

THE GIFT

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

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SEPTEMBER 2008

CHURCH CULTURE

At recent church council meetings, we have been talking about the culture of the church. This may sound like an odd conversation topic, so let me explain. Culture, of course, is the term used for the various habits, customs, and social norms any group of people share with other members of the same group. For example, part of our shared culture as Americans is loving apple pie, mom, and 4th of July fireworks. Part of the culture in the Southern United States involves drinking sweet tea, a distinctively accented speech, and impeccable manners. Those who don't conform to the culture around them are easily identified. Just as countries, geographic regions, and even various professions develop a culture, so do institutions and organizations. Most people have worked for a company or been a part of an organization where the culture was identifiably different from the one they were familiar with in some way - either much more strict, much more gracious, or something else

entirely. The church is no different.

Recently, the council has been talking about the culture of the church and, in particular, our congregation. I asked the members of the council to describe our congregation's culture and this is what they came up with: "old fashioned," "conservative," "set in our ways," "extended family," "reliable" (the church always comes through in a need), "cautious" (particularly with money), "friendly and welcoming," "devoted to each other" (though others suggested that there were about 50% 'fair weather friends'), and again, the word "family" came up.

Next, I asked the council to describe the ideal church, or the church that they thought would be ideal. The list was somewhat different and included: "outgoing," "ministry driven" (beyond Sunday worship), "members involved in the life of the congregation," "generous," "happy," "forgiving, accepting,

and welcoming," "devoted to Christ," "open to change," and "willing to be in conflict."

If you compare the lists, you won't see a whole lot of overlap between our congregation's culture and the ideal church's culture. That is troubling to me, and I hope that it is troubling to you as well. But the reason for taking a serious look at our own culture is not to make us fret, but rather to make ourselves aware of it, because awareness of an issue is the first step towards resolving the issue. There are at least two reasons why we might want to address our congregational culture. First, quite selfishly, is for our own spiritual development. We are not Christians in a vacuum. We worship and serve together as a community and that community impacts our own worship and spiritual life. A healthy church culture will lead to a healthier spiritual life. The other reason is pragmatic. While the church building's location is ideal in terms of a beautiful setting, it is far from ideal when it comes

to evangelism. Very, very, very few people happen to come across the church building on their way to other places and decide that they want to drop in and see what we are doing on Sunday morning. That means that our congregational culture must be so compelling, and so well known, that people will go out of their way to set aside all of the other activities that are cutting into every church's attendance numbers, to join us on Sunday morning, and become a part of our community the rest of the week.

Changing one's culture sounds like a daunting task, and it is, but I believe that it is one that is within your reach. Ultimately, **you** are the one who can make it happen.

Long Live The King!

Pastor Andersen

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REEL-Y GOOD NEWS!

Jack Reel has made some great progress over the past few months! He is now able to drive short distances and is using portable oxygen only on an "as needed" basis! He and his wife are currently building a new home and hope to move in October. God is Great!

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ADDRESS BOOK UPDATE

Klopf, Sgt. Gregory
BCO 72nd SC
CMR 435 Box 1113
APO AE 09086

THOSE QUIET QUILTERS!

Did you know that the St. John quilters have been very busy lately? They recently sent 7 boxes of quilts (approximately 39 quilts), 3 afghans, 3 baby afghans, 1 comforter, and 6 stuffed toys to the flood victims in Iowa. Along with these items went 4 additional boxes of quilts (approximately 28 quilts) from the Derinda church quilters. A big thank you to Helen Muto for delivering the packages to Pastor Daiker, who notified the women of St. John about this ministry opportunity!

A special thank you also goes out to the quilters from the family of Irene Endress for the beautiful plant given at the time of her passing. Quilting was her love!

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BAKED GOODS AND MORE!

It is once again time to begin preparing for the Hanover All Church Bazaar! Let's try to spice up our display this year by adding other items in addition to the fantastic baked goods! Any ideas? Contact Julie Yuswak. Thanks to everyone who has helped out with this event in the past and look forward to the help of

several volunteers again this year!

SAVE THE DATE!

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church is having their 81st Annual Ice Cream Social and Bazaar. Take a drive on Sunday, September 14th, 2008. Serving times are 11 AM to 2 PM. Menu will include hot beef and turkey and dressing sandwiches, hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad, nachos and cheese, homemade pies and cakes, ice cream/ice cream cones, lemonade and coffee. Cost is \$7 per person with children 4 years old and younger are free! A flyer is located in the entryway with more information.

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PRAYER POWER

Ella Hoffman, Dan Magee, Joe Dvorak Sr., Mary Lou Krohmer Shaw, Meredith Townsend, Jack Reel, Kevin Meiners, Warren Parker, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the armed forces

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BOOK CLUB IS BACK!

If you missed the last book on why men hate going to church, be sure to catch this one! Changing Lenses by Howard Zehr focuses on the modern

criminal justice system and compares it to the biblical view of justice. Cost of the book is

\$10. Sign up in the narthex and indicate when works best

for you. Plan is to launch off book club in October!

THE BACKPACKS HAVE BEEN BLESSED!

The time has come! Rally Sunday will be held on September 7, 2008 with installation of Sunday School teachers and ice cream sundaes following worship. Sunday School will officially begin on September 14th, with a new and exciting format being used! All ages will meet together as a group to learn and grow in God's grace. We will have a teaching group each month that will present the teachings of the bible in new and exciting ways! If you would like to contribute to the special Sunday School offering on Rally Sunday, please indicate so on your offering envelope. Thanks in advance!

A JOB WELL DONE!

Please take a moment to thank Jeff Randecker and Clyde Eden for their hard work in prepping the cemetery road for gravel and for overseeing the job to its completion. Thanks also to everyone who contributed monies toward the cemetery road gravel "project." Monetary donations received that exceeded the cost of repairing the cemetery road will be put toward repair of some headstones that have fallen over. Anyone wishing to contribute funds toward the repair of the headstones may continue to do so by indicating this on offering envelopes.

SPOTLIGHT ON STEWARDSHIP

"God Owns It All" is the chapter heading in a book by a Christian author who presents this chapter first as the foundation for money management and giving. God does own it all! That is the teaching of Psalm 24:1, which says, "The earth is the Lord's." Psalm 50:10 says that all of the beasts of the field belong to God, and that the cattle on a thousand hills are His. Haggai 2:8 says that God even owns the silver and gold in all the mines. Now, He allows us to use what rightfully belongs to Him, but God continues to retain the ownership. We are managers and stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Someday, when we stand before Him, we shall give an account of what kind of job we have done in managing the resources which God has allowed us to use. That's why every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision. Every time we use some of God's money, we are making a decision which has eternal ramifications. Are you using money and possessions as if they belong to you, or are you making spending decisions with the full realization that it all belongs to God?

SEPTEMBER SERVANTS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Lector</i>	<i>Acolyte</i>	<i>Greeters</i>	<i>Sacristan</i>
September 7 th	Ernie Lieb	Paige Paisley	Lavonne and Clyde Eden	Joan Beyer
September 14 th	Vicki Wurster		Ken and June Eden	Marilee Hejna
September 21 st	Jen Johnson	Matthew Carroll	Daylon and Shirley Scheele	Joan Beyer
September 28 th	Rene Albrecht		George and Marilee Hejna	Marilee Hejna

Ushers: Ken and June Eden, Carl and Sam Albrecht

Treasurer's Assistant: Allen Wurster

Sunday School Teachers: Daylon Scheele, Pam Staver, Ashley Randecker