter mailbox at church or by email at loveletter@lord-of-love.org. Articles must be received by the Love Letter editor by the 20th of the month.