

THE GIFT

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Ownership is a great thing. When we talk about a person taking ownership of something like a church, or a ministry within the church, or an idea, or a set of beliefs, what we mean is that that person makes whatever it is they are referring to their own. For example, most Americans take ownership of the idea of Democracy, it doesn't mean that the person in question has any legal rights to the idea of Democracy, but that Democracy is their belief, they have made it their own. The same is true of the church. Very frequently we hear people say things like "This is my church." When people say this, they do not mean that they own the people that make up the church, or even the building that the people assemble in for worship and other activities, but they have taken ownership of the church.

Ownership is a great thing. Just like the things we literally own, like our cars, our homes, and our other belongings, when we take ownership of things, we care for them. This is what leads people to spend years lovingly caring for altar linens, making sure that the building is in good repair, serving on various committees, starting new ministries, or any of the other plethora of things that people do in order to ensure that the church, or anything people take ownership of, will exist well into the future. People taking ownership of the church and its ministries is one of the things a pastor hopes for, and a lot of time is spent in seminary teaching students to encourage congregational ownership.

Ownership is a great thing. But ownership can have a down side. When ownership takes on a more literal sense, where one believes that because this is their church they can have their way, in all things all the time and that they never need to change nor grow or they will leave and find another church, then ownership perhaps needs to be reexamined (trust me, even as the pastor, I do not get to have my way very often). When youth and new members are seen as new opportunities to do the same old thing, rather than celebrated for their new ideas and unique gifts, then ownership has taken a deadly turn.

When the goal of preserving the church and its ministries (a very noble goal) leads us to feel that we cannot do anything that might upset someone, then the church is constrained in its action, and its ministry. When the church is constrained, and it cannot change for fear of upsetting members, the church then becomes stagnant and slips into decline. The very thing that people are doing to preserve the church (people who have taken ownership of the church, who love the church the most and who most want to see the church prosper and thrive) is killing it.

Ownership IS a wonderful thing, it moves us to support and protect what we take ownership of. Every congregation member should take ownership of the church and its ministries, let us all make sure that in our efforts to take ownership of the church that we do not take ownership in a way that leads to domination or constraint.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Andersen

SEND A CARD, SAY A PRAYER

Paige and I met **Bailey McMannus** on a Disney Cruise Ship in May of 2006 when she was 10 years old. She lives in California and was there on her "Make a Wish Vacation". She had been diagnosed with a rare form of Leukemia when she was young and had endured chemo and bone marrow aspirations and many hurdles since then. Her vacation had been cancelled once due to her health, so she was very happy to be feeling well and enjoying the time spent with her Mom and older sister, Megan. She and Paige became friends and penpals and kept in good touch. After not hearing from her for a couple of months, her Mom called to say that Bailey was back in the hospital and had relapsed with Leukemia in March of last year (which is when I added her to our prayer list.). Bailey endured more chemo, radiation and testing. She needed a bone marrow transplant but they weren't able to find a match. In June, Bailey had a double umbilical cord blood cell transplant, which was the next best thing. She spent more than 100 days in the hospital and after numerous setbacks and infections, Bailey made it back home this past November and was able to get her wish to be home for Christmas. Bailey is now back in the hospital again. She had spiked a fever and ended up with 2 serious blood infections that eventually caused her lungs to collapse. Her kidneys aren't functioning properly either, so they may have to biopsy them and she may end up needing dialysis. Bailey is in ICU until her lungs function, but will remain in the hospital while they find out what's going on with her kidneys. She is 11 years old now and even after all that she has endured, Bailey remains strong and brave. Her Mom has continually mentioned that she is a

"fighter". Bailey's updates are posted on www.carepages.com and her password is Bailey_June. Thanks for all the prayers and please keep them coming!
Cindy and Paige Paisley

Thanks to a guardian angel, **Dean, Diane & Cecelia Zink** were protected in a very serious automobile accident. They are all doing fine including the unborn baby. Thanks be to God!

Dan Koester had a "horrible" January, as he got the flu, had two teeth pulled, and then got pneumonia. During this time he could not receive his chemo treatments for the cancer he is fighting. February has been much brighter for him. He is getting his chemo treatments again and is feeling much better.

Joe Dvorak Sr. was hospitalized at UW Madison on 1/19/08 with concerns of a recent heart attack or heart problems. On Saturday 1/26/08, he underwent triple bypass surgery. He was recovering nicely from surgery when on Wednesday 1/30/08 his medical condition deteriorated and he needed to be resuscitated. The following day, he had an internal defibrillator/pacemaker implanted. He did recover nicely from that and was released after spending a week in rehab. He was able to make it home in time to celebrate his 64th birthday with his entire family around.

Jeanette Yeager recently enjoyed a trip with her son, Dennis, to Texas to visit her

brother. She tires easily due to her past heart complications and is having some eye problems.

Warren Parker now has both legs amputated above the knee. He is doing unbelievably well both physically and mentally! Warren & Genevieve both have a great attitude about their new home at Morgan Memorial and love to have people stop by and visit with them.

Raymond Eden is very weak and is unable to feed himself due to the loss of his sight. He cannot play cards or Bingo, which he always enjoyed. He can eat only very soft foods and thickened liquids and seems to choke easily. He loves to have people visit him and enjoys reciting the 23rd Psalm, Lord's Prayer, Apostles Creed and favorite hymns with them. Music has always been a great enjoyment for him, but finds it very difficult to clap or sing as he always did.

Mary Lou Krohmer Shaw had a mastectomy on January 21st and has recovered nicely. On February 20th, she had her first chemotherapy treatment and will need seven more with the next one scheduled for March 5th. She is extremely tired and her body feels like she has a severe case of the flu, even her teeth ache! Her address is:

Mary Shaw

A BUNCH OF THANKS

Thank you to the congregation for the gift certificate I received at Christmas. Also, thanks to the Sunday School for the unique necklace they gave me. Both gifts were appreciated.

Kathy Guenzler



Sincere thank you to those who sent sympathy cards and gave condolences to us at the time of LeVere Steffes's death.

4216 W. 70th St.
Edina, MN 55435

Jack Reel (Kathy Guenzler's brother-in-law), who was severely burned due to a furnace explosion Oct. 13th, has had numerous surgeries with one relapse after another. He will have a birthday March 13th and would love to hear from all of us. Please send cards to:

Saint Anthony Medical Center
5666 E State Street
Rockford, IL 61108
c/o Jack Reel

- **Also keep in your thoughts and prayers the following: The family of Floris Blackburn, The family of Lowell Hill, Meredith Townsend, Kevin Meiners, Dennis Ulicny, Allen Randecker, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces.**
- **Continual updates are appreciated! Anyone with updated information on Kevin Meiners? If so, please let the congregation know.**

Raymond and Florence Steffes

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone for your cares, concerns, and thoughts of sympathy in the passing of Floris Blackbourn. She always enjoyed visiting St. John during her many trips to Stockton over the years!

Marvin and Charlotte Blackbourn

Steve and Amy Smith and Family

David and Brenda Baltierra and Family

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Members of St. John,

Family TIES would like to thank you for the wonderful Christmas gifts you provided for the families that we serve. Your members have once again outdone themselves by providing much needed items to needy families in the area. We appreciate your continued support during the holiday season.

Many Thanks!
Kara, 0-3 Coordinator
Diane, 3-5 Coordinator

We would like to thank you for all your prayers and concerns while our dad was hospitalized. He is home now and recovering nicely but is still very weak and tired. His doctors are very pleased with his progress to this point. If you would like to send him a card, his home address is:

Joe Dvorak
PO Box 425
Lena, IL 61048

We are sure he would truly appreciate hearing from you. Thanks again for all your prayers and concerns. They meant a lot to us.

Joe and Janet Dvorak

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Dear Pastor Andersen,

God's work. Our hands. These are such simple words, but they speak a profound truth. It is God's work that we have the privilege of doing together as the church. It is God's work that we are called to do.

God's work. Our hands. This is the theme that was introduced by Bishop Mark Hanson at last year's Churchwide Assembly. It is the banner under which we will gather as a synod in our own assembly in June.

God's work. Our hands. With thanks to our generous God, we are grateful for your congregation's mission support commitment of \$6,355 for 2008. It represents your partnership with the Northern Illinois Synod and our joint partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The work we do together is remarkable. Tell the story as you extend our thanks to the people of St. John Lutheran Church.

Living in God's Amazing grace,

Bishop Gary Wollersheim

Pastor Jeffrey Clements

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

St. John Lutheran Sunday School Account:

Balance on Hand 1/1/07	\$137.47
Total Offerings	\$186.05
Total Expenses	\$145.46
Balance on Hand 12/31/07	\$178.06

Pam Staver

LEND A HELPING HAND

The St. John Cemetery Fund is in need of a boost! If you wish to contribute toward cemetery mowings during the month of March, please indicate so on your offering envelopes. Thank You!

AND THE NEW BEAN COUNTER IS.....

Jeff Randecker has graciously agreed to serve as St. John's Treasurer for 2008. Please take a moment to thank him and Sharon for donating their time and talents to this demanding position. Also, give Meredith Townsend an extra pat on the back for a job well done over the past few years!

EXPO, EXPO **WHO'S AT THE EXPO?**

Be sure to keep Saturday, April 5th open for the Stockton Expo! This year the event will take place on one day only from 9 AM to 5 PM. St. John's has once again been asked to provide food for those attending. A big thank you to Candy Randecker for volunteering her time to chair the event. She will be looking for several individuals to help. More information to follow in the coming weeks!

EASTER PREPARATIONS

The Easter Lily and Sunrise Breakfast signup sheets will be in the church entry soon. Please help as you are able. Any questions? See Minnie.

**GOD'S BLESSINGS THIS
MONTH!**