



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

December 2013



Honoring Jesus With Our Gifts

We are receiving thousands of marketing messages suggesting gifts for “the holidays.” Certainly, this is an important time of year for gift-giving. Certainly, you will do best if your loved ones receive gifts from you that they appreciate receiving!

Here are a couple of questions for your consideration. What if we look at “the holidays” from the perspective of faith in Jesus the Christ? (Then, of course, we would use the word, “Christmas!”) What if we think of how we’re going to give our time and our money and material gifts from that perspective? How will we honor Jesus with our gifts? After all, that’s the origin of giving gifts at this time of the year – because we are celebrating the birth of the Christ child – celebrating the Christ Mass.

From the perspective of faith in Jesus the Christ it’s easy to be bemused and chagrined by marketing messages received. Give a set of socket wrenches to honor Jesus? Give a microwave oven to honor Jesus? Give a Lexus to honor Jesus?

Giving gifts is a wonderful thing to do in itself! And, again, you will do best if your loved ones receive gifts from you that they appreciate receiving! But what if you also give time and money and even material gifts that honor Jesus – in caring for the poor, for instance, because Jesus was a Palestinian peasant; or caring for the homeless because an important part of the Christmas story in Luke is that the new born Christ child is far from any comforts of home?

What possibilities come to mind? New socks and underwear are luxuries for those who are homeless and being cared for in Community of Faith shelters in our church buildings. New books and toys are luxuries for children being sheltered at Avalon. Money is desperately needed by Lutheran Disaster Response to buy and ship supplies for those homeless and impoverished in the Philippines. How can you give your time – to offer tutoring to a school child in need of a mentor, to a location of the homeless shelter in any of our church buildings, to the community medical clinics that serve the poor, to FISH? Aren’t there countless examples of honoring Jesus with our gifts?

Here’s my favorite story on this subject, from a Christmas Eve in the 1990s. I was serving St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in Wilmington, Delaware. We worshiped in a magnificent gothic building. The best organ in the city could rattle the stained glass windows. The choir made an impressive procession down the 67-foot long center aisle. On this one Christmas Eve, I was standing with the choir members, crowded in the back of the church, listening to the splendid organ prelude. It was a magical, romantic and sensual moment of beautiful sight and sound. Then, just before we began singing “O Come, All Ye Faithful” for the entrance hymn, a young adult began squeezing past. She was a staff member of a homeless shelter. She whispered to me, “I’m so sorry I’m late! I had to work late at the shelter tonight.” I stopped her. I turned her towards me and squeezed her shoulder. I said, “If there’s anyone who doesn’t need to apologize it’s you – working at a homeless shelter on Christmas Eve. Bless you.”

Bless you in the ways you will give your time and money and material items during these next weeks and into the New Year, honoring Jesus with your gifts.

Pastor Andy Ballentine

Worship, Fellowship and Servanthood during the Holy Days

- **Give thanks** the evening before Thanksgiving, **Wednesday, November 27, 7:30 PM**. Members of St. Martin's Episcopal Church will join us here in this informal worship service, featuring an opportunity to share your thanksgivings, followed by Holy Communion.
- **Holden Evening Prayer, Wednesdays, December 4, 11, 18, 7:00 PM**
December 4: Hoping for Fulfillment (Isaiah 2:1-5)
December 11: Hoping for An End to Conflict (Isaiah 11:1-10)
December 18: Hoping for An End to Fear (Isaiah 35:1-10)
- **Christmas Caroling** to ill and homebound folks **Sunday, December 22**
4:00 PM: We meet in the Fellowship Hall to organize.
6:00 PM: We'll return to the Fellowship Hall to share a meal together. Bring chili and/or cornbread to share! (If you're not able to make the caroling, feel free to join the meal gathering!)
- **Christmas Eve** (all services with candle light):
5:00 PM: Worship featuring the children and youth of the congregation. Holy Communion
6:30 PM: Pot luck dinner in the Fellowship Hall
7:30 PM: Worship featuring sermon, choir and Holy Communion.
10:00 PM: Worship featuring sermon, choir and Holy Communion.
- **Christmas Day:**
10:00 AM Worship at St. Martin's Episcopal Church (Jamestown Road, on the right, just past Rt. 199, heading towards Jamestown)
- **First Sunday of Christmas, December 29:**



Big News!

Our "Primary Candidate" for co-pastor to work with **Pastor Ballentine** will be here on **December 8**. She will preach at both services and interact informally with the congregation after each service. A call can only be issued by the congregation during a Congregational Meeting. Stay tuned for the date of the meeting.



St. Stephen November Council Minutes

The Council met on November 19, 2013.

- ♦ Council met with the candidate recommended by the Call Committee for our new Co-Pastor, and had an informative time of questions and discussion with the candidate.

- ◆ After the candidate left, Council and representatives of the Call Committee discussed the candidate, noting that the Finance Committee believes we can afford the expense of a Co-Pastor. Council thinks it is important that the Congregation understands this is a co-pastor serving on an equal level, and working with, not for, Andy.
- ◆ A motion to present this candidate to the Congregation was passed unanimously by the Council members present. President Egloff will notify the Congregation of the date when the candidate will preach at St. Stephen and meet with the Congregation. Hopefully this will be in early December.
- ◆ A tentative date is set for January 5 for a Congregational meeting to vote on calling the candidate. Since this individual is currently serving another congregation, confidentiality is still important.
- ◆ Council approved spending \$1,762 to replace broken door closers on 6 doors, since this is a safety hazard.
- ◆ Council extended its thanks to the Call Committee for their work.

David F. Clark, Secretary



Monday Evening Book Study for January - February: Selected Stories of Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor is one of the greatest American short story writers. She lived and died in the small town of Milledgeville, Georgia. She was a Roman Catholic, attending mass every day, living in the deep south of the mid-20th century. She was sick during most of her adult life, suffering from lupus, a disease that killed her in 1964 at age 39.

With those unusual circumstances of her life, she wrote exquisite short stories that are saturated with God. She one time said that, in each of her stories, a character is faced with a moment of grace. How will he or she react? But there is nothing sweet about her stories! Her stories are often shocking. They are full of odd characters and feature bizarre plot twists. Our conversations will be lively!

We will read and discuss seven of her stories. (It was a very hard thing for me to choose only seven! But you'll be able to read the others.) We will meet on these **Monday evenings, 7:00 PM each time: January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 16, 24.**

The book we'll order is *The Complete Stories*. The price for each copy will be about \$14. If you'd like us to order you a copy, please contact me at pas-torab@saintstephenlutheran.net by **Sunday, December 22.**

Pastor Andy Ballentine



Pipe Peeps

I welcome the celebration of the Holden Evening Prayer during the Season of Advent. With this busy season, sometimes I find it difficult to get a few moments for quiet prayer, at a time when I am most in need of it! It is a gift to have this opportunity to gather as Church for a few precious moments of peaceful meditation. I hope you will take advantage of this beautiful Service and join us on **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 PM during Advent.**

The choir has been rehearsing diligently for Advent and Christmas, and recently we have offered a few anthems which were quite challenging. I am impressed by the willingness of the choir to try new compositions, and we have been trying to blend as a single voice made out of many. That's the goal of a good choir musically, but there is also a lesson to be learned in our faith journey. How important it is when we listen to others and try and make our voice complement our sisters and brothers. For Christmas Eve, we will sing a new anthem arranged by an American composer, Evelyn Larter, which is a new take on an old English Carol.

On **Sunday, February 2**, I will offer a concert in the sanctuary as my way of saying "Thank You" for the support I have received at St. Stephen. This year I am delighted that I will be joined by our own **Thom Recktenwald**. Thom is an excellent flautist, and his unique golden flute has a most pleasing tonal quality. Please mark your calendars for this exciting opportunity to hear some great music.

Your Brother in Christ,

Michael Monaco

Unwelcome Guests



Recently while in a retail store I was caught off guard by hearing the Christmas song "I'll be home for Christmas" What?! It was only the first week of November!!! We hadn't yet celebrated Thanksgiving. And, in hearing that song, it reminded me of family, the family members with whom I would no longer be able to celebrate Christmas.

Missing family is but one of the holiday stressors. Between the commercialization of the holidays, the diminishing hours of sun, and the pressure to have a perfect Christmas, we can open the doors to unwelcome guests -- Stress and Depression.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, consider the following practical tips to minimize if not prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays.

- **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- **Reach out.** Volunteering your time to help others is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect. Families and rituals change. Find new ways to celebrate.
- **Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much you can afford to spend. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts and just create more financial stress.

- **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities.
- **Learn to say no.** Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.
- **Keep practicing healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
- **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do.
- **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

For more ideas check out the Sunday bulletins, "Care Notes" in the Gathering Space and Health Ministry Office, or talk with . . .

Marcie Clark, Parish Nurse



Join in the beautiful music of Advent!

"Carols from around the World" begins **Sunday, December 1** during the Faith Formation hour. Join **Ina Berkey** in the Worship Space at **10:00 AM** to explore the carols and customs of Advent. Bring your coffee and grab a hymn book. See you then.



Communication Audit Summary and Recommendations

*(Editor's note: Gettysburg Seminary student **Christine Roe** is spending Sundays with us at St. Stephen during this year, for the "Teaching Parish" component of her seminary education. The purpose of Teaching Parish is to give a student another model of how a congregation lives and works together, in preparation for her ministry calling after seminary. Below is the summary of the first report she submitted to her professor. The subject is how St. Stephen communicates its ministry to the world.)*

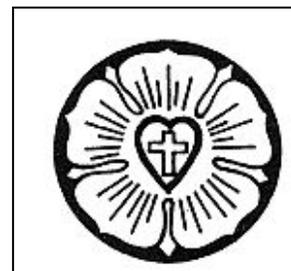
St. Stephen Lutheran Church is my very active and integrative classroom for the Lutheran seminary I attend at Gettysburg Pennsylvania. In this particular report, I have been instructed to look at how St. Stephen communicates its ministry to the world. The devices of communication consist of ways St. Stephen is seen, heard or read by its community. The pieces of communication are means by which its audience conveys itself to the world. The rationale for this class stems from the need to prepare leadership positions in the church. It is believed that this preparation needs an interpretive framework for understanding congregations. It is believed by the seminary that this framework will bring together a theological interpretation, upon careful observation of human communities. Therefore, this integrative approach merges the worlds of theological studies with engaging congregational realities. It happens through careful conversation, study and reflection.

I began my integrative interactions with St. Stephen on September 22. The relationship began its formation a year before this date, due to my desire to have a Teaching Parish near my home town of Newport News. St. Stephen was recommended to me by my home congregation Pastor, I received approval from my Field Education Professor, I received approval from my candidacy committee with the Virginia Synod and then ultimately approval from St. Stephen. From the moment I arrived at St. Stephen I was welcomed. Pastor Ballentine and I met and he asked me what I wanted to learn from this experience. From the moment we discussed my desires, he listened to my

hopes and expectations and he introduced me to members of this church. Everyone I met embraced me within this community. I met formally with ten members and informally with fifteen members of the community. Within all of these encounters we shared dialogues, reflections, desires, stories and hopes. It was evident from these encounters that God is present.

The communication that was shared in these times together reflected both the vision and the mission statements of St. Stephen. It is evident that this community nurtures itself in the Word of God, as seen in the ministries, in the lives, in the loves and in the world in and around St. Stephen. The language that is utilized reflects the continued walk with God that is witnessed in this church. For instance, Sunday school is called Faith Formation, the word volunteer is not seen and instead ministry is seen and heard, inclusive language is heard from the pulpit and in the writings of the newsletter and the web site and there is an active and ongoing modeling of the Word of God seen in this church. My observations of this communication were witnessed, for instance, as I saw a ten year old mentored by her brother in the ministry of ushers, a three year old mentored by her mother in the ministry of altar guild, a college student shared her faith story from the pulpit and a stranger who came to this church to hear this person's faith story.

I hope that members of St. Stephen will welcome an opportunity to further discuss this Communication Audit. I hope that there will be an open dialogue about the means of grace found in the Faith Formation groups. I hope that members will welcome a conversation about what they communicate to the world about their theology. I strongly recommend St. Stephen reflect on what is unique about this community regarding its relationship with college students, with the ongoing seasonal visitors and with its continued support of the ELCA. I would like the opportunity to provide leadership in these conversations.



My Journey With (and without) Stephen Ministry



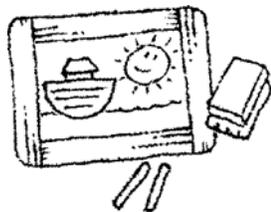
December brings a time of cheer, goodwill, and celebration of Christ's birth. We try to find just the right present for our friends and family. We imagine their delight and take pleasure in giving the gift. How about a different kind of gift? One for someone you may not know. It is the gift of time -- the time taken to listen, to reassure and reflect God's love, to stand by a person "after." The time taken after Christmas and visits of grandchildren leave them alone again. Time given after the funeral, the casseroles, and the promise of visits that trail off in a few weeks or months. After the job is "centralized", after the veteran comes home with invisible wounds. You won't get squeals of delight and you may not even think you have done anything special.

Stephen Ministers provide confidential, Christian based care giving for those in times of trial. Like the monetary gifts we hear of this time of year, we are "paying it forward". We are taking God's gift to us and using a tiny fraction of our lives as a gift to help others.

Consider the service of Stephen Ministry in 2014. It is time well spent, and time that will provide you blessings in years to come. Classes start in January, so contact a Stephen Leader or Pastor Ballentine to start your journey. *"I put my trust in you; show me the road that I must walk, for I lift up my soul to you". Psalm 144:8*

Cindy Gibbs

Preschool News



The Preschool is preparing for Christmas! The children are busy making Christmas gifts for their parents and decorating the school with wonderful Christmas crafts. The children are learning about the story of Christmas, and the birth of baby Jesus.

We are collecting food for the St. Olaf food pantry. Feel free to drop off any canned goods, cereals, pasta

etc. at the Preschool. We will be bringing the food to St. Olaf on **December 17** after the party. Last year we donated over 25 grocery bags of food! Let's help everyone have a Merry Christmas!

The children are making Christmas cards for the patients at Riverside Hospital. A big "thank you" to one of our mothers, Jesse Goodrich, Human Resources for Riverside Hospital, for asking us to participate in this wonderful act of kindness.

The 4-year-old and 5-year-old classes will be singing Christmas Carols at the Great Wolf Lodge on **Monday, December 9 at 6:00 PM.**

We will be having our Christmas parties on **Monday, December 16** for the 4-year-old and 5-year-old classes, and **Tuesday, December 17** for the 3-year-old classes. We are expecting a special visit from Santa Claus! School will be closed for Christmas break from **Wednesday, December 18** through **Wednesday, January 1, 2014**. The students and staff would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! See you in 2014!

Registration for 2014 and 2015 is open for all current families and members of St. Stephen. Registration opens to the public on **January 6, 2014**. We will have our annual Open House on **Sunday January 27, 2014 from 1:30 to 3:30 PM**. Tell your friends about our wonderful Preschool! Last year we filled up by February and had a waiting list.

Lauren McQuain

The Church Mouse Hears



Many congratulations are in order!

- Keara Mahony was chosen to be one of Queen's Lake Middle School cheerleaders.
- **Tom Berkey** is a model for all of us of how to care for our bodies. He is top finisher in his age group (75 and above) at the recent Army 10 Miler road running race in Washington, DC.





- **Austin Pierce** received the news October 24 from the Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association that he placed first in the state for Jazz drum set. He'll perform in the All VA Jazz Ensemble for the Virginia Music Educators Association annual conference in Hot Springs at The Omni Homestead Resort in November. We give thanks for God's gifts to Austin!



- Cheers to **Emma Timberg** for her election as the Student Council Association Historian at Stonehouse Elementary School.



- Cheers to **Logan Timberg** for becoming the Citizen of the Month at Stonehouse Elementary School.



- We celebrate God's blessings of **Maria Happel Traver!!** Maria, a former Lutheran Student Association member, has been working on a PhD in Molecular Genetics and Microbiology at Duke since her graduation from William and Mary. She

successfully defended her thesis: "The Effects of GMS Immunity-Related GTPases on Guanylate-Binding Proteins, Protein Aggregate Formation, and Macroautophagy." Wow!



- It was special having **Pastor Dwayne Westerman** with us on November 17. His talk between services was close to the hearts of many of us who support the program in Tanzania!
- The Prayer Shawl knitters are having a wonderful time each Friday afternoon – knitting, chatting, and learning from each other. LSA student, **Carolyn McKenna**, is a wonderful addition to the group of "older folk" who are there. Please join us – call **Sandy Peterkin** at the church for particulars.
- It was nice seeing **Lou Rossiter's** picture in the *Virginia Gazette* for November 20 as he recently presented a program on health care legislation to the Kiwanis Club.
- The same *Virginia Gazette* carried a long article about homeless students in our school system and quoted **Stephanie Leek**, the school division's homeless education liaison, several times with valuable insight saying, "Sometimes in our community it's not something we really want to believe is here, but it really is."



December Birthdays

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Abigail Cummings | |
| 2 | Gisela Fashing | Peter Geier |
| 3 | Glenn Carlson, Jr. | |
| 4 | Andy Ballentine | Mitchell Stauffer |
| | Sarah Toler | Dorothy Wright |
| 6 | Chandler Reubush | |
| 7 | Glenn Carlson | |

- 8 Kristin Cosby
- 11 John Allen
- 12 Jean Gulesian Joey Pierce
- 13 Birdie Burton Pamela Franck
- Marj Gottschalk-Trone Lori Harms
- 14 Cindy Gibbs Hannalore Herion
- 15 Carla Javier
- 16 Katherine Hyland Ursula Murden
- 18 Gretchen Williams
- 20 Kathryn Ogborn Tom Peterkin
- 21 June Henderson Casey Toler
- Robert Voigt
- 23 Jessica Finch Kasprzyk
- 24 Amy Bergh Jan MacQuestion
- 26 Carolee Bush
- 27 Otis Childress
- 30 Rosalie Frey
- 31 Betty Shaughnessy

Is your name missing? Is your date wrong? Please let us know immediately!
 RevNovember 23, 2013



Address Changes

Ward Bourn wcbourn@mac.net

Daniel and Deloris Hanley
 410 Merrimac Trail #6
 Williamsburg, VA 23185
 757-345-3598
d45hanl@yahoo.com

Betty McKee
 185 Augusta Lane
 Waverly IA 50677-9258

Terry Hinders
terry.hinders@gmail.com



Prayers

Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for **Al Bean, Debbie DeLong, Cindy Gibbs, Bob Hanny, Jack Harris, Michelle Ivey, Glenn Joppa, Lana Olson, Dan Stimson, Linda Vonderheide, James Wiers and Soni York**. *Pray for those who are caring for these loved ones.* **Pray God's blessings upon Christine and Jon Hallman, Rachel and Andrew Martin** and all parents who are awaiting the births of their babies.

Pray for these who are physically unable to get to worship: **Dick Batman, Elsa Englert, Ruth Ennis, Bernice Fahncke, Bob and Angie Groom, Elsie Hall, Willetta Heising, Jean Kuhn, Helen Lenox, Jo Schumacher, Jean Shivel, Dot Wright and Lois Wysesong**

Pray God's blessings upon

Those who are **homeless in Williamsburg**, and those who are serving the homeless through the Community of Faith Mission.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Nathalee Accomando, Nadine Adams, Rita Adams, Millie Andrews-Young, Juliann Balistreri, John Bazakos, Lilian Bean, Lois Bomba, Carol Boyer, Bob Canny, Joanne Carlson, Ralph Clark, Rebecca Boyer Clark, Michael Compton, Rodger Coulter, Betsy Cummings, Jeris DeKievit, Barbara Driscoll, Maxine Eittreim, Mary Egger, Nick Finley, Bette Fissel, Margaret Flanders, Natalie Fulton, Mary Funkhouser, Lori Galloway, Their Giardi, Lenora Godette, Bill and Nancy Gottschalk, Eleanor Hallman, Eleanor Harms, Mary Clara Haury, Janis Hepburn, Carol Horton, Tim Killian, Brittany Liberta, Mildred Lindblad, Nancy Luken, Laura Martin, Bertha and Sheena McCabe, Allison and Pat McCool, Helen Minnick, Stephen Monaco, Heidi Morris, Laura Mraz, the Nasra family, Ryleigh Pate, Ray Petro, Lisa Query, George Rauchfuss, Lisa Rivolta, Carol Robinson, Joan Roderick, Dorothy Roger, Betty and Bill Roth, Bryan Sanderson, Felicia Scala, Roland Scheiding, Bernadine Schlicht, Linda Smalarz, Kristian Smith, Nancy Spaniol, Evelyn Spear, Bill Thies, Linda Thies, Bob VanRosedale, Annette Vosteen, Louise Walker, Wanda Watkins, Audrey Kay Watson, Helen Wiers, Garrett Wood and Lois Wright.

Letters to the Congregation



FISH again thanked us for our contributions. ELCA World Hunger wrote us about the help and hope our gifts to families in need provides throughout the entire world. They also thanked us for the \$2,223. 76 to Tornadoes-United States. The Williamsburg Volunteer Fire Department thanked us for the \$100 donation. Olde Towne Medical Center thanked us for our donation of \$1,500. We have a very generous congregation and that has been particularly important in these difficult times.

From Christine Roe

Dear Sisters and Brothers at St. Stephen,

My semester at the seminary will soon end. You will continue to see me on Sundays until December 15 and I will be with you all at the 7:30 service on the eve of Christmas. In the month of January, I am going with classmates and professors to the Holy Land. I will then return during the spring semester, starting February 2. This letter is to express my appreciation to you all for your time, your stories, your encouragement and, most of all, for your love. You embody the love of Christ in all that you do and it is an honor to be here at this time with you all. Every one of us is on a journey and I am grateful to have you along this journey with me.

God's peace be with you always,

Christine Roe

Bryan Goetsch
Robert Pushaw
Dino Polizois
Elise Emanuel
Reed and Karen Nester
Phyllis Stewart
Richard and Janyce Olson
Joan Dorsey and Chad DeFede
Bill and Jane Holcombe

Barbara Weekes

Elise Emanuel
Susan Britcher
Bill and Jane Holcombe



Dorothy Reeves

Theologian in Residence Fund

Elsie Burkle
John and Helen Allen

December Community of Faith Mission for the Williamsburg Homeless

I continue to be humbled by the Community of Faith Mission and St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Each interaction with the homeless of Williamsburg brings Pastor Dwayne Westerman's sermon this past Sunday to life – how much we take for granted each day. A table on which to eat...A chair on which to sit...Clothes...Shoes...Electricity...Heat...A bed...Safety... Friendship...Privacy...Food...Drink...



In three days of serving food – 23 people from St. Stephen came together to cook and to serve hot meals to those seeking shelter in the Williamsburg United Methodist Church. Those helping with breakfast and lunch preparation reported to our kitchen ready to work at 4:00 AM. Those who came to help with dinner stayed to clean up our kitchen until 9:30 PM. Many offered to come back to help – “Call me; I’m just 10 minutes away. I can help again if you need it.” No one complained about the hours, the slow ovens, or any task that needed to be accomplished. I am humbled by the outpouring of support and love from our congregation. All in all 54 people of St. Stephen helped with check-ins, dinner cooking and serving, overnight staffing (two shifts) breakfast cooking and serving and check-out.

“Thank you.” “Thank you so much.” Those being served our meals expressed so much gratitude. Looking up at me – looking into my eyes – showing thankfulness for the simplest of things. A second serving of meatloaf... a refill of iced tea... homemade cookies. I am humbled at how little it takes to bring a smile and overwhelming gratitude.

The man was very tall and didn't talk to us much. He had plastic bags inside his canvas shoes to keep his feet dry. He packed all of his possessions into pockets of the many layers of clothing he wore – to keep warm and to simply carry. He spoke to himself a bit. Making a check list of those things he had. I find myself doing that at times, too. I'm hoping I can get him a pair of warm shoes that will fit.



Camaraderie is developing among the guests staying at the shelter. On Monday one or two were scattered at each table. On Wednesday morning, a group of five men sat together. “You know where to find me, man, if you need any help.” An older man offered to a man in his early 20s. He came over to me and said, “He's so young. I wish someone had been around to give me advice in the beginning.”

“I get to play guardian angel today.” another man told me. Usually he sleeps in his car, but that day he would be using it to help get one of the other men to appointments.

One couple sits apart from the rest – rarely speaking – eating very little. I tried to make conversation, but they were not interested in talking. I wonder what journey they are on, and am pained that I cannot reach them. Others feel differently, but forgetting WHY we are there serving the poor. We are not there for appreciation or thanks -- we are simply using our hands to do God's work. It is a privilege.

There was a heated discussion on Wednesday night. One of the men took exception to another who snored loudly all night. I try to imagine sleeping in a room with 10 other people, unable to simply leave the room if I wanted. To go and watch television. To go and surf the internet. To raid the fridge or pantry for a midnight



snack. I am humbled again by all that I take for granted.

During the discussion, one of the guests came up to me and told me not to worry, that he would protect me, if needed. I was not worried for our safety, but appreciated his concern and offer to protect. He is a big man. He told me that he wasn't there to fight – but if he was protecting me he wouldn't get into trouble. I am humbled by this man's valor and willingness to stand by my side.

There are only two women and 10 men staying at the shelter tonight. Sharon* is a girl at home sitting and eating with the men. She tells me that she probably won't be at the shelter on Friday night because she needs a good night's sleep – she has an eight-hour shift to work on Saturday.

“Why can't you get a good night's sleep here?”

“Because they wake us up at 5:30.”

“Where will you sleep?”

“In my car. There are two kinds of homeless. I'm the good homeless – I've got a car.” She smiles, “It's only going down to the 50s Friday night, I'll sleep better in my car.”

“Where will you park to sleep?”

“At one of the churches. It's safe there, and I know the code to get into the building to have a shower in the morning. Maybe there will be some water in the refrigerator for me to drink.”

She works in one of the shops I frequent. I'll be sure to look for her the next time I'm there.

Jim* tells me that he is going to stay in the shelter all winter. He is working hard and saving his money for the security deposit on an apartment.

“How was your day?” This was a staple question as our family sat around the dinner table. Each in turn told about his or her day. The question takes on a different tone when asked of someone homeless. Each evening they come in from the cold into a warm place, with new faces there to help them and to share their room. There is no consistency except in the inconsistency.

Dinner is served from 7:00-8:00 PM. On Monday night we were asked to prepare a plate for a man who was coming in from work, but couldn't make it to the shelter before 8:00. Generally those latecomers are given just a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. We prepared a plate of meatloaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, dinner roll and butter for him. On Wednesday night Larry* came in at 7:55 and was so pleased that we were able to give him dinner of homemade barbeque, coleslaw and baked beans. I asked if he was the one we made the plate for on Monday – his face broke into a beautiful grin. “Yes, ma'am, thank you.” He wore work boots, and at breakfast, told us poor circulation in his feet made them hurt. When he came in for dinner, he looked so very tired, having worked hard all day. He did not want to talk, just eat and go to bed.

The title of Pastor Westerman's sermon was “Thank God for the Poor!” He told us that through serving the poor we will see Jesus. I am humbled at seeing Jesus in Jim, Sharon, Larry, and the others at the Community of Faith Shelter. We all worked hard this week, **Jo Hanny** was masterful in coordinating all those who wanted to serve. We must always remember that we are blessed by doing God's work with our hands.

* Not their real names
Sandy Peterkin



Congregational Officers:

President	Keith Egloff	229-7859
Vice President	Emily Rossiter	345-6206
Secretary	Dave Clark	603-6346
Treasurer	Paul Kristiansen	220-2709
Financial Secretary	Samantha Shearer	258-1337

Church Council:

Cathy Bingman	(515) 971-6915
Dave Clark	603-6346
Keith Egloff	229-7859
Bob Hanny	229-5080
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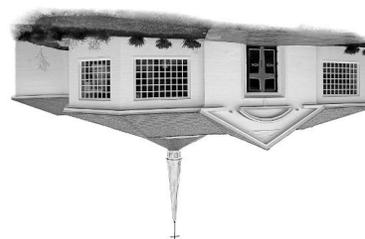
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