

THE GIFT

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ARE YOU A PERSON WHO ATTENDS WORSHIP?

There are many reasons to come to worship, probably as many reasons as there are Christians, though there are several common threads. There are great theological reasons to come: hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed, participation in the sacraments, participation in confession and receiving of absolution, hearing the word read aloud, confessing one's faith together with others, and giving of one's offering. There are some great social reasons to participate in worship as well: conversations over coffee and doughnuts, the opportunity for mutual consolation and celebration of life's events with trusted others, opportunities for

interactions with folks we might not get to see at other times during the week, and even the experience of dealing gracefully with people we may not always agree with. And there are lots of other reasons to attend Sunday worship as well: the enjoyment of music, opportunities to learn about the faith, business networking, hearing about other opportunities to serve outside the congregation, being the body of Christ, just to name a few. No doubt folks will come to me after reading this and tell me that I left their favorite reason to come to church, the reason they find most compelling, off the list.

But despite all of the reasons TO come to worship, many folks still find it difficult to attend worship regularly. This does not apply to everyone, of course, as there are folks who are present in worship

almost every week, without fail. But there are also a significant number of people who are absent as often as they are present, or who are present even less often still.

And just like folks have reasons for attending Sunday worship, those who don't attend regularly also have reasons for NOT attending Sunday worship: there are sports to play, work commitments, family reunions and other obligations, weather is too bad (or conversely too good!), some folks enjoy sleeping in on Sunday mornings, and even shopping competes with regular worship attendance for priority.

The surprising thing is that almost all of the folks who choose to do things other than worship on Sunday morning often tell me that they wish they could be in worship (they could be!). Now, no doubt some of those

folks are just telling the pastor what they think he wants to hear, but I believe that the vast majority truly wish to prioritize their relationship with Christ over their relationship with their pillow, or their golf clubs, etc. – they just have difficulty doing it. And I believe them.

If you find yourself in that latter group, the group of folks who are absent as often as they are present, yet honestly wish to attend worship regularly, weekly, then I have a technique that can help you achieve that goal. Decide ONCE. Ask the question, and answer the question ONE TIME, “Am I a person who attends worship?” It is that easy.

However, answering that question 52 times a year is HARD. Answering the question on Wednesday afternoon when a friend invites you to go out for breakfast on Sunday morning is hard. Answering the question at the end of practice Thursday night when your coach wants you to play in a game Sunday morning is hard. But, if the question has already been answered, if you

have decided ahead of time that you are indeed a person who attends worship regularly, if the option of skipping worship (just this once) is not available to you because you have already decided that you attend worship regularly, then the decision on Wednesday afternoon, or on Thursday night, is easy. Answering the question once, and living with that decision, is easy. Answering the question 52 times a year, and living with all of those decisions, is hard.

Answer the question ONCE. Are you a person who attends worship?

Long Live The King!

Pastor Andersen

ST. JOHN'S SURFERS

The Elizabeth All-Church Community VBS was held at the First United Methodist Church in Elizabeth on June 22-26th from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. St. John's own Cecelia Zink, Ashley Carroll, and Hayley Johnson participated in a week full of great food, music, stories, and crafts. They learned the five “be-

attitudes” during their “beach parties.” be obedient, be kind, be forgiving, be bold, believe. A short program was held following VBS on Thursday 6/26, at which time the surfers' family and friends were entertained and educated on “Beach Party – Surfin' Through The Scriptures.” A special thanks to the church council for donating money toward VBS and to those who individually gave through offering envelopes.

PRAYER POWER

The family of Phyllis Miller, The family of Bryan Davey, The family of Karl Hoffman, Joy Hoffman, Ella Hoffman, Dan Magee, Irene Endress, Joe Dvorak Sr., Allen Randecker, Mary Lou Krohmer Shaw, Meredith Townsend, Jack Reel, Kevin Meiners, Warren Parker, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces

* Updates are always appreciated! *

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS

Minnie Lieb and Jen Johnson would like to say thank you for the privilege of representing St. John's of Massbach at this year's Northern Illinois Synod Convention held at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. The Synod Convention took place on Friday and Saturday, June 13th and 14th, 2008 and was also attended by Pastor and Sandy Andersen. Here are some highlights from a weekend full of outstanding food and fellowship:

- Guest speakers included Dr. Diane L. Jacobson, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary and director of the ELCA Book of Faith initiative. Christina Jackson-Skelton, ELCA Treasurer, was also present to bring greetings and inform individuals on ELCA happenings since last year's convention.
- Two large worship services with holy communion took place, one on Friday evening and one on Saturday morning. Three pastors were ordained during Friday evening's worship service. Approximately 600 people were present for worship, which included special music from a bell choir, brass group, and lay choir consisting of convention attendees. Friday evening's offering totaled \$13,931.79, which was designated to Northern Illinois University's Lutheran Campus Ministry program in hopes of employing a full-time campus pastor.
- Resolutions *passed* during the assembly included the following:
 1. Resolution to become "Green Congregations" – congregations are urged to form a "Green Team" to help take better care of God's creation
 2. Resolution to become a "Green Synod" – synod "Green Team" members will help the synod, its congregations and agencies to become "green"
 3. Good Shepherd/LSSI Resolution – beginning in 2009, the fourth Sunday of Easter will be Good Shepherd/LSSI Sunday and members and friends of Illinois ELCA congregations are encouraged to communicate to their elected officials their support for increased funding for human care services
 4. Resolution to increase Hunger Appeal giving – congregations are encouraged to set a goal for increased 2008 giving and educate members about the work of the ELCA World Hunger Appeal
 5. Call for moral deliberation – synod encourages its members and congregations to deliberate and discuss our nation's foreign and military policies with use of resources and activities
 6. Book of Faith initiative – congregations are encouraged to begin a regular practice of bible study and prayer and to celebrate and continue to support those places where scripture is already taught and engaged

A full text of resolutions with amendments is available at

www.nisynod.org/assembly

- Anniversary recognition was given to several parishes throughout Northern Illinois, some of which included First Lutheran Church of Mount Carroll and St. Matthew Lutheran Church of Galena, both celebrating 150 years.
- Lunch roundtable discussions focused on the issue of dwindling attendance at worship services and youth events, which is challenging many churches throughout the Northern Illinois Synod.
- Full details of the event can be found at www.nisynod.org/assembly/2008/highlights.html

GREAT JOB, GRADS!

Congratulations to the following individuals on reaching yet another milestone in their lives:

Eighth Grade: Tyler Sisti
 High School: Sam Albrecht, Amanda Randecker, Jonathan Sisti
 College: Ben Yuswak, Nicole Koester

A reception was held in their honor following worship on June 1st.

MONEY MATTERS

How much money have we accumulated for cemetery mowings, you ask? To date, we have collected \$2,851.00 in free will offerings.

The last two months, our expenses and income for St. John have been as follows:

	<u>Expenses:</u>	<u>Income:</u>
April	\$11,381.25	\$7,908.97
May	\$6,924.07	\$7,032.18

A reminder to consider tithing your economic stimulus rebate! Let's help the less fortunate in our area by donating funds to the Stockton and Elizabeth Food Pantries!

STAYING INFORMED

Copies of the most recent Secretary's and Treasurer's reports will be placed in a folder marked "Council Meetings" and available in the narthex.

GOD'S BLESSINGS, SARAH!

On Sunday, June 8th, a reception was held following worship to wish Godspeed to Sarah Alexander, as she pursues a new career in the Washington D.C. area. It has been a pleasure to have Sarah as a part of our worshipping community and we wish her all the best in the future!

FOURTH OF JULY FUN

Don't forget to stop by the Stockton Park on Friday, July 4th to visit St. John's booth! We will be giving away balloons for the kids and displaying our commemorative items for purchase. Volunteers are still needed to help "man" the booth throughout the day. Hunt up the sign up sheet in the narthex if you are interested!

JULY VOLUNTEERS

	Lector	Acolyte	Greeters	Sacristan
July 6 th	Connie Carroll	Matthew Carroll	Ken and June Eden	Joan Beyer
July 13 th	Pam Staver		Daylon and Shirley Scheele	Marilee Hejna
July 20 th	Julie Yuswak	Paige Paisley	George and Marilee Hejna	Joan Beyer
July 27 th	Calvin Klopf		Pam Staver and Joan Beyer	Marilee Hejna

Ushers: Marv Blackburn; Jody, Michael, and Matthew Carroll
Treasurer's Assistant: Eldon Carroll

