

PASTOR'S PEN

Dear Friends of Christ,

People have been asking if there is something in the water at Holy Trinity — *both* pastors got married in the same summer! (Truth be told, the Fellowship Hall water fountain does pour forth famously delicious water.) Marrying Emily was one of the smartest things I have done. Still, we both took a chance. We gambled. We stepped forward in faith.

I've been burned a couple of times in relationships with women. I'm a different person than I was then, hopefully a little wiser, and Emily is not one of the people who burned me. Still, I am taking a chance. I step forward into the unknown in faith.

Our journey as a faith family at Holy Trinity is undertaken in faith. (Hey, we even call it a *faith* family, and not because 'Christian family' lacks alliteration.) We pray and hope to discern God's will for us. We minister to the world around us as God calls us to do. We do these things in faith, with the faith that God will provide what we need to do the work, and the faith that God is with us while we work.

Last fall Holy Trinity stepped forward in faith with a budget that was a little bit higher than our conservative estimate of giving. We had a Director of Youth & Family Ministries. We had a new Director of Music. I was on board as the second pastor. The congregation had many flourishing ministries and was looking for more. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we decided that we did not want to curtail ministry but rather grow ministry. We wanted to do God's work, and if that meant growing into larger budgets that would be part of it.

By now we've learned that even our conservative estimate of giving was higher than what we would get. After eight months we were \$31,000 below budget with no sign of things improving. So what happened with all our prayer and discernment? Where is God?

God is with us in this unknown. The ministry of Holy Trinity is wonderful and I, for one, don't want to see it slowed or reduced. The world has thrown us a few curveballs—higher utilities, a perfectly-timed blizzard, and pastors adding their spouses to their health insurance (that local water again!)—but that is part of living in faith.

We did not step into the unknown in exchange for favors from God: "If we grow our ministry, God, you'd better be nice to us!" No. We stepped forward in response to God's grace for us: "You have forgiven us our sins and given us new life; please accept this work as our thanks." Our ministry is our thanks for the good things God has given us.

There is something in the water here. It drowns the old sinful life and waters the new life of Christ in us. That's something worth sharing, and sharing it is precisely what we are here to do. We share that water with each other, both inside and outside, with strangers and with our dearest friends, with people we rarely see and with people who always share the pew with us.

We share the water because that's what we do; the gift of our new life in Christ is also our call to share our new life in Christ. We do not enjoy the gifts of God unless we step forward in faith. Had Emily and I not spoken to each other, not dated, not gotten married, we would have been classmates, passing acquaintances, or maybe really good friends who eventually went their separate ways. Instead we get a life together.

If people ask, tell them, "Yes, there is something in the water here, and I'd like to offer you some." Have the faith to share your gifts, and step forward in faith with Christ.

In + Christ,

Pastor Timothy A Leitzke

EVANGELISM & STEWARDSHIP

Walk With Jesus

Every day is a walk with Jesus. We Christians believe life is spent in the presence of our Lord. Therefore, we can talk about every day as a day during which we walk with Jesus. Some days we feel Jesus' presence. Some days we feel quite a distance from Jesus. We boldly proclaim that, regardless of how we feel, Jesus is there. Jesus walks with us every day.

As we who are Holy Trinity Lutheran Church members consider our financial stewardship over the next few weeks, you will be asked to think about your use of money and possessions as a part of your walk with Jesus. This is most appropriate, because when Jesus walked this earth with his disciples he often talked about money and possessions. If money was a part of Jesus' first walk on this earth, it should be a part of our walk with Jesus today.

We believe that everything we have is a trust from God, given to us to care for and manage. What we do with our money is very much a part of our relationship with our Lord. This will be our focus in the coming weeks.

For three consecutive Sundays we will read a bulletin insert and hear a talk in worship. For three weeks we each will receive a letter from the congregation. All of these will focus on our walk with Jesus and how money plays an important part in this walk.

Then, on Saturday, Oct. 28 and Sunday, Oct. 29 each member will have the opportunity to complete an estimate of giving card. On this card, each of us will indicate our plan for giving for the coming year. This will not only be a plan for giving to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, it will also be a plan for how we will walk with Jesus in the coming year.

One Hundred (or more!) Perfect Gifts

Gift giving can be so much fun! Many times I have been giddy with excitement, anticipating the unwrapping of a special present from me. These are times when I love the gift and know the recipient will, too.

Gift giving can also be a burden, a really hard job. We can be heard saying, "I don't know what size he is..." or "I don't know the colors in their kitchen..." or "They are down-sizing; they don't want more stuff."

Sound familiar?

Buying the "perfect" gift for someone this Christmas is practically guaranteed. The ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) has published a **Good Gifts** catalog full of wonderful gifts. Instead of purchasing the gift for Aunt Betty, however, you purchase it in her name. Aunt Betty will receive an acknowledgment of "her gift," and the recipient will surely be grateful for this gift of love.

The ELCA sponsors many types of programs at home and abroad that you can help support with your gifts. Here are some examples:

Serving the Poor:

\$16 buys an eye exam for a basic prescription
\$35 provides an insulin vial

Women and Girls:

\$25-\$250 buys a goat
\$50-\$100 provides literacy training

Hunger at Home:

\$10 supports a youth for one month at a congregation-based after school program

You can provide for school fees, fruit tree seedlings, a trauma counselor, rabbits and fish, a bundle of roof shingles, tools, and on and on. Your whole family can get in on the fun of choosing or you may check the box which says, "Direct my gift to the areas most in need."

As you look through the catalog or scroll through the web site, you will have the opportunity to get acquainted with some of the life-enhancing and life-saving programs we support with our benevolence dollars and our prayers. Copies of the catalogue are in the narthex, the Lamplighter newsstand in Fellowship Hall and in the church office. You can also browse the catalog by logging on to www.elca.org/goodgifts

~~Carla Conaty

Kodak Moments

Evangelism and Stewardship will produce a new church photo directory early next year. If you are interested in joining the Church Directory Team, please call Dennis Blazak (732) 892-9735 or leave a note for him in the church office.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Books for Blessing the Beasts ...

In honor of the birthday of St. Francis (Oct. 4) we will celebrate the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, Oct. 8 (in the church parking lot ☺.)

Be Blest: A Celebration of Seasons, by Mary Beth Owens, was inspired by St. Francis' "Canticle of Brother Sun." It includes short prayers, one for each month of the year, with musical arrangements, which celebrate "...the creative power that connects all living things."

Other books about this popular saint may be found in the Biblical Characters/Saints section of our Sunday School Library. These include Saint Francis of Assisi: A Life of Joy, by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Kennedy writes that Francis was a kind of patron saint for his family. The stories he heard growing up greatly influenced his feelings about animals and nature. Now a lawyer for the Natural Resources Defense Council, Kennedy retells the saint's life in his first book for children. Beautifully illustrated by Dennis Nolan, with scenes set in Assisi, the famous prayer of St. Francis, which begins "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace ..." runs throughout the book at the bottom of alternate pages.

~~Ellin Greene

WORSHIP & MUSIC

The Cherub Choir, a program for nursery level through first grade children, and Music Makers, a program for second- through sixth-grade children, resume rehearsals this month.

The Cherubs, under the direction of Sue Kmetz, will meet from 3:45 to 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 5, and at the same time and day every week thereafter.

Music Makers are led by Holy Trinity Director of Music Ted Barr. The group will meet from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. weekly, beginning Tuesday, Oct. 10.

Please encourage your child to join the age-appropriate group and develop God-given musical talent in the friendly, fun-filled environment our directors provide.

A Gift for the Musically Gifted

Through the generous giving of Jeanne and Arno Schwarz, a deserving young person will receive a monetary gift to help further his or her musical endeavors within and outside Holy Trinity Church.

If you are a youth who sings and/or plays a musical instrument (or know one!) please send a letter to Holy Trinity (attention Cindy Markus) on or before Nov. 1. Tell us a little bit about yourself and why you feel you deserve this award.

Future weekend worship bulletins and The Lamplighter will let you know who the 2006 recipient is and during which service Jeanne and Arno will present the award.

**Operation Christmas Child
"The Power of a Simple Gift"**

**Bringing the Good News of God's Love
to 7.6 Million Children Around the World**

The Christmas season is a time for celebrating the Greatest Gift ever given. The profound truth of Christmas is that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The Operation Christmas Child project, which we are participating in again this year, presents a wonderful opportunity to share this life-changing message with hurting children and their families. Each gift-filled shoe box is given as a tangible expression of God's unconditional love, bringing joy, renewing hope, and opening doors for the Good News of Jesus Christ.

People across America are taking shoe boxes from home and filling them with small toys/activities, school supplies, hygiene items, candy and other gifts. We are going to be a part of this excitement once again. Those who shared this experience with us last year will tell you how joyful it was! There will be large brown boxes on the stage in Fellowship Hall labeled for the particular items we would like to gather. Please place these items in their respective box no later than November 10 as we will be assembling these boxes on Sunday, November 12 in Fellowship Hall.

Please hold on to your empty shoe boxes until November 3, at which time there will be a large box for you to deposit them. We will be providing items for children of the age group 10 to 14 and our goal this year will be to fill 100 shoe boxes! Won't you help? This is a hands-on mission's project that every member of your family can participate in. Keep your ears and eyes open for more information during the next few weeks and months!

Christmas is about sharing the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, with the World. What a perfect gift to give in honor of Jesus' birthday.

*Thank you,
Cindy Markus - (732) 458-2539
Karen Astrom - (732) 257-7134*

Namibia or Bust

On July 24, 2006, 14 lay people and pastors traveled from New Jersey on a Companion Synod Trip to Namibia, Africa. Our sole purpose was to build new and nurture existing relationships among Lutheran brothers and sisters living in the northern regions of what is a vast and beautiful country.

This was my first visit, but many had been there before, and it was joyous to be so warmly received by everyone, no matter where we traveled - which added up to about 2900 miles total. It was an experience of abundant blessings and great joy, and I have returned with many pictures and stories to share.

Please be sure to leave Sunday, October 22, 2006, at 10:15 a.m. open so that I can share my travels with you and introduce you to our brothers and sisters of Uudhengelo Lutheran Parish, our sister congregation.

-- Cindy Markus

**Youth & Family Ministry
The Pumpkin**

The story of a pumpkin reminds us of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:14-16: "You are the light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lamp stand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven."

A pumpkin starts out as a seed that grows on a vine. When fully grown, a pumpkin is picked and wiped clean and ready for market. We buy these pumpkins, cut the top, and clean out all the seeds and stuff inside. We carve two eyes, a nose, and a smiley face. Then we place a lighted candle inside for all to see.

We are just like a pumpkin; Jesus picks us to follow Him. He washes away all our sins and removes the seeds of doubt, fear, and hate that have grown inside us. Then he places within us the light of his love that warms our hearts for the world to see. Shine your light of Jesus everywhere.

-- Karen Astrom

Bible Sunday

Bible Sunday is October 29th. This is one of many faith milestones we celebrate at Holy Trinity. When a child is baptized the parents and sponsors promise to place the scriptures in their child's hands. Holy Trinity helps the parents fulfill this promise.

At the 11:15 worship service on Oct. 29, all 3^d graders in Sunday School will be receiving bibles donated by Frances Siemers in memory of her late husband Alfred Siemers. Robin Baymore designed labels for the bibles. Joan Wallace inscribed your child's name. Pastor Mary and Karen Astrom met with the parents and gave them the bibles to be personalized by family members. The bibles will be returned to Holy Trinity and presented at worship.

Bring your family and friends to worship on Bible Sunday – a special day to celebrate the milestone your child has reached!

Bible Fun Night

We will be having fun with the bible as we celebrate Martin Luther's birthday Friday, November 10th from 6 to 8 p.m. Join us for a meal and games. Remember to bring your bible with you. Please sign up on the Youth and Family Ministry Bulletin Board.

Take a Hike!

The Shore Area Crop Walk will step off at 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22, in Ocean Grove, to raise funds for local, national & international food banks.

All Holy Trinity families and Confirmation Connection members are encouraged to participate!

Whether you do or don't "walk the walk," consider supporting our Holy Trinity team with monetary donations or bring a jar of peanut butter to be directed to a local food bank.

Registration begins at 12:30 p.m. at the Ocean Grove Pavilion, Ocean Avenue at Ocean Parkway.

If you would like more information, please call Karen Astrom, (732) 223-9862, or send her an e-mail at KRA728@optonline.net.

Break the Fast

The Interfaith Dialog Center extends a unique invitation to us this month!

Join Turkish families as they break the Ramadan fast with members of different communities and religions at an Iftar Dinner. The event is at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10 in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hasbrouck Heights/Meadowlands Hotel, 650 Terrace Ave., Hasbrouck Heights.

Ramadan is the month that Muslims fast, IDF director and program coordinator Dr. Levent Koc explained.

The dinner is one aspect of the IDF's mission to "... spread dialog and mutual understanding at the grassroots level. We believe that sustainable dialogue can only be achieved if we experience it at all levels of society."

For more information and to RSVP, log on to www.idcnj.org/news/20051017/.

W. E. L. C. A.

Have you thought about attending one of our women's circles? The fall is a good time to join one of the groups so you can help support our church and community projects for the year. Please consider joining one of the following Circles of WELCA -- the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It's just one hour a month of fun and fellowship.

Louise Circle will meet on Monday, Oct. 9 at 7:30 p.m. at church. They will be finalizing planned activities for the bazaar and completing the Health Kits. Call Circle Leader Ruth Walsh @ (732) 528-7695.

Elisabeth Circle will meet on Monday, Oct. 9 at 9:30 a.m. at church. They will be completing the Health Kits. Please bring an In-Kind Gift of socks and underwear for the men at the Lutheran Center in Camden County. Call Louise Moenke @ (732) 899-6846 for information.

excited about life here in Manasquan and as part of Holy Trinity. Thank you all.

In + Christ,
Pastor Tim Leitzke

Circle of Hope will meet on Saturday, October 14 at 9 a.m. at church. They will be planning for the Christmas Bazaar and completing the Health Kits. Please bring a home-baked item to send to the Platoon they are supporting. To join, call Nancy Smarr @ (732) 681-3369 or Karen Jeffray @ (732) 223-8355.

Trinity Crafters: Call Ronnie Reed at 732-701-1160 for more information.

The 19th Annual New Jersey Women of the ELCA Convention will be held Friday, Oct. 13 and Saturday, Oct. 14 in the St. Pius X Spiritual Life Center, Blackwood, N. J.

Love and Marriage

During the month of September, the following couples were joined in marriage at Holy Trinity:

Jennifer Stenson & Michael Campbell
(Sept. 16).

Jennifer Plunkett and James Flynn
(Sept. 22)

Pastor Leitzke married Emily Hollars in Maryland on Sept. 1.

Child of God

During the month of September, Holy Trinity welcomed Scarlett Eileen Hollingsworth Morton into the Body of Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Mail Bag

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you so much for your many gifts and warm welcome for Emily and me upon our return from our wedding. I especially want to thank Doris and the Mortons and their fellow conspirators in making the "Worship & Music" coffee hour on Sept 10 into a party for Emily and me. I've been here for fourteen months and just when everyone was getting used to me things changed again and I threw a wife into the mix. Everyone at Holy Trinity has made us feel welcome and treated us as well-loved members of the faith family.

I'm excited about actually seeing my wife more than once every 2-3 months, she's excited about being part of a congregation in a whole new capacity, and we're both

