



ed.network

A networking newsletter for the Christian Education ministries
of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the ELCA

Your church can make Christmas memories

By Nancy Hebel

What are your earliest family memories of Christmas? Is it a special Christmas cookie made with your grandma? Or maybe it's the same small train circling the Christmas tree? Did you always put a certain ornament on the tree first? At our house we had a very special Christmas candle. The glass was milky white and opaque, and just like the miracle of Christmas, when the inner candle was lit, it was possible to see the nativity through the glass. Each Christmas Eve, after Grandma's house, and after worship services, we sat together, lit our special candle, and read Luke 2, the Christmas story.

Family traditions—the sights,

sounds, and scents we share year after year with our families enrich our memories and provide a strong family bond. Traditions are passed from generation to generation and become part of the core of a family.

The Christmas and Epiphany Season is a perfect time for church families to develop and implement traditions also. They can be big or small, simple or elaborate, involving many people or just a few, but the outcome will be the same. I know a church that uses the same children's Christmas program that it has used for almost 100 years. I know a church that involves almost the entire congregation in performances of The

Boar's Head Festival and invites the community as a ministry gift. I know a church that decorates their Christmas tree with family-made Christian ornaments. I know a church that spends a Saturday before Christmas making Advent wreaths to give as gifts. I know a church that rents a trolley and goes caroling to nursing homes.

The possibilities are endless. The benefits are tremendous. What can your church do this Christmas and Epiphany Season that will touch the lives of your congregation members forever?

Browse these Alternative Christmas Giving sites

By Judy Scharpenberg

Two thoughts come to mind in this season of Christmas and Epiphany ... celebrating the coming of the Christ Child and getting the message to our neighbors here and abroad. What a good time to consider alternative Christmas gifts - ones that will accomplish both endeavors! Check out the following websites:

www.elca.org/hunger/resources/altgiving.html
www.wheatridge.org (special projects)
www.heifer.org



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Christian Education staff, committee members, teachers and volunteers.

Epiphany: Celebrate Baptism

By Karen Seykowski

Celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord on January 11, 2004.

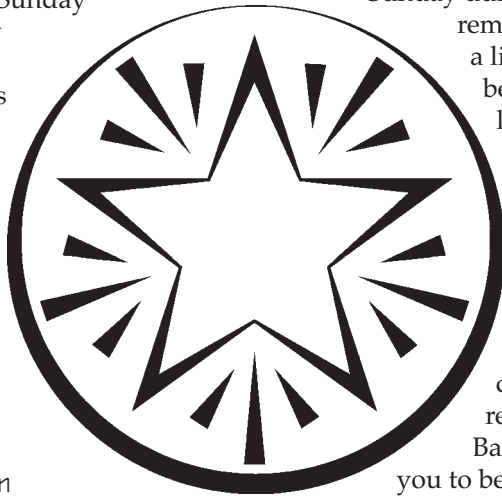
The First Sunday after the Epiphany is the Baptism of Our Lord. Celebrate in Sunday School, Bible study groups, during worship (children's sermon or temple talk). Focus on the "essentials" in Luke 3:21-22 — water, and heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, God spoke.

Celebrate Baptism through out the Epiphany season

There are six opportunities to celebrate the baptism of each man, woman, and child in your congregation, Sunday School class, or Bible study group (January 18, the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, through February 22, the Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany). Here are some celebra-

tion suggestions:

- Light your baptismal candle (or a representative candle) each Sunday during Epiphany as a reminder that you are a light to the world because Christ is the light to the world!



- Write an Epiphany prayer or litany focusing on ways to respond as a light in your community, as a reminder that Baptism has called you to be a light to the world.

- Have an Epiphany Party for your class or study group. Serve light refreshments amid the ambiance of lighted candles. Prior to the party, have a hands-on candle-making project.

- r e a d e r n e t w o r k -

Sunday School help needed

The "reader network" is a new column for the ed.network. Here we will address a question from a reader with an answer from another reader/s. Then a new question will be posted for the next issue. You, the reader, are invited to send in questions for future issues and to offer your insights to the question for the next issue.

The last issue included a question for readers to answer. To allow more time for

readers to respond we are extending the deadline for this question until January 5, 2004.

Question for next issue:

What can my church do about dwindling Sunday School attendance?

To suggest an answer to this question or to ask your own question, simply write to the editor using the contact information at the bottom of this page.

Announcements

Do you know where to find Christian Education resources?

The Congregational Resource Center is a library of Christian educational materials that may be checked out by any member of any congregation. Available are videos, Kerygma materials, all kinds of resources for youth, adult education materials and more. This fantastic resource is located in the basement of the library at Christian Theological Seminary, 1000 W. 42nd Street in Indianapolis (near Butler University). Get more detail at <<http://www.cts.edu/CRC>>. Check it out!

Augsburg Fortress offers new fundraiser

Visit Augsburg Fortress at <www.augsburgfortress.org/fundraising> to learn how your congregation or youth group can earn some money. Sell Augsburg Fortress books and keep 40% of the proceeds plus sample copies of books you'll display at your church.