

Raising faith in

The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship

January 2009



"Go in peace, serve the Lord"

Someone declares that phrase each Sunday at the end of our worship, and together we are invited to respond, "Thanks be to God!" Then, we leave to finish out this gift of Sabbath day with our friends and/or families, maybe trim the bushes, watch a football game or a host of other options. The next morning, we wake up to MONDAY!

Lately I've been thinking about the wonder and beauty of Monday through Saturday, how these days make up the space and place where we, as disciples of Jesus, serve our Lord in an incredible variety of ways. I find myself wondering about how the love of Christ finds a way to express itself through all of you in everyday ways. I sit in amazement thinking about how, for example, a teacher like Katie enters the classroom with joy and eagerness to serve the children day in and day out. That's not easy work, but it is her calling. I think about someone like Karole who manages people at CVS, listening to them, caring for them, guiding them, training them. It's not without its struggles, day in and day out. Just being on one's feet for hours at a time can be exhausting, but she prays her way through it and knows this is her calling to serve.

Whether we are retired or actively employed... whatever our status is, we are all seeking to connect faith and life, church and world. And this is a profound venture. When we hear the words, "Go in peace, serve the Lord" and respond with "Thanks be to God," with faith we are once again launched into the arena of life and world, there to face the real challenges and questions of how to be the church, the love of Jesus, in the places we live and breathe. This is our labor. This is our calling. And whatever we do, whether it is for a paycheck or not for a paycheck, there is meaning and value and all our labor is good, and blessed.

This may seem strange to you, but what follows is an open invitation to everyone.

I am inviting you to share, in this publication known as The Backyard, where you see the connection of faith and life, church and world, in your daily walk with Christ. What's God up to in your daily life and work? What do you wrestle with as you seek to connect your faith with this daily journey? Where do you see Christ in and through the things you do each day? You may write an article in response to this invitation, or (if you are uncomfortable doing the writing), I can help you write your response. Maybe we can get a dialog going within these pages that hopefully will be helpful for all of us, because as we talk about stewardship, the bulk of our gifts are being generously shared in this daily arena, not around 16526 Ella Blvd.

Let's see what surprises God is up to with our sharing!

-Pastor John

Did you know



...that "God calls all Christians to a life of vocation. To have a 'vocation' means to live out one's call. For Christians, that call is answered in the structures of daily life – family, work, state, service to the neighbor, care of creation – as the setting in which to live out their identity in the gospel."

1993 ELCA Statement,
"Together for Ministry"

Noisy Offering

January 18

The January Mission of the Month "Noisy Offering" supports the Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM) Houston, a ministry of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Christ the King Lutheran Church.

LCM Houston strives to provide spiritual enrichment and Christian fellowship for the academic communities of Rice University, the University of Houston and the Texas Medical Center. They do this through Bible study, worship and fellowship.

Lutheran Campus Ministry, lead by Rev. Brad Fuerst, is based out of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Rice Village.

On January 18, Pastor Fuerst will be our guest preacher. For more information on this ministry visit www.lcmhouston.org/about.html.



We are asking you to dig into your pockets and purses and pull out any loose change you may be carrying. Deposit it in the buckets that will be passed during worship services on January 18.

Glimpses of Grace

World Hunger	\$605.00
African Initiative	\$21,961.00
Mission of the Month	\$3469.19
Mulkey Fund Income	\$4495.08
Benevolence	\$16,980.29
Turkeys for NAM	\$275.00
Seafarers Boxes	\$3,978.00
Habitat for Humanity	\$1,450.00

Mission of the Month Gifts:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan	\$218.29
Lutherhill Campership Fund	\$259.39
Wholeness Project of Lutheran Social Services	\$145.63
God's Global Barnyard	\$182.88
Lutheran Seminary Scholarship Fund	\$203.45
NAM Back to School	\$582.50
ELCA Disaster Response	\$804.00
ELCA Disaster Response (2nd time after Ike)	\$337.07
Seafarers Project	\$433.05
Water 2 Thrive	\$366.93
Joyful Life Lutheran Church	\$610.76

Helping Hands Fund

July: Two families received money for food, gas, assistance and items from the food pantry.

August: Six families received money for food, school supplies, assistance, also items from the food pantry.

September: Four families received money for housing and gas, also items from the food pantry.

October: One family (hurricane Ike evacuees) received aid.

Balance on hand: \$1,005.81

"Next to Word and Sacrament, the recognition of the divine vocation of every Christian in his or her worldly occupation is the third great insight of the Lutheran Reformation."

Jurgen Moltmann, "Reformation and Revolution"

God's Global Barnyard

Countries with Animal Husbandry

A recent email from From Krystal McClinton, Coordinator, ELCA World Hunger & Disaster Appeal:

Hello Pastor John,

We are so grateful to you and Hosanna Lutheran Church for your heart of giving and desire to be a blessing to others less fortunate. Your generous gift will help in ending the cycle of hunger and poverty for many families. God's Global Barnyard is one of our most favorable ways to bring hope and life to many of our neighbors in distant lands. In fact, animal husbandry has long been a successful strategy used by communities to improve food and economic security. Animals provide a way for families to produce both food and valuable products they can sell for added income. Animals can often be raised on land that is too rocky, dry or steep to grow crops, and they help to improve the fertility of the soil. They can eat things that people can't — like grass and vegetable scraps — and produce protein-rich foods like milk, cheese, meat and eggs.

Some of our outreach locations include:

China – The Amity Foundation's pig-raising project for people living with HIV/AIDS distributes pigs to families to give them a source of income and encourage their spirits.

Kosovo – Along with Lutheran World Federation, a Women's Center was built; many women have received sheep in order to generate wool for carpets. These carpets are sold regularly in local markets.

Peru – Alpacas, native to South America, provide wool necessary for women to utilize their traditional knitting abilities to create clothing businesses.

Mexico – Many families have been blessed with flocks of chickens and turkeys to build poultry houses. Such houses provide stable nutrition and income.

Ethiopia – Cows provide families with milk and meat which their owners are able to trade for other necessities.

Kenya – Goats provide milk for nutrition. Milk can also be sold to others.

Malawi – Bee farming provides honey and wax for other products to create a stable income.

Tanzania – Over 5,000 families are now involved in fish farming, generating much-needed income.

God's blessings to you and your faith family this holiday season!

Did you know



...that on December 3rd Hosanna's confirmation class gathered their gifts and were able to give someone in these countries two goats, two turkeys, two pigs, twenty chickens, twelve water jugs and one fish farm!!

Isn't it wonderful that the fish farms are built in Tanzania, where we are also deeply connected through our own Hosanna African Initiative?

A parting thought

Through the back gate



The True Spirit of Christmas at Hosanna

We have just completed another rotation of Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). It was a great week and the families were wonderful.

I want to thank the many Hosanna volunteers who help make this program a great success.

One family moved into the program in the middle of the week of our rotation. As always we pray before the evening meal. At the end of the blessing, the new guests — a young mother (Ashley) and her baby girl (Jayla) — thanked us for providing them with a safe place. She had been put out on the street by her father and called Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM), attempting to get into their IHN program. At first there was no room. But this time the voice on the phone said, "We have a space. Come right now."

Again, she thanked us and said she felt safe because the Lord was taking care of her and her daughter. There was a wonderful peace in her voice.

Is that not the real meaning of Christmas?

-Nickie Brooks
Hosanna IHN Coordinator



Thanks again for having us as your guests this week. It was so thoughtful and generous of you to prepare dinner nightly and breakfast on Saturday. We will never forget your kindness. You are so awesome to allow our kids access to the toys and provide such fun and entertaining activities for everyone. Our hearts have truly been touched by your benevolence. Blessings, the Langstins.

On behalf of my children I thank you for showing us a lot of love and respect. Thank you for being great hosts and we love you for that ... You all made us feel at home. This is one of our happiest moments. God bless you and keep doing what you do. You truly are amazing. We thank you and love you for it.
Love, Charissa Nealey D.

Your hospitality was more than generous. Thanks for the love and support you've shown. May God bless you 100 times forward for the blessings you gave me and my daughter. Thanks for the Christmas gift cards and I love you much. Thanks again.
Ashley and Jayla

My son Marcelius and I would like to say thank you for all your great hospitality this past week. Each night we arrived we felt very welcomed to be in the house of the Lord ... We would like to thank Ms. Nickie for being such a good host and making sure each family had more than enough to eat ... I will be forever grateful. From the hearts of Angie Strauder and Marcelius Hall. Thank you, thank you, thank you.