

Minutes of the Meeting

Audrey Elling, Facilitator

Welcome - Audrey Elling

Following soup, salad and dessert at 6:00 PM, Audrey welcomed those attending and opened the meeting.

Introductions

Audrey opened by saying that this particular Common Table is different from those held previously. The focus is on the upcoming Advent season and what is going on in ministry for Advent this year. The focus is upon that which each of us can do to recharge our batteries before the holidays grab hold and allow us to truly make this Advent a Season of Joy!

She then asked each participant to introduce his or her self and tell of a personal experience of the coming of joy during advent. Several wonderful stories were offered.

The Support of Love INC - Ken Fong and Sallie Suby-Long

Ken and Sallie opened by noting that the partnership with Love INC is a great thing for St. Luke's. It offers another avenue for putting our "Missional" vision into action!

Ken noted that the process of working with Love INC is in place.

There are brochures located at the Get Connected Center.

A card has been prepared with numbers and hours of Love Inc., that can be given to anyone inquiring about help from Love INC.

Visitors coming to St. Luke's asking for help will be able to use the phone to get in touch with Love INC.

St. Luke's is not the only church working with Love INC. There are a number of other churches involved and each church has a specialized area of ministry. Ken noted that we are in the process of deciding what our specialty should be.

Creating a Cold Weather Emergency Shelter is one support function being considered as one specialized ministry for St. Luke's. Several issues about this ministry are being addressed. Money will be needed to fund "Shelter Vouchers" and funding strategies are being developed. At the same time, the St. Luke's team working with Love INC in talking with local hotels to determine what and where space could be made available.

Preparing for the Advent of Joy

Anticipating the Season – Sallie Suby-Long

- How do we celebrate Christmas?
- How is it affected by commercialism all around us?

The pull away from the real meaning of Christmas is dramatic and comes from all directions. Sallie showed some commercial messages that are touching but move away from the real meaning of Christmas: Hallmark cards tell us that care, love come from our expressing ourselves through a greeting card, the "biggest little thing you can do." Sears tells us that we can be "heroes at home" and bring meaning to the season through using their tools and supplies. But the true meaning comes from something else.

Sallie then read a magazine article, "Sacred Season of Love" and made the point that the true meaning of Advent comes through giving yourself in love to others in ways that truly celebrate our togetherness in family and community. Participating in such things as the joint thanksgiving and communion jointly with Christ Lutheran church on Nov. 23 is a good example.

Ten Tips to a Season of Joy – Brad Laurvick

Brad offered a handout and spoke to the ten tips.

1. Plan ahead. To keep the joy in Christmas, get conversations going up front, do what you intend to do early!
2. Enjoy a family nativity. Get hands on with the miracle and tell the story of gift giving in the Birth of Jesus.
3. Learn about St. Nicholas. See how Santa Claus has been completely taken over by commerce.
4. Avoid debt. Red & Green does not mean ending up in the red!
5. Avoid Stress. Be the gift you give to yourself. Don't assume that the things have to be the same way they've always been.
6. Draw names rather than everyone giving something to everyone else in your giving circle. Let the gifts be fewer but personal.
7. Give alternative gifts made by your hands or someone else's. Give to the needy in the name of the gift receiver. Give of yourself, not just "stuff."
8. Celebrate Advent for four weeks before Christmas. Use a children's Advent calendar or some other appropriate guide.
9. Put the gifts under the tree shortly before opening them and then take turns opening them one at a time. And don't let the presents obscure the Nativity Scene! Manage the focus.

10. Don't try to change everything and everybody at once. Make changes slowly but persistently. The magi didn't get there right away either!

Practices in the Pursuit of Joy

Prayer and Hospitality – Lynda Fickling and Janet Forbes

Lynda spoke of the contemplative life. "It's all about slowing down, focusing inward, and it's key to our preparing for Christmas."

She suggests that we all have an Advent mantra – a short, prayer that can be repeated over and over as we meditate. "Come Lord Jesus" is an excellent Christian meditation. "Take 30 minutes in the morning," says Lynda, "and spend time meditating or reading a devotion." It will help you keep your focus on what's important during this Advent season.

Lynda then handed out small blank cards entitled "My Advent Mantra" and told us to "find your own Advent mantra, write it down, and keep it with you, reciting it regularly during the Advent season."

The Advent of Joy Calendar – Janet Forbes and Ken Fong

Ken reviewed the Calendar of Advent and Christmas activities coming up. The full calendar is listed in this month's newsletter and will be included in the November 21 worship bulletin.

Janet noted that the theme of the sermon series for Advent will be "Bringing joy to life." She thanked Sharon Oliver for the lovely graphic that will be used during the season.

We were all invited to participate in the Thanksgiving and Communion Service to be celebrated jointly with Christ Lutheran church in our sanctuary on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at 6:30 p.m.

She then closed with these thoughts on bringing joy to the Advent season:

Practice radical hospitality
Welcome the stranger
Be the voice of gratitude and joy, and
You'll find the Joy of the season.

The next Common Table will meet on Feb. 28, 2011

The meeting adjourned with a prayer of sending forth and a request to submit individual evaluations of this meeting.

Respectfully submitted to the glory of God
Les Ludlam, secretary