

THE GIFT

A CHRISTIAN PUBLICATION
BY ST. JOHN LUTHERAN

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I'M TAKING MY BIBLE AND GOING HOME!

This sort of threat is of course a spin-off of the age-old playground threat "I'm taking my ball and going home" made in an attempt to control the outcome of negotiations over rules or the conditions under which a game is played. In church, the threat is more often stated as "if you don't do things to fit my tastes, or to my specifications, then I will just go join XYZ church!" Of course, most people who make these sorts of threats rarely carry out their threatened behavior, and are even more rarely missed when they do, though that is the topic for another newsletter. Though very few of us have ever heard someone say "I'm taking my Bible and going home" most of us can think of a person who has made the threat, or perhaps can remember making that sort of threat ourselves.

There should be no surprise that people from time to time make these sorts of threats. All that they are doing is applying the same standards to the church that they experience in almost every other realm of life. It is hard to think of another realm of life in which people's taste's and whims are not catered to, in which people cannot get exactly what it is that they want, in which there is not someone standing at the ready to fulfill every desire. If you want that new widget you are looking for to be blue instead of red, someone will make a blue one for you. If you don't like thick crust on your pizza, the guy down the street will make your pie with thin crust, if you don't want your children to learn about evolution in school, you can send them to "Christian" school instead. Even our government is ruled by the temperamental whims of the majority instead of by the needs of the people. From the very first day we are born we are taught to be good consumers, to be catered to, and to get what we want, it should be no wonder that we bring that same experience to church with us.

And the church is not immune. Do you want to attend a church where there is liturgical dance? Do you want to worship at a place that uses hymnals? Do you want a big screen TV used in worship? Do you want to be told that the way to salvation is through works righteousness? Do you only want to be expected to come to church for Sunday worship, and for no other reason thought the week? Or do you want something else entirely? There is a church that will fill each and every one of those desires for you, and many of them have done a great job of putting people in pews while doing it.

Unfortunately for us, and maybe particularly unfortunately for those in leadership of churches, the church is not a commodity that can be modified to meet the desires of the people who choose to be a part of it. This is because the church does not exist in order to cater to your desires, but to change you, to guide you, to help you to be the person that Christ wants you to be. And that is the crux of the problem, and the blessing; that the church exists to fulfill your needs, not your desires.

Do you come to church expecting to be made comfortable? Expecting that you already know everything you need to about God? Expecting that no one will say or do anything you don't like, or object to while you are there? OR, do you come hoping to be changed? Hoping to be challenged? Hoping to grow in relationship with Christ? Hoping to serve your neighbor? This is a fundamental question, and your answer will color your experience in and out of church – do you come to serve, or to be served? Do you come to be reborn as a member of the kingdom of God, or do you come to be pampered? When asked to do something that is uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or perhaps even distasteful to you, what will your response be? Will you believe that there might be something in it that is good for you, or will you take your Bible and go home?

Yours In Christ, Pastor Andersen

NOTES FROM SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The 2007 assembly of the Northern Illinois Synod took place at Augustana College on the 15th and 16th of June. At the assembly this year we heard from The Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell, who is the Robert and Phyllis Leatherman Professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. The Rev. Dr. Powell spoke on multiple occasions about stewardship, suggesting rather convincingly that stewardship is not just about giving away one's money, but rather a way of life that understands one's entire being, including their money, as a gift from God.

On Friday evening at the Rite of Holy Communion with Ordination and Commissioning, The Rev. Linda Winkelman was ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament, and Jane Atteberry and Elizabeth Martin were both commissioned as Associates in ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

The assembly considered several resolutions, the first of which, a resolution calling for pastors to spend 2 days per calendar year in spiritual renewal was passed. A second resolution calling for a faithful response to global climate change, encouraging churches to both advocate for, and themselves, conserve energy also passed. The third resolution discussed was a request from the synod council that congregations that receive undesignated bequests and memorials share a tithe with the Northern Illinois Synod passed as well. The fourth resolution was a resolution toward the alleviation of world hunger, and challenged each congregation of the Northern Illinois Synod to accept a goal of contributing \$5.00 per member annually to the world hunger appeal, as well as to advocate for, support, and encourage members and congregations of the Northern Illinois synod to make choices that would lead to the alleviation of world hunger. Our own Sandy Andersen offered an amendment to this resolution, asking the synod to commit to donating at least \$5000.00 to Bread for the World. While Sandy's resolution was defeated, the original resolution was passed. The fifth resolution discussed was a resolution to ask the 2007 church wide assembly of the ELCA to consider allowing bishops to refrain from disciplining rostered leaders who are in mutual, chaste, and faithful committed same gender relationships. This resolution was defeated after significant discussion and quoting from Leviticus by assembly members. The sixth resolution discussed by the assembly was another resolution to the 2007 church wide assembly, this time to ask the assembly to direct the appropriate committees and units to remove language from the church's governing documents that requires rostered leaders who are homosexual in their self-understanding to abstain from homosexual sexual relationships. This resolution passed and will be sent to the 2007 church wide assembly of the ELCA for consideration. The last resolution discussed was another memorial to be sent to the 2007 ELCA church wide assembly, this one to memorialize the church to appeal to our political leaders to stand up against preemptive war. Due to time constraints, the final resolution scheduled to be considered by the assembly, a resolution for "a prayer for a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior" was referred to the synod council for action.

During the final plenary session on June 16th, the assembly honored those pastors celebrating 50, 55, and 60 year anniversaries of ordination and recognized congregations celebrating 100, 125, and 150 anniversaries this year, including St. John.

More information about the assembly is available at <http://www.nisynod.org/assembly/2007/index.htm>

WORDS OF THANKS

Thank you for making my retirement after 42 years of nursing so memorable. Your cards, gifts, flowers, personal wishes, and attendance at the open house will forever be treasured!

Charlotte Blackburn

Thank you to everyone for all the calls, cards, food, prayers, and visits during my illness. It really helped pass the time and get me back on track. Thanks again!

Allen Wurster

WWW.CHECKTHISSITEOUT.COM !

Take a moment to look at St. John's website! Pastor has updated the site and made it very conducive to visitors and members alike. There is an updated calendar and Pastor is also seeking photos to place on the "recent events" page. The official address is www.stjohnmassbach.org. See what you think, provide photos if you can, and most importantly, share it with others!

AN OPPORTUNITY...

Don't forget about the adult education classes that are now taking place! There is a different topic each week and all are welcome to attend any or all sessions. See you on Thursday nights at 7:30!

FAR AWAY FRIENDS...

Dear Jen:

Please give our best to all our Massbach Friends. We miss you all and have very fond memories of the time we lived and worshipped with you all at St. John's. Our current address and phone number are:

2569 Primrose Lane
Creedmoor, NC 27522
(919) 764-9607

In case anyone is wondering, Creedmoor is in the Raleigh/Durham triangle area. We are 20 miles north of Raleigh and 15 miles northeast of Durham.

Thanks for including us in the directory and congratulations to St. John's for 150 years of dedicated and faithful witness in Massbach.

Sincerely,

Homer and Pat Ashby

IN APPRECIATION...

Dear Ms. Blackburn:

Thank you for your help with the 2007 Galena Triathlon & Duathlon. We appreciate your group's willingness to help with the event. Your organization did a wonderful job of serving the athletes, spectators, and volunteers. The post-race party was a huge success.

For your group's contribution to the event, we have enclosed a check in the amount of \$1,000.00.

Again, thank you for your help. We look forward to working with you for the 2008 event.

Sincerely,

Melosa Belger
Event Coordinator

** Thanks again to everyone who volunteered.
How about doing it again next year?
Charlotte and Marvin **

LIFT OFF! SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH GOD!

It's VBS time again! This year it will be held in conjunction with other Elizabeth area congregations:

WHEN: August 5 – 9, 2007
5:30 – 8:00 PM

WHERE: First United Methodist Church
309 S. Main St.
Elizabeth, IL 61028
(815) 858-2224

The children will enjoy a kid-friendly meal each evening, which can also be enjoyed by the rest of the family, for a very small fee! Registration forms can be found in the narthex. For more information or to schedule transportation, please contact Jen Johnson at 947-6014.

DEAR GOD,

This month, we have been praying for: Kevin Meiners, Lucy Miele-Auen, Warren Parker, Allison Hillen, Jim Krohmer, Lucille Groezinger, Donna Wurster, Dennis Ulicny, Bailey McMannus, Robert and Jeanette Yeager, Warren Dailey, Joan Bonvillain, Raymond Steffes, Marlow Townsend, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces. If you have updates on any of these individuals, please notify the editors so that all can remain informed.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS...

It has been over 6 months since our appreciative servicemen received the wonderful care packages. Shall we send them another surprise? There were some duplicate food items saved from the last collection that are waiting to be sent. If anyone would like to assist in assembling/arranging another care package for Greg Klopff, see Jen Johnson or call her at 947-6014.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST!

Our 150th celebration is next week, Sunday July 15th! Plan on spending the day in Massbach for some great food and entertainment in honor of "150 years of faith"!

Agenda is as follows:

11:30 – 1:30 Catered lunch consisting of BBQ beef or ham sandwich, baked beans, macaroni salad, raw vegetable salad, fresh fruit, bag of chips, cookie, and beverage.

12:00 Kim Stout

1:00 Michael McCraney

2:00 "Men in Accord"

2:45 Quilt Raffle Drawing

3:00 Closing

There will also be kids games from 12:30 until 3:00 for those 3 and over. Lots of prizes!

Here are ways in which you can help:

- ✓ Picnic Tables and Lawn Chairs: There is a sign-up in the entryway for anyone willing to loan a picnic table or tables and/or lawn chairs for the celebration day.
- ✓ Flowers: Anyone with potted flowers is welcome to help adorn the tables and church grounds on the day of the celebration.
- ✓ Commemorative Items: Contact Shirley Scheele at 947-2690 if you have any commemorative items (i.e. books, pictures, old quilts, etc.) you are willing to have displayed during the celebration. They will be protected well and returned in the way they were received!
- ✓ Tickets: Tickets are available to sell in advance and this is recommended so that an approximation can be given to the caterer. Cost for adults will be \$8.00 at the door and \$7.50 in advance. Children's tickets will be \$4.50 at the door and \$4.00 in advance with children 3 and under free. See Pam Staver for more details.
- ✓ Don't forget about our commemorative cookbooks, cups, and crocks for sale! Visit the church entryway to order/purchase items.