

Raising faith in

The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship ■ November 2011

During the months of November and December, we are all thinking of one or more gifts we will give during "the season." One of things that has become special to me and many others in the ELCA is what's known as the "Good Gifts Catalog." It is filled with opportunities for giving in a way that makes a huge difference in the lives of many around the world. The gifts vary in "price," but each of them creates a new world of possibility to the one who receives such a gift. A pig (\$30.00), ten chicks (\$10.00), a duck or a

goat... seemingly "small" gifts, but I think Henri Nouwen says it well, "The more we give them away, the more we discover how much there is to give away."

All around the church you will notice copies of the Good Gift Catalog. I invite you to pick one up and take it home. Then just browse through it... see what happens to your imagination!

Pastor John

Noisy Offering

November 20

Hi all!

This month our Noisy Offering is being dedicated to the Life Center. The Life Center is a short-term, faith-based shelter for the homeless of Houston. They can accommodate up to 70 people at one time and provide educational service, group counseling, and an in-house work program. They help the homeless to achieve a proper identification and provide them with the tools they need to leave the streets. They say, "We provide Homeless people with a place to come home to, food to sustain them, clothing to keep them warm, job counseling, a mailing address, Spiritual Guidance, a Computer Literacy Program and even a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Program to help them overcome destructive addictions as they learn to cope with life."



The Life Center offers an extraordinary opportunity to help people who often times have nothing left. As you know this year we have been encouraging everyone to be noisy at church and in their lives. If you would like the opportunity to be noisy and volunteer at the Life Center, some of the tasks that they need help with include: Cleanup days, Landscaping, Hot Meals for the Homeless, Fellowship and Praise, Each One Teach One, Street Outreach, Lectures and Testimonies, Light-duty Renovations, Construction and miscellaneous other special events. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Jeremy Boucher at lifecenterhouston@gmail.com or call 832-292-3295.

The Life Center aims to make a tremendous difference in people's lives and they do that through providing a loving environment that otherwise the population they serve would not receive.

The Life Center's contact information:

4516 Old Yale St.
Houston, TX 77018
Phone: 713-750-9565
Homeless Hotline: 832-292-3295
Lifecenterhouston@gmail.com
lifecenterhouston.com
Mailing address:
PO Box 10556
Houston, TX 77206

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me!

Abby Roszak

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832-457-8710

Have an awesome and NOISY month!

Glimpses of Grace 2011

Year-to-Date Gifts

Through October 31, 2011:

World Hunger	\$954.00
African Initiative:	
WomenCraft	\$17,900.00
Kagera Scholarship Fund	\$2,575.00
Buffalo Wings Fundraiser	\$1,155.90
Benevolence	\$20,475.44
Helping Hands	\$1,410.00
Mulkey Scholarship Fund	\$704.00
Habitat for Humanity	\$2,000.00
Garage Sale	\$3,903.39
Northwest Assistance Ministries	\$490.00
Rachel's Day	\$268.00
Hunger Rumbings	\$1,106.00
Mulkey Fundraiser	\$5,917.00
Disaster Relief	\$200.00
Crop Walk	\$1,335.00

Mission of the Month Gifts:

January — WomenCraft	\$755.57
February — The Life Center	\$729.00
March — Lutherhill Ministries	\$701.80
April — Habitat for Humanity	\$758.50
May — Lutheran Campus Ministries	\$595.52
June — NAM SOS Food Drive	\$668.76
July — Care Net Pregnancy Center	\$551.00
August — NAM Back-to-School Drive	\$720.83
September — African Initiative/WomenCraft	\$739.92
October — Seafarer's Boxes	\$1,485.00

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.

March: Four individuals received food.

April: Five families received food.

May: Four families received assistance.

June: Five families received food; two received gift cards.

July: Six families received food.

August: Four received food, assistance and gift cards.

September: Ten received food, three gift cards, one financial assistance.

October: Eight received food, two gift cards, one financial assistance.

Helping Hands Fund Balance: **\$2,072.57**

God's Cake

Sometimes we wonder, 'What did I do to deserve this?' or 'Why did God have to do this to me?'

Here is a wonderful explanation!

A daughter is telling her Mother how everything is going wrong, she's failing algebra, her boyfriend broke up with her and her best friend is moving away.

Meanwhile, her Mother is baking a cake and asks her daughter if she would like a snack, and the daughter says, 'Absolutely Mom, I love your cake.' 'Here, have some cooking oil,' her Mother offers. 'Yuck' says her daughter.

'How about a couple raw eggs? '

'Gross, Mom!'

'Would you like some flour then?'

Or maybe baking soda?'

'Mom, those are all yucky!'

To which the mother replies:

'Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves.

But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! '

God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!

THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS WERE OF ONE HEART AND ONE MIND. NO ONE CLAIMED PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF ANY POSSESSIONS, BUT EVERYTHING THEY OWNED WAS HELD IN COMMON. ACTS 4:32

The Christian community described in Acts understood and practiced total stewardship. The believers did not claim personal ownership but held everything in common. Stewardship not only involves sharing our possessions with others, but also sharing our ownership of those possessions with God.

**GOD IS
CRAZY
ABOUT
YOU.**

God sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, God listens. God can live anywhere in the universe, and God chose your heart.

Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here we might as well dance!

“Keep your eyes on the prince of peace, the one who doesn’t cling to his divine power; the one who refuses to turn stones into bread, jump from great heights, and rule with great power ... the one who touches the lame, the crippled, and the blind, the one who speaks of forgiveness and encouragement ... Keep your eyes on him who becomes poor with the poor, weak with the weak. He is the source of all peace.”

**Henri J. M. Nouwen from “Adam’s Story,”
Weavings, March-April, 1988**

“ Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”

Colossians 3:12-15

“The world likes things to be large, big, impressive, and elaborate. God chooses the small things which are overlooked in the big world. Andrew’s remark, “five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?” captures well the mentality of a calculating mind. It sounds as if he says to Jesus, “Can’t you count? Five loaves and two fish are simply not enough.” But for Jesus they were enough ... Jesus distributed the loaves and the fish “as much as they wanted.” ... There is enough, plenty even, for everyone – there are even leftovers. Here a great mystery becomes visible. What little we give away multiplies. This is the way of God. This is also the way we are called to live our lives. The little love we have, the little knowledge we have, the little advice we have, the little possessions we have, are given to us as gifts of God to be given away. The more we give them away, the more we discover how much there is to give away.”

**Henri J.M. Nouwen,
The Road to Daybreak**