

Raising faith in

The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship ■ March 2011

Forming the Future

On Saturday, March 19th, the leadership of Hosanna Lutheran Church will be gathering for a retreat which is a first step in focusing the mission of our congregation. More steps will follow after the retreat and everyone will be invited to take part in this process. We pray that our time together will be faithful and helpful. As I have shared my genuine excitement and hopeful anticipation of this event with many in the congregation, I often get asked, "WHY do we need to do this?" Each time, I have shared a response to that question but there have been times when I get the "deer in the headlights" look from those I have talked with. That's O.K., really, but I thought that in this edition of the Backyard I would share a reflection written quite a while ago by Pastor Kerry Nelson, who is quite passionate about mission focus. It's an article about a book which I have read, a book that Kerry is encouraging others to read. But, more importantly, embedded in the article is a very compelling answer as to the "WHY." I invite you to read Kerry's reflection because four words stand out: Clarity, movement, alignment and focus. I "simply" can't say it any better.

I hope you enjoy Kerry's reflection and I hope we all find joy in the coming months when we seek to find that focus of God's purpose for Hosanna.

Peace to you, Pastor John.

Simple Church

Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger needs to be added to your "must read" list.

In this post I'll share a bit about why I think this is a must read.

Frankly, I'm getting tired of talking about the problems in the church. My sense is that we are all aware of the challenges that we face today in staying faithful to the Great Commandment and Great Commission. We have all spent a long time now identifying and living in the problem (declining congregational membership, participation, support and impact). We're all looking for help in finding a solution. We have all learned that the solution is not going to be found in doing the same old things, only working harder at them.

In the recovery movement, people often talk about the importance of focusing on the solution rather than living in the problem. We have arrived at that point in the church when we need to live in the solution.

I think we are all (I HOPE we are all) discovering the need to rethink what we do, why we do it, and how we might be more effective.

Before I share what I find helpful in Simple Church I want to begin with the obvious – I really do believe that to every complicated problem there is a simple solution and it is always wrong.

There is not, has never been, and will never be a simple silver bullet solution to the mystery of faithfulness as Christian congregations and leadership. There is not a magic yellow brick road that we can follow. The only thing valuable about "Ten Quick Steps to Success in the Church" are the numbers of copies sold by the person who found the time to write and market a book.

But there are signposts along the way. Books are repositories of someone's thinking. They are a

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

8765 West Higgins Road • Chicago, IL 60631 • 800-638-3522 • www.elca.org

February 11, 2011

Thank You

Hosanna Lutheran Church
16526 Ella Blvd.
Houston, TX 77090-4301

Dear Hosanna Lutheran Church:

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed through the world. Romans 1:8

Thank you for the special way you are impacting the mission and ministries of the ELCA. I gratefully acknowledge your ELCA Good Gift of \$840.00 received on January 18, 2011.

ELCA Good Gifts support our church's mission work to *equip* those who share the Gospel, *nourish* neighbors near and far who are hungry or need clean drinking water, *nurture* children in need of care and protection, *heal* those affected and infected with HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases, *inspire* future church leaders and *partner* with ministries around the world.

As Lutherans, we are called to help our friends and neighbors – around the corner, across the country, and on the other side of the world. Thanks to your generosity, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America today is a church at work in the world, doing God's work with our hands, proclaiming Christ's redeeming love to all.

Sincerely yours,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop

P.S. If you would like a copy of the Good Gifts catalog, please call 800.638.3522.

The \$840 gift is designated for:

Water	\$300
ELCA Malaria Campaign	\$180
Primary Health Care	\$65
Children-World Hunger	\$70
International Disaster General	\$40
God's Global Barnyard	\$185

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Thanks to Shirley Ostrander

01-15-2004

HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

Noisy Offering March 20

Lutherhill Ministries

Lutherhill is a year-round retreat center where people of all faiths are welcome to come and enjoy 85 acres of wooded and wide open spaces. Facilities are available for swimming, games, high ropes adventure course, RVs, tent campsites and other activities. Wooded areas abound for hiking or just sitting down and relaxing among our beautiful live oak trees.

Located between Austin and Houston, just outside of La Grange, TX, Lutherhill sits atop the highest point in Fayette County and is well known for beautiful sunsets and an incredible view of the surrounding countryside.

People have enjoyed Lutherhill since 1954 as a place to worship, study, and play together. Come for a relaxing day or weekend, or stay longer if you like! Lutherhill Ministries serves all these groups and perhaps yours too: Individuals and families seeking a quiet place to reflect, renew and recharge.

Lutherhill welcomes congregations for adult, family or youth retreats, groups, large or small for overnight or day retreats and congregations at their Day Camp facilities.

What Lutherhill Offers

Housing in a variety of accommodations, food service or facilities that allow groups to cook for themselves; recreational facilities, including a challenge course, pool and pond; friendly customized service to help you plan your event and professional staff to lead worship, team-building activities and recreational activities.

Make some noise. Make a difference in the world.



Glimpses of Grace 2011

Year-to-Date

Through February 28, 2011:

World Hunger	\$160.00
African Initiative:	
WomenCraft	\$7,700.00
Kagera Scholarship Fund	
Buffalo Wings Fundraiser	\$1,155.90
Benevolence	\$4,219.71
Helping Hands	\$200.00
Mulkey Scholarship Fund	\$100.00

Mission of the Month Gifts:

January—WomenCraft	\$775.57
February—The Life Center	\$729.00

Helping Hands

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

February: Four individuals received food, one received rent assistance.

Helping Hands Fund balance on hand: \$587.57

"GAIN ALL YOU CAN, SAVE ALL YOU CAN, AND GIVE ALL YOU CAN."

— John Wesley, *The Use of Money*, 1744

"AT ITS BEST, GIVING IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP." — Cornelius J. Dyck (1740-92), colonel under the command of Gen. George Washington

"A MAN HAS MADE AT LEAST A START ON DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE WHEN HE PLANTS SHADE TREES UNDER WHICH HE KNOWS FULL WELL HE WILL NEVER SIT." — D. Elton Trueblood (1900-94), American author, educator, philosopher and theologian

"ONCE YOU MAKE A LOT OF MONEY, IT'S INCREDIBLY ENJOYABLE TO GIVE IT AWAY. IT'S A WAY TO SATISFY THE SOUL." — Stanley Druckenmiller, U.S. hedge fund manager

"WHEN IT COMES TO GIVING UNTIL IT HURTS, MOST PEOPLE HAVE A VERY LOW THRESHOLD OF PAIN." — Anonymous

Through the Back Gate

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way of communal sharing across time. In that, books are valuable. Simple Church is valuable.

Simple Church begins by describing the “problem” facing us as Christian leaders using two key words: complexity and stagnation. Too many pastors are overwhelmed with the demands of ministry because they spend too much of their time doing the wrong things for the right reasons.

The solution proposed by Simple Church can be captured in four simple words: clarity, movement, alignment and focus. These are words we know by intuition. Whenever we recognize these words incarnated in congregational ministry, we always recognize that something good is going on there. We would do well to keep these words in mind.

Clarity – The basketball coach, John Wooden, called this “singleness of purpose.” Clarity means having a crystal clear purpose and vision toward what we are trying to accomplish. A congregation might decide their purpose is to make new disciples, raise them toward maturity, and send them into the world to serve. Without clarity, no one really agrees on what a congregation is trying to do. Without clarity, confusion reigns.

Movement – This word recognizes the relational, forward motion, character of the Christian faith. To follow Jesus means to walk in his footsteps, to be on a journey together. A congregation would then envision what those footsteps might look like for a new disciple, the idea of helping someone move from here to there without getting lost in the process. Without movement, stagnation sets in, people get forgotten. Movement also requires measurement – just like we look at the odometer to see how many miles we have driven, we pay attention to how many people are participating in the steps along the way and where people are on the journey.

Alignment – Oftentimes, given the complexity of life, we fall victim to the temptation to do too many things poorly rather than a few things well. Alignment means bringing all that happens in the life of a congregation from the point of view of clarity of purpose and movement toward maturity. If something is currently in place, or something new is proposed, that doesn’t fit into the larger purpose of the congregation, then the congregation doesn’t do it.

Focus – Focus is the flipside of clarity. Focus literally means looking at everything that happens from the lens of how it fits and serves the whole. Focus touches planning, decision making, time management, budgeting, etc.

Kennon Callahan was the first person I remember who taught, “If you’re digging a hole, working harder only digs a deeper hole.” As we think together about what it means to grow in effectiveness as Christian congregations, thinking more simply, with greater clarity and focus, paying attention to movement and alignment, might help us get there. Simple Church can help us in our thinking.

clarity
movement
alignment
focus