

THE GIFT

**A CHRISTIAN PUBLICATION BY ST. JOHN
LUTHERAN**

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APRIL 2008

I've been lying to you, a lot, and I intend to continue to lie to you. You see, it is the ethical thing for me to do.

Very frequently, people will ask me "How is So-and-so doing?" and I will very frequently answer "I don't know." Often, the motivation for asking the question is genuine concern for the welfare of other members of the congregation, but sometimes the person asking is just trying to check up on me, to see if I have been out to visit the person in question. The truth is that often times, I do know how a person is doing, but I am not about to tell anyone anything that they do not already know. Sometimes, I will answer that question with a very vague answer "I heard So-and-so is doing well..." or I might hand out a tid-bit of information someone else has given me, something that is relatively common knowledge, but generally I try to answer that question with "I don't know." And more often than not, I am looking you in the eye and lying to you. But I have my reasons, allow me to explain.

You see, as your pastor, I am regularly trusted with the intimate details of people's lives, and there is honestly no way to do my job without that information. In a typical week, I will talk with folks about all sorts of things, from a battle with addiction, to a family problem, to the fear of death – and worse – and better. The thing is that most people do not want you to know that they are battling with addiction, or that their parents are driving them crazy, or that the radiation treatments have rendered them infertile. And that is their right. People have the right to be as open as they choose to be. They have the right to control the amount of information they share about themselves. Ethically, therefore, I am required to not pass on the information I gather as I meet with people. Protecting people's privacy is a sacred trust and one I do not take lightly.

But it goes beyond that. You see, if people get the idea that what I tell them will be shared with others, then they will be less likely to trust me with their concerns, and soon, I would not be able to do my job. This is why I almost never talk about how someone is doing, and why, when asked during Sunday morning announcements, I defer those questions to others. Aunt Petunia may not mind, and may even want the congregation to know that she slipped on the ice and broke her hip; Uncle Earl, however, may well not want people to know about his hysterectomy. And if Uncle Earl hears me talk about Aunt Petunia, he may well get the idea that his surgery will be the next one I talk about. The only real solution is for me to remain tight-lipped in all cases. And so I do.

But the ethical and practical concerns are not the end of the issue, either. Even if I was not an ethical person, I would still be bound by ELCA policies, which are rather explicit. In Provision 7.45 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "... to be true to a sacred trust inherent in the nature of the pastoral office, no ordained minister of this church shall divulge any confidential disclosure received in the course of the care of souls..." Other historic and foundational documents of the church echo the sentiment of the constitution. I can, and rightly so, be disciplined or even expelled from the ELCA were I to share inappropriate information with you.

As if that were not enough, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (otherwise known as HIPAA) makes it illegal for me to share information about patients in hospitals and other settings without their expressed permission. This includes even the fact that a person is in a hospital.

Now I love all of you, but I am not about to risk tangling with law enforcement, the Bishop, or my own conscience, to satisfy your questions about other people's lives. And so I expect that I will continue to be required to "lie" to you, and on a relatively regular basis at that. Here is my recommendation. If you want to know how Petunia is doing, call her up and ask her. She will be happy to tell you whatever she wants you to know, and most folks appreciate knowing that you thought of them enough to call and ask.

But if you ask me, I don't know.

Yours In Christ,

Pastor Andersen

SAVE THE DATES!

* Saturday, April 5th – Expo in Stockton from 9AM to 5 PM – Sign-up sheet is located in narthex and there will be a need for many volunteers that day. Contact Candy Randecker at 947-2884 or Charlotte Blackburn at 947-2031 for more details.

* Saturday, April 12th – Clean-up day at church - More details to come.

THANKS FOR VOLUNTEERING!

	Lector	Acolyte	Greeters
April 6 th	Connie Carroll	Paige Paisley	Ernie and Minnie Lieb
April 13 th	Pam Staver	Paige Paisley	Gloria Endress and Donna Albrecht
April 20 th	Julie Yuswak	Matthew Carroll	LaVonne and Clyde Eden
April 27 th	Calvin Klopff	Matthew Carroll	Ken and June Eden

April Ushers: Steve, Jake, Sam, and Tom Eden

who gave a memorial in his name.
Thank you to Pastor for his visits and

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS FOR....

The Family of Lester Albrecht, Ruth Chumbler, Tammy Morhardt, Raymond Eden, Joe Dvorak Sr., Allen Randecker, Mary Lou Krohmer Shaw, Meredith Townsend, Jack Reel, Kevin Meiners, Warren Parker, Dennis Ulicny, Bailey McMannus, Jeanette Yeager, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces

Sandy for her beautiful music at his funeral.

The family of Lowell Hill

A huge thank you to everyone that donated and helped at Lester's funeral. It was appreciated.

Kathy and Joan

ACROSS THE MILES....

Dennis Ulicny, brother-in-law of Pastor and Sandy Andersen, has been battling cancer for months. He is currently undergoing intense treatment due to a progression of the disease. Please send him a card to help brighten his day:

Thank you to the S.S. moms and dads for bringing your children to the Easter service. I hope you enjoyed them as much as they enjoyed singing the song.

Kathy

Dennis Ulicny
43945 Pinot Noir
Sterling Hts, MI 48314

What can we say? You outdid yourselves. Thanks to all our family, friends, and church family for the concern, food, phone calls, offers of help, and support given to us during our "mini" vacation. Many thanks for the wonderful meals and fellowship, it made the long town living go a little faster. May God bless everyone.

Ivan and Kathy

T-H-A-N-K-S!

A huge thanks to all of those who participated in the Advent devotion program for The Society of St. Andrew. Through your generous donations, we were able to raise \$410.25 that will go toward fighting hunger in the United States. Great Job!

Sandy Andersen

The family of George Lowell Hill wishes to thank everyone who remembered him with visits, cards, or any other remembrances and to those

FELLOWSHIP AND FOOD!

The education/fellowship committee would like to encourage you to take a moment to sign up for refreshments in the narthex. Refreshments will be served after worship on the second Sunday of each month.

MONEY MATTERS -

Just a reminder that a special collection is still underway to help with mowing of the churchyard and cemetery. Please specify on your giving envelopes if you desire to contribute. Thanks!

IT'S GETTIN' GOOD!

Don't forget about Pastor's book club on Thursday nights and Saturday afternoons! We are getting into the "heart of the matter" - how to bring men back to the church and keep them there!