

# Raising faith in The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship



## Generosity

Her name is Virginia and she lives in Muncie, Indiana. She moved there in 1987 from New Jersey to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren. Her husband of 55 years had recently died and at the age of 80 she was ready for a change in her life. She had a very limited income but it was enough to rent a one bedroom apartment which, in her words, "was plenty of room for me and my bird."

As I spent more time with her, I learned how amazing she was in every way. She carried her faith into every facet of her life and expressed her love for God with such joy that she was contagious. Virginia is simply one of the most generous people I have ever met in my life and she inspired me in so many ways as she expressed her sheer joy in responding to God's love in her life.

When Sean was baptized on August 12, 1990, Virginia handed me an envelope which had a greeting card inside. Inside the greeting card was a \$100 U.S. savings bond; her gift to Sean on the special occasion of his baptism. I knew she had very little financially, but she gave so abundantly that it brought a tear to my eye. It still does as I think of that moment. We still have that savings bond and I don't think I will ever cash it in. Instead, I think I will frame it and a recent photo we received of Virginia, our dear sister in Christ.

The generosity of the people all around us can be contagious and acts of love, gifts given abundantly, can grow our own ability to be generous. I think of others in my life that have been generous to me, like my Dad and my Mom, who died two years ago. As I remember my mother, I can still hear her singing to

me, rocking me to sleep. I remember her gentle smile and her bright eyes. I remember the way she could laugh and light up the room with such energy. She was generous in all things and I was blessed beyond measure because of her abundant ways.

I think of such things when, in the middle of the day, I find myself day dreaming of my bride, Lois, and of my beautiful son, Sean. They have been generous to me in so many ways that I simply am unable to count them. I can only be thankful, and I want to be generous in return.

God has been and always will be generous to us, gifting us in countless ways. As you read this article today, pause and think about the gifts that surround you and us as a congregation. Doing so on a daily basis is also a good thing. It can ground us in our desire to be thankful and in our desire to respond generously. Give it a try for 30 days; see what happens!

— Pastor John

## Did you know

*...that 359 people from the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod went to Galveston on October 4th to muck out and repair homes of several families?*



*"The Dead Sea is the dead sea because it continually receives and never gives." — Anonymous*

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## ***Mission of the month*** *...an update*

During September our area was hit with by hurricane Ike. For many people it was a devastating event. Because the need is so great, ELCA Disaster Response was our September mission of the month "noisy offering."

ELCA Disaster Response is known for its long-term healing presence after catastrophic events. Domestic Disaster Response and International Disaster Response efforts are implemented through trusted partners with roots in the communities they serve. Through ELCA Disaster Response, they are prepared to care for "the long haul."

Together we collected \$804. In addition, we applied to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for a 50 cents on the dollar match, so our \$804 became \$1206!

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*No man is an island, no man stands alone.  
Each man's joy is joy to me  
Each man's grief is my own.  
We need one another, so I will defend  
Each man as my brother  
Each man as my friend.*

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## **angels in Hard Hats**

Hurricane Ike left many homes, businesses and churches, including Hosanna, without power for days. Ike's heavy winds knocked down one power pole at the southwest corner of the church property, ripping out the lines that connected us to the power grid and the rest of the world.

Finally, on Wednesday, October 1, after 2 1/2 power-less weeks, a white truck with two men in hard hats turned into the parking lot. We knew instantly they were here to plug us back in. The staff and Bible study participants greeted them and directed them to the downed power pole. The men, from North Carolina, had been working non-stop for a month, starting in West Virginia, then New Orleans, Tomball and now Houston. We gave them home-made pineapple upside down cake and coffee. They smiled. Soon they were joined by other men. Gay Zimmerman thanked them individually.

We applaud these angels in hard hats for a job well done, not only for Hosanna, but for the entire Houston area. It was a monumental task reconnecting millions of people, one step at a time. We thank them for their tireless work.

## **Noisy Offering** **October 19**



The centers are "homes away from home" for seafarers visiting the Port of Houston. Chartered in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the two centers have served over a million visiting seafarers. Recognizing that everyone is a gift of God, their mission is to be a ministry of presence, outreach, witness, worship, service and advocacy for seafarers and their families from around the world.

This year in addition to funding the Christmas boxes, the first \$200 raised will be sent to the Committee for Ministry to the Port of Houston to help cover the purchase of Bibles, provide underwriting for its mobile phone ministry (which provides cell phones to seafarers who do not have shore privileges), and supply chaplains when extra help is needed to ensure coverage of the two centers and visitation of all ships entering the Port of Houston.

Our chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will match contributions 50 cents on the dollar.

On Sunday, October 19 please dig into your pockets and purses and deposit your loose change into the buckets passed by the ushers during the offering at all worship services.

### **Did you know**

...that Nerisa McConnell (with Bob's help) made all the homemade ice cream for the church picnic?



## a random act of kindness

Through its Helping Hands Fund, Hosanna has had occasion to assist those less fortunate, often times with a Band-Aid, sometimes with a solution.

With money and a great deal of time and effort, Hosanna helped place Jessica, Sharika, Clyde Jr. and Piara in a safe and wholesome environment—a new apartment at Kuykendahl and I-45. It's both a Band-Aid and a solution.

If God had a refrigerator, your (the Hosanna community) picture would be on it!

To pastor and church family, I would like thank you and your wonderful church family for everything y'all have done for me. I really appreciate it. And so do my kids. I just thank God for bringing you all in my life when he did. I love y'all a lot and when I get the chance I will return the blessing. Thank you. Thank you, and God bless! Jessica Felder

...And thank you Mrs. Dorothy and Mr. Keith.

## Glimpses of Grace — 2008



<b>World Hunger</b>	<b>\$485</b>
<b>African Initiative</b>	<b>\$7950</b>
<b>Mission of the Month Total</b>	<b>2669.21</b>
<b>Mulkey Fund Income</b>	<b>\$4470.08</b>
<b>Benevolence</b>	<b>\$9322.59</b>

(Amounts are year-to-date)

### Mission of the Month Gifts (by month):

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	\$337.07
ELCA Disaster Response (2nd time, after Ike)	\$804.00

### 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 food, housing and gas, also items from the food pantry.

## This Christmas, I want... to build a fish pond for Jesus!

Christmas is coming soon. Already we are seeing stores gearing up and advertisements are right around the corner. I'm observing this and it makes me think of Christmas of '07. Then I find myself smiling because something happened then that was different from all other Christmas celebrations, and it made me feel good.

As a family, we sent a gift to the ELCA, earmarked to purchase two goats and some chickens for families in Africa. I couldn't help but imagine the difference those animals would make for those families: eggs every day, milk and (in time!) more goats and more chickens! I just think that's great for those families, for the children, and it felt good to gift others in such a unique and practical way.

So...this year we are going to gift a village with a fish farm. It takes \$250 to dig the pond and stock it with fish. Being a fisherman myself, I can imagine the children going fishing and feasting on fresh fish from that pond. What a delightful thought.

I remember sharing in a recent sermon the story of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio and the words of their Pastor, Mike Slaughter, "Christmas is not your birthday. Stop acting like it." Food for thought, isn't it, as we move closer to the holiday season?

If you want to check out this possibility, go to [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) then click the box "Our faith in action" and then click the link "ELCA Good Gifts."

—Pastor John

## Did you know



That Hosanna housed four families in the church before, during and after Hurricane Ike?

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## A Parting thought

# Through the back gate



By Dale Bargmann

The Thursday after Ike violently ripped through Galveston and Houston an old friend from Denver, David Mporampora, called, asking about my family's situation. I informed him that our home was undamaged, almost as if a category 2 hurricane had never occurred. But, we had no power or air conditioning. Sleep was an exercise in futility. David said, "Welcome to Africa!" Instantly he put things back into perspective for me.

David Mporampora grew up in Uganda, Africa. He survived the terrible years of the reign of Idi Amin, one of the world's most notorious and violent dictators. During this time a brave missionary, May Dodzweit, left her American conveniences and traveled halfway across the world. At the risk of her life she came to Uganda with the message of the gospel. She was greeted by unfriendly people; many were militant political activists and die-hard idol worshippers who wanted nothing to do with the white man's religion. But she persevered until David's family experienced Christ after the miraculous healing of his deathly sick father. Without formal training David learned to play several musical instruments and compose music. He came to the United States for a college education and to pursue the American dream, to use his God-given musical talents to become a celebrity Christian artist, earn lots of money and live the lifestyle of the rich and famous. But God had other plans for him.

While scanning the job notice board at Denver Seminary seeking ministry opportunities, he noticed a large heading: "Job ministry opening." The Denver Rescue Mission, which works with homeless people, crack heads, prostitutes, parolees and ex-convicts, urgently needed a counselor. As David tells the story, "God spoke to me in the voice of a marine drill sergeant giving orders to a recruit: "Go fill out an application!" David could only say, "Yes, sir."

Driving into the inner-city was not fun. The sidewalk was littered with broken bottles and the sight of yelling and cursing drunks at the mission door was depressing. The smell was overwhelming. It showed no evidence of being a stepping stone to celebrity status.

To David's great surprise he was hired because he possessed one thing other more qualified applicants didn't his gift of music. "Homeless people," the mission director said, "love music over preaching and teaching."

To make a long story short, David's work with the battered and forgotten in Denver's slums changed the focus of his life from inward to outward. After several years of work in counseling and crises intervention he said goodbye and

founded ChristAid, a fully-accredited outreach whose stated mission is "to rescue, rehabilitate and equip orphans, widows and the aged out of their distress."

Through its various programs, ChristAid:

- Seeks sponsors for children — called Ahadi Kids — in Uganda orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, the true weapon of mass destruction.
- Asks caring people to support elderly women — a program called Grandmas for Jesus — forced to be sole-supporters for families left parentless by AIDS.
- Sends 40-foot shipping containers to Uganda and genocide stricken Rwanda filled with donated computers, medical equipment, bicycles, school supplies and books and other needed supplies.
- Builds schools, soccer fields and water supply facilities in forgotten Uganda villages.
- Organizes mission trips to Uganda to work on projects with native volunteers.
- Oh yes, David has not abandoned his God-given musical talents. He formed ChristAid's own band, Sifa! Sifa! Africa! which regularly plays for churches and other organizations, taking the people on an "African safari of praise," while gaining much-needed funding for its life-saving programs.



ChristAid founder  
David Mporampora

What began as a simple ministry run out of David's family apartment has exploded into a powerful, life-saving outreach to the poor of Uganda. Lives are being transformed through health care, education and the message of the gospel through action.

More information and lots of photos:  
[www.christaidinc.org](http://www.christaidinc.org)

In particular, check out the "Sponsor a child." "Sponsor a grandma" and "Mission projects" links.

*John Westerhoff says that when he considers the needs of the poor compared to his own relative affluence, the question becomes not "What do I need to give?" but "What do I have the right to keep?" (Giving to God, Mark Allan Powell, page 168)*