Love came down at Christmas

For the members of Sunne Lutheran Church, Christmas is about the coming of the presence of God into people’s lives. In this month’s local pages, meet some of the church’s members, who are also members of Capital Electric Cooperative, and read about a program called “Half of Christmas,” and how it is helping communities experience the love, compassion and forgiveness of Christ.
Is it better to give than to receive?
Most of the members of Sunne Lutheran Church wouldn’t hesitate to say yes.

The church, a Capital Electric Cooperative business consumer located several miles southeast of Wilton, has about 500 members and is led by Pastor Paul Schauer.

From homeless shelters to children’s research hospitals, to animal shelters and food pantries, 4-H groups and more, financial assistance is greatly needed in our own communities and beyond. With so many worthy organizations needing assistance, and with the giving season on the horizon, Schauer started a dialogue with church members to discuss what they could do as a group to assist local and global efforts.

“One of the refrains that almost everybody makes around here, is, ‘I have so much stuff. I don’t need anything more.’ So we decided to take that sentiment and turn it into, ‘I have so much stuff. What can I do to help somebody else?’”

Schauer had heard about a movement in which church congregations set aside half of what they would spend on Christmas gifts, and give the money to a designated organization chosen by the church council. Schauer says the program provided the members of Sunne Lutheran Church with an opportunity to teach families what Christmas is all about.

“It’s not just the birth of a baby; it’s the coming of the presence of God into our lives. And the presence of God is all about love and compassion and forgiveness,” he says. “The reason we decided to do Half of Christmas is to try to bring that presence not just into our own lives, but into the lives of everybody around...
us, so that everybody can experience
the love, the presence, the compassion
and the forgiveness of Christ.”

The church implemented the
program four years ago. The first
year, members raised about $7,000
and gave the offering to flood relief in
Minot. The second year, the collection
was given to a hospital in the Central
African Republic. The third year,
money was donated to Camp of
the Cross near Garrison, and this
year’s collection will go to the camp
once again. The camp is building
a fellowship center, and Sunne
Lutheran Church has pledged to raise
$20,000 for the project.

“Our congregation has a long
history with the camp, and my family
has a long history with the camp. My
parents actually met there when they
were in high school,” Schauer shares
with a smile.

Capital Electric Cooperative

Pastor Paul Schauer began part-time
interim work for Sunne Lutheran Church
in 1992. Called full-time in April 1993,
he has led the congregation for 22 years.

Randy and SuAnn Olson became
members of Sunne Lutheran Church in
1980. SuAnn says the country church is
thriving in part because of its leadership.
She likes how Pastor Paul Schauer
speaks from the heart during his
sermons; he doesn’t read notes or stand
behind a podium. Randy likes how the
church atmosphere is less formal and
more personal.

Vance and Jen Vesey grew up in
small towns where everyone knew one
another. After they married and moved
to Bismarck, they wanted to join a small
church that made them feel comfortable
and connected. They discovered Sunne
Lutheran Church southeast of Wilton
in 2003, and now attend one of the
curch’s two Sunday services with sons,
from left: Cole, Davis and Logan.

Sunne Lutheran Church is “home”
to Bernard and Alice Falkenstein.
Bernard was baptized and confirmed
in the church, and he and Alice were
married in the church. The couple
lived southeast of the church until
seven years ago, when they moved to
Bismarck. Not deterred by the distance,
Bernard and Alice continue to attend and
support their country church, and plan
to be active members until they die.
members Randy and SuAnn Olson became members of Sunne Lutheran Church in 1980. When asked if it is better to give than to receive, Randy answered, “It all depends on how a person is situated. If a person has been blessed along the way, then it feels good to give. But if you’re in dire need, then it’s nice to receive. We’ve been blessed,” he shares. “This program is one way we are giving back to our communities.”

Capital Electric Cooperative members Vance and Jen Vesey became members of Sunne Lutheran Church in 2003. Parents to twins Logan and Cole, age 7, and Davis, age 3, Vance and Jen support the Half of Christmas program because it provides an opportunity for them to help others, while teaching their children valuable lessons.

“We definitely recognize how fortunate we are and blessed in what we have, and what we’ve been able to provide to our kids. There are so many out there who don’t have the financial resources of letting their kids have some extra,” Jen says. “We feel like this is a wonderful way for us to give back, and to teach our children that it’s not all about us. It’s our choice — if we have the means to help others, we’re going to do it. It’s a quality that we really want our children to understand, and we don’t want to give them everything. We want them to feel like they’ve earned things and that they are able to give back to others as well.”

Even if people are not part of a church organization, Pastor Schauer urges people to donate to worthwhile charities and organizations, as part of their own response to people in need.

“It is about love, and we as Christians frame it in the context of God’s love for us through Christ,” he explains. “But if that’s not where you’re at in your spirituality, frame it however you want, as long as you are sharing love with people.”

YOUTH TOUR

If you will be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2015, and your parents or guardians are members of Capital Electric Cooperative, you qualify for the essay-writing contest!

Here’s the topic: If you were asked to influence other students your age to become more actively involved in their electric cooperative, including attendance at the electric cooperative annual meeting, what would you tell them, and why?

For the contest rules and deadline, visit www.capitalelec.com and click on “Community” and “Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.” Or, call Wes at 701-255-1513 or email wese@capitalelec.com. If you want to go on a trip-of-a-lifetime, NOW’S the time to apply! The deadline to apply is Jan. 30, 2015.
Co-op Scholarship Available

Plan ahead
It’s never too early for teenagers and their parents to start thinking about what it takes to earn a student scholarship. There are a wide variety of scholarships available — and a lot of competition.

“Work hard in school, and be involved in extracurricular activities and in the community. Those things seem to matter,” advises Capital Electric Cooperative member Tom Materi. “Be thinking about those things prior to becoming a senior.”

Tom and his wife, Deb, should know. Their son, Jonathan, applied for and received last year’s $1,000 scholarship from Capital Electric Cooperative, in partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

A freshman at North Dakota State University in Fargo, Jonathan is enrolled in the computer engineering program. For the past several months, he has been adjusting to college life and the demands of a much heavier workload — and learning firsthand just how expensive tuition, room and board, and books can be.

“College costs continue to skyrocket,” Tom says. “Jonathan is grateful for the help he received from Capital Electric, and he is hoping it’s something he can pay forward one day.”

Apply now!
Seniors, if your parents are members of Capital Electric Cooperative, you are eligible to apply for this scholarship for the 2015-2016 school year. To qualify for the $1,000 scholarship, you must be a student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Our co-op will assemble a panel of impartial judges to review all applications. The judges will select the winning application based on academic performance, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, a statement of education and career goals, work experience and an outside referral. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

Application forms may be downloaded at www.capitalelec.com or picked up at co-op headquarters at 4111 State St. N. in Bismarck. Applications need to be completed and returned to Capital Electric on or before Friday, Feb. 13, 2015.

LIHEAP provides energy assistance to eligible low-income households
If you need assistance paying your utility bill this winter, you might qualify for energy assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Federally funded and administered by the N.D. Department of Human Services and county social services, LIHEAP provides the following services for eligible individuals and families:
• heating assistance
• making your home energy efficient
• furnace and chimney cleaning
• emergency assistance
• furnace replacements

• minor repairs, and
• energy cost reduction devices

In 2013, more than 13,363 low-income households in North Dakota participated in the state program. Shari Vetter, billing coordinator for Capital Electric Cooperative, says 13 co-op members utilized the program.

Applications are accepted from October through May of each heating season. For information related to application for benefits, program eligibility or an existing case, contact your local County Social Services office. There is no cost to apply, but consumers will have to pay a percentage of some services based on their income.

To read more about the LIHEAP program, view frequently asked questions and apply for energy assistance, visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html or www.nd.gov/dhs/ and click on “Services and Help,” “Public Assistance” and the “Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.”

To ask questions about the LIHEAP program, call 701-328-2065 or email dhseap@nd.gov.

Jonathan Materi was the recipient of last year’s cooperative scholarship. His parents, Capital Electric members Tom and Deb Materi, say their son is working hard at NDSU, and that he is putting the co-op membership’s dollars to good use.
Gordy Wiese, Operations Supervisor, is retiring from Capital Electric Cooperative in January after 40 years of co-op service.
Gordy Wiese retires after 40 years

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Dedicating your life and career to one line of work requires a high level of commitment. After 40 years with Capital Electric Cooperative, Operations Supervisor Gordy Wiese will be hanging up his hard hat for the last time on Jan. 2, 2015. His contributions to the cooperative have been significant over the years.

Gordy began his career with the co-op at age 20, fresh out of line school and anxious to get a job and get to work. The opportunity as an apprentice lineman came to him via a call from John Stumpf, who was the operations supervisor for Capital Electric at that time. The co-op needed another lineman, and contacted Gordy’s instructor at the line school to see if anyone was available. As Gordy remembers it, “He took the call and yelled over to me, ‘Gordy, would you be interested in a job in Bismarck?’ I said, ‘You bet!’”

Gordy showed up for work on his first day, June 1, 1974, and never looked back. After 16 years of line work, the position of operations supervisor became available and Gordy moved inside to take on that role. When he retires in January, he will have 25 years in as supervisor. He reflects, “It can be a tough job sometimes, and you have to be ready to make quick decisions. You always have to plan for contingencies, which sometimes keeps you awake at night thinking about what you should do.”

Gordy isn’t ready to retire completely yet, as he has accepted a position as account manager for western North Dakota with Irby, a national electrical equipment distributor. According to Gordy, “I wasn’t quite ready to go from working full-time and making decisions on a daily basis to doing nothing. I wanted to try something new before I retire, and this was an opportunity that just came along for me at the right time. The best part is that I will be able to continue to work with cooperatives as I sell them electrical equipment.”

A diligence for safety has always been Gordy’s top priority at Capital Electric. “Through the years we have always focused our efforts on safety for our linemen and reliability for the members. That has never changed,” says Gordy.

“Another aspect of the co-op that has remained constant is the integrity of the employees. Everyone remembers that we serve the members and that will always be our first priority.”

The most challenging part of working for an electric cooperative is dealing with the aftermath of a major storm. Over the course of four decades, Gordy has seen a lot of them. While they don’t get any easier, “You just get to work and get things fixed.” With a smile, Gordy contemplates, “It will be nice knowing that I won’t be the one responsible for making sure things are cleaned up after the next storm. I’ll be leaving that job in very capable hands, and the members’ needs will still come first.”

After 40 years, Gordy says he is thankful for the opportunities Capital Electric has given him over the years. “It was a great experience to work here, and I have enjoyed it very much.”

The Capital Electric Cooperative board of directors and employees would like to thank Gordy for the many years of dedication he brought to the cooperative, and wish him the very best!
The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc., was held Friday, Oct. 17, 2014, at company headquarters in Bismarck.

**Financial review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Wrangham and Olson reviewed the September 2014 check register and expenditures. Wrangham reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve September expenditures in the amount of $3,257,551.01.

The Manager reviewed the comparison of actual-to-budgeted expenses for the month of September and for the year-to-date through September 2014. Accounts receivable balances as of Oct. 16, 2014 were reviewed.

**Business department report:** The Manager reviewed the September financial and statistical report with the Board. The total kilowatt-hour (KWH) sales for September 2014 were above budget by 12.9 percent. The actual monthly electric revenue is above budget by 14.6 percent. Year-to-date, KWH sales are up from budget by 3 percent and electric revenue is $23,664,597, versus the budgeted revenue of $22,423,610, over budget by 5.5 percent. The financial margin for September is -$123,365, versus the budgeted margin of $21,193, below budget by $144,558. The year-to-date margin is $30,464, under budget by $448,714.

In September, 137 new services were billed, bringing active services to 18,271 versus 17,518 at this time last year. This is above budget by 14.6 percent. Year-to-date margin is $30,464, under budget by $448,714.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative:** We are still waiting for final approval from OGC. The debt assumption agreement draft has been modified to reflect actual December 2013 asset and debt values, since the actual information is known.

**Capital credits:** A schedule of unretired capital credits by year, an analysis of generation and transmission capital credits, and a 10-year estate retirement worksheet were reviewed by the board.

**Depreciation rates:** In response to the auditor’s recommendations to review our depreciation rates on distribution plant, especially in regard to the shorter life of electronics such as TWACS metering, we have done an analysis and are planning to modify our depreciation rates beginning in October 2014. The change will result in an annual reduction of depreciation expense in the amount of $135,298.

**Update on health care scenarios:** The Board discussed the various options. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) health insurance plan as presented without the option to include retirees.

**MoneyGram cash payment option:** We are in the process of adding an after-hours cash payment option for our members via a MoneyGram to National Information Solution Cooperative (NISC) interface. This will provide a method for prepaid and disconnected accounts to pay cash 24/7 to their billing account and initiate a reconnect if needed. MoneyGram is available at a number of local stores, including Walmart and CVS.

**Audit engagement letter:** After discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to direct management to sign an audit engagement letter with Eide Bailly.

**Estate retirements:** There were no estate retirements this month.

**Heat rate:** After discussion it was moved, seconded and carried to amend Rate Schedule E, DF, CE and W as proposed.

**Engineering and operations report:** The Manager reviewed the written report from the engineering and operations departments. We completed 68 work orders this month, adding 79 new consumers to the system. Fischer and The Third Generation continue to trench in cable around the Bismarck area.

**Gordy Wise, operations supervisor,** submitted his resignation on Sept. 25, 2014. His last day of employment at Capital Electric will be Jan. 2, 2015.

We are still working with BEK Communications Cooperative putting fiber optic cable in our substations. Ward, Horizon and East Bismarck are the only substations left to put fiber in.

It was moved by, seconded and carried to approve Policy III-11.

**Member services department:** The Manager reviewed the member services written report.

**Solar Well service policy:** A draft of our proposed Solar Well policy was reviewed by the Board. The proposed policy includes the basic requirements for Capital Electric to partner with a member to install a solar-powered well system.

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations on large electric water heaters:** Regulations are coming that may limit the size of electric water heaters. Our Marathon electric water heater program has seen the majority of sales in the 85- to 105-gallon sizes. These regulations appear to limit the size to 50 gallons or less, unless you have a heat pump-style electric water heater with a COP of 2.0 or greater.

**Communications and public relations department:** The Manager reviewed the written report from the communications and public relations department. Wes attended the Bismarck State College Energy Conference on Oct. 14. The topics and speakers were outstanding, with a lot of great information on oil and gas, EPA issues that will affect our industry and more. Senators Heitkamp and Hoeven and Representative Cramer were in attendance, and sat on an informative panel regarding issues facing the energy industry.

**Safety report:** There were no lost-time accidents this month.

**Integrity fund:** It was moved, seconded and carried to approve the Board resolution regarding CFC funding to help cover the costs of the dispute with Montana-Dakota Utilities over the Menards Inc., site.

**Central Power report:** Haugen-Hoffart reported that the Board meets next week.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative MAC:** Nygren reviewed the topics being addressed at the meeting schedule on Oct. 22 and 23, 2014 in Sioux Falls, S.D.

**NDAREC:** Liuska reported on the highlights of the meeting and discussed some of the decisions made.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the meeting, without objection, the regular meeting was adjourned.

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**CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

4111 State St. N.
Bismarck, ND 58503

Website: www.capitalelec.com

**OFFICE HOURS:**
Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Office phone: 701-223-1513
Toll-free: 888-223-1513
Pay-By-Phone: 1-877-853-5928
DAY—NIGHT—WEEKEND TROUBLE CALL: 223-1513

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