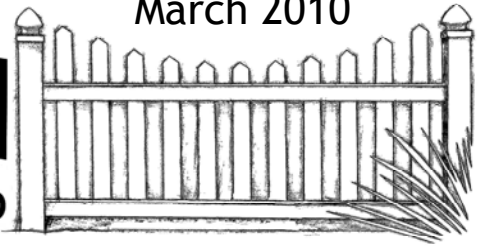


Raising faith in

# The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship

March 2010



## Raising Faith During Lent

In the early Christian Church, those who had a desire to be baptized would go through a long process of learning known as the "catechumen." Lent was a primary time for this catechumen and they would move through the forty days learning about the disciplines of discipleship. The catechumen would come to an end with the new converts being baptized during the Vigil of Easter which took place the Saturday evening before Easter. Can you imagine their joy being newly baptized and celebrating their first Easter? It's almost breathtaking to imagine that moment for them!

Though we no longer practice this intense process in the same way today in the Church, we still "practice Lent." When I was growing up, one of the key questions which surfaced in conversation was, "What are you giving up for Lent?" That question still arises in conversations today and some folks still "give up", sacrifice, something during The Forty Days in order to help them focus on the disciplines of discipleship and to come closer to Christ, our crucified Lord. And that's a good thing; it's just that it doesn't happen with the same frequency as when I was much younger. I am not saying that is a bad thing, either, because as I look back on all the years of my life I never once "gave up" anything for lent. I seem to recall that I attempted to give up something during two Lents of my life. I can't even recall what they were, exactly, but I DO recall vividly that I failed miserably on both attempts. I felt like such a worm. How

about you?

Here's an image that is helpful for me. If I take the thought of the second paragraph above and place it up against the image in the first paragraph (practice of the catechumen in the early Church), there seems to be a common desire in both. That common desire is to grow in faith and draw closer to Christ. The thought I have is that, if we want to deepen our faith but have a difficult time with "giving up" something to help accomplish this, maybe that "something" is to ADD something in Lent. One thing.

Maybe that one thing is a servant project for one of the neighbors on your street, or one Saturday a month helping Habitat for Humanity build a home for a family. Maybe that one thing is to spend fifteen minutes reading Scripture (your favorite Gospel or a book you've never read). Maybe that one thing is to try tithing for the Lenten season. Or spend that fifteen minutes a day simply being silent with God, praying and/or meditating. If the meaning of "Lent" is to "spring forth" (grow), then maybe that one thing would have an incredible effect on each of us.

After all, stewardship is really about raising faith. Blessings to all of us during these Forty Days of Lent as we creatively and generously give to our One God, our additional one thing.

Pastor John

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# Noisy Offering

## March 21

### Lutherhill Ministries

The Noisy Offering for March is Lutherhill Ministries, an ELCA Summer Camp and Year Round Retreat Center.

Lutherhill is a place for youth and adults to explore God's world and word. People of all faiths are welcome to come and enjoy the 77 acres of wooded and wide-open spaces. Since 1954 people have enjoyed Lutherhill as a place to worship, study, and play together.

The camp is between Austin and Houston, just outside of La Grange, TX. It sits atop the highest point in Fayette County and is well-known for beautiful sunsets and an incredible view of the surrounding countryside. They are currently building six new cabins and a health lodge to accommodate all who want to experience camp.

Lutherhill's mission statement is: "...A place for all people, of every generation, to experience the love of Christ in unique settings and new ways."

Sometimes families do not have the funds to send their children to summer camp and Lutherhill offers "camperships" (scholarships) so they can attend. Our offering to their campership fund will help insure that no child who wants to attend camp will be denied the opportunity.

Once at camp the children can experience: arts and crafts, canoeing, low ropes, high ropes (Adventurers and older), field games, Bible study, campfires, camp outs (Yearlings and older), archery, worship, camp games, swimming, evening cabin devotions, camp songs, learning and having fun!

So save your spare change and extra dollars for Sunday, March 21. All money we collect will be sent to Lutherhill for their campership fund. Make some noise, and make a difference in the world!



### Planting Trees, Preventing Desertification

Mauritania is predominantly desert, and soil erosion aggravated by drought further contributes to desertification.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Mauritania operates an Environmental Protection and Reforestation Project and works with communities to set up irrigation systems, distribute seedlings and provide health services. This helps protect roads, wells, and other village infrastructures from desertification.

Belts of lush green forest around the country's capital, Nouakchott, and many villages bear witness to the effectiveness of this approach. During its 35 years of work on this project, LWF helped form a "green belt" around the capital, saving it from being overrun by the desert.

Because of deforestation the once great port city of Ephesus, mentioned prominently in Acts 19, is a ruin. It was abandoned 1800 years ago, ironically covered and preserved for today's tourists by the silt washed down from the hills that also filled its harbor. The silted-in harbor was why this port city, capital of Roman Asia, had to be abandoned; the port was unusable.

The city elders worried publicly about the silt; their harbor, the reason for the city's prominence, was turning into swamp. For sure there were those who argued against any change: "You can't stop lumbering the hills! You can't change the way things are done. We need timber to heat the baths. Our lifestyles will suffer. Business will suffer."

Ephesus is a metaphor for what we are doing to the planet. And just like those worried town councilors back then, there are those who worry about the impact our civilization has upon the environment. There are others, too, who say that we can't do anything because "business" will suffer.

Will we be just as ineffectual as the Ephesians? Or will we be more like the people of Mauritania? Unlike the Romans, who had no clue, we know what we're doing. But can we stop doing it in time?

# Did you know

? ...that in the United States and the Caribbean, 1 out of every 50 people is served through an ELCA social ministry organization?

...that this year, more than 450 ELCA congregations are being planted, under development or focused on renewal?

...that the ELCA has more than 1,800 educational centers focused on teaching in a Christian environment ranging from early childhood education to graduate studies?

...that more than 90 countries benefit from the support of ministry and projects through the work of the ELCA.

...that after Hurricane Katrina, Lutherans responded with \$27.7 million to help rebuild?

...that Lutherans responded to the 2004 tsunami in East Africa and South Asia with gifts totaling over \$11 million.

## Glimpses of Grace 2010

### Through February 28:

<b>World Hunger</b>	<b>\$180.00</b>
<b>African Initiative</b>	<b>\$580.00</b>

### Year-to-Date:

<b>Benevolence</b>	<b>\$4,088.77</b>
<b>Helping Hands</b>	<b>\$160.00</b>
<b>Mulkey Endowment Fund</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>
<b>Haiti Earthquake Relief (total)</b>	<b>\$1,684.77</b>
<b>Souper Bowl of Caring</b>	<b>\$406.00</b>

### Mission of the Month Gifts:

January—ELCA Microloans	\$644.54
February—Haiti Earthquake Relief	\$684.77

### Helping Hands Fund

**January:** Two families received money for rent assistance;  
Four individuals received items from the food pantry.

**February:** Five individuals received items from the food pantry.

**Balance on hand:** \$693.21

***No church ever has a money problem, only a faithfulness problem.***

*When you give to God, you discover that God gives to you.*

***When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing.***

***Do yer givin' while yer livin' so you'll be knowin' where it's goin'.***

*There are no pockets in a shroud and no U-hauls behind a hearse.*

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# “Chicks and ducks and geese better scurry when...”

**ELCA Good Gifts, the giving catalog of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has 65 ideas that can make a significant impact on the lives of people around the world. Here are some of the lesser-cost options:**

Did you know that \$10 buys 10 chicks, a bargain that makes a big difference? Within months of birth, chicks begin laying eggs, which make nutritious meals for growing kids. Extra eggs generate income.

Ducks are only \$20. They lay hundreds of protein-rich eggs each year.

Ducklings can be shared or sold to provide extra income.



Goats are \$50. Another bargain. Goats can survive in extreme climates. They provide milk and fertilizer.

\$10 provides a family of four with blankets to stay warm.

\$12 provides six water jugs for transporting clean water.

\$12 provides six water jugs for transporting clean water.

\$10 provides a fruit tree seeding.

\$10 provides adult literacy training.

\$10 buys a pair of shoes.

\$10 provides a mosquito net.

\$15 covers health and dental care for an orphaned child.

\$30 fills a child's backpack with food in the United States.

Go online: [elca.org/goodgifts](http://elca.org/goodgifts) or phone: 800-638-3522.

You also can use the order form in the Good Gifts catalog (copies are in the south nar-thex).

