

Goin' Fishin'
Jeremiah 32:27

My dad and my uncle used to go fishing a lot when I was a kid, at least every other weekend. Often I would get to come along, and would climb up in the cab of the truck towing the boat, sit in the middle, and try not to get my knees bruised as my uncle drove his stick-shift.

We always seemed to go to Lake 14, and yes, that is the actual name of a lake. In Michigan there are so many fresh water inland lakes, they started to be numbered rather than named. I didn't like Lake 14 – I could never catch anything there. My dad and uncle would always have more luck than me; I just sat in the middle of the boat watching my bobber float on the water while the other two guys went bobber-less and pulled in one lake trout after another.

After Stacey and I had been married a few years, I decided to go on a fishing trip by myself. I packed up my car with pole, lures, and a lot of good intentions. I caught weeds, tree branches and something that I think might have once been an old shoe. I returned home defeated after stopping by our local meat market to pick up some already cleaned and filleted Perch (for whatever reason, Stacey wouldn't believe that I caught them that way).

I'm not a fisherman. Never have been, and I imagine never will be. I don't have the patience, apparently I can't cast a rod worth beans, and until the goal of fishing becomes bringing home a bucket of weeds, Nemo and all his friends are safe from me.

I have all this on my mind today because I received an invitation in the mail from Lutheran Hour Ministries for a "Men's NetWork North American Fishing Tournament." When I saw the advertisement I was immediately drawn back to being that little boy sitting in a boat, shivering from the lake breeze and watching my bobber just lay silently on the water. I remembered those feelings of hopelessness, embarrassment, and awkwardness as I realized I just didn't fit in with 'the guys.' Really I was more of a third wheel than anything else.

That, then, led me to think about the Disciple Peter. Here's a guy whose whole life was about goin' fishin', right up until the time Jesus invited him to go for a stroll on the water. After Peter was rescued when he started to sink, he must have felt embarrassed, hopeless and incredibly awkward around Jesus and 'the guys.'

But he was the only one who got out of the boat to go to Jesus. He was the only one who was bold enough to ask to walk on the water. I like the title of Phillip Yancey's book, If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat.

Peter asked for an audacious thing, and Jesus said 'yes.' He went from "Peter the fisherman" to "Peter the water-walker."

Lord, make me a water-walker. Make LCC a water-walking church – a people used by You to accomplish the humanly impossible. Call us out of the boat, and lead us on to the water. Make us water-walkers.

Pastor Michael

ADOPT AN EXPENSE PROGRAM

(January – December 2009)

We are starting fresh to get the “Adopt-an-Expense” program to coincide with the church’s fiscal year. So... below is the list of “Adopt-An-Expense” program items for 2009, so far. As mentioned at the January congregational meeting, the **goal is to get \$1,600 of adopted expenses by the end of the year.** **We are half way to our goal by the end of May!** Does this mean we can beat the goal??? Many thanks to Cory and Don Burroughs, Gudrun Davis, Jackie Johnson, Patty Owen and the 4th-6th grade Sunday School, and Audrey and Ray Yeingst for their contributions. Please remember that you can adopt a portion of any expense. Every little bit helps!!!

<u>Item</u>	<u>Approx. cost</u>	<u>Remain. Amt</u>	<u>Adopted</u> <small>(this year)</small>
2009 Expenses			
Sunday School Supplies			
Fall material	380.00	240.00	140.00
Winter material	380.00	380.00	
Spring material	380.00	380.00	
VBS Supplies	1000.00	1000.00	
Offering envelopes	500.00	500.00	
Disposable Communion Cups	110.00	0.00	110.00
Portals of Prayer	160.00	160.00	
Confirmation Scarves	40.00	40.00	
Certificates (Baptism, 1 st communion...)	60.00	60.00	
Altar Candles	500.00	500.00	
Eternal Candles	125.00	125.00	
Calendars	30.00	30.00	
Communion cruet	94.00	0.00	94.00
Holy Week bulletin covers	90.00	90.00	
Pastors’ wives conference	90.00	0.00	90.00
Puppet Ministry			
Deluxe Puppet Pack	116.00	0.00	116.00
6 Inbetweens	144.00	39.00	105.00
6 Full/Half Body Puppets	240.00	40.00	200.00
Stage Materials/Props	300.00	300.00	

TOTAL ADOPTED: \$855.00

LCC HAPPENINGS

June is here! Last month I boasted that we always have the newsletter available by the first of the month. This month I have to eat my words – so sorry!

- **Janet Fisher and Kyle McGivney** coordinating Mainspring on May 16th, feeding about 80 people last month. WOW! Many thanks to all the cooks who stepped up and made this a very successful day.
- **The New Bethlehem Coffee House** concluded its 2008/2009 season with the annual cookout and band. Unfortunately we ended up indoors, but still had an enjoyable afternoon. The Coffee House depends on the support and efforts of our church members to be the successful ministry it is. A big shout out goes to the following who have assisted the Coffee House this season: Janet Fisher, Sandy Landstrom, John Kaczorowski, Kyle McGivney, Bruce Bakeberg, Dottie Hayes, Pat Beal, Tom, Tommy, Joe and Greg Chiarelli, Satu Donahoe, Bobby, Kristin and Kayla McDermott, Agnes Abrahamson, Melinda Rhoads, Chuck Lemke, Pastor Michael, Jim and Claire Tracey, Jen, Madison, Haley and Paige Dwyer, Kat and Tina Ritz, Michael and Zachary Graden, and Rob Hendrickson. Thank you so much for your time, talents and energy. **Last but not least, JILL CHIARELLI, thank you for all you do!**
- **The men met on May 30th**, for their monthly Bible Study and breakfast, postponed this month due to the Iron Sharpens Iron conference and Memorial Day weekend. Men's monthly breakfasts will resume in September.
- **The Women's book study group**, which met Monday evenings from 7:15 PM to 8:15 PM during the school year, completed their study of "*Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*" by Joanna Weaver.
- **The Women of the Cross met for a field trip on May 29th**. The group went out to dinner and then to the Christian bookstore in Brockton.
- **A small group of five men** attended the Iron Sharpens Iron conference in Worcester on May 16th. Feedback is that the conference was great and that hopefully more will attend the next time
- **A Congregational Meeting was held Sunday, May 31st** at 10:30 AM following our worship service. Status reports were presented at that time. However, the main focus of the meeting was to vote in a slate of council members for those positions whose term ended this year. A list of the persons voted into office and status reports presented at the meeting are included later in the newsletter.
- **Also on May 31st**, several should be thanked for sticking around after the congregational meeting to help with a clean-up of the exterior. Many thanks to the Muller family (John, Dawn, Davis and Jennah), Bill Beal, Al Hieber, Sandy Landstrom and Cory Burroughs for all your help!
- **Puppets of the Cross** started in May, with their first presentation on May 17th. We have received several contributions to fund this ministry through our Adopt an Expense program and are hoping to have the program fully funded by the time September rolls around!
- **Women and girls of the Cross** had another breakfast on Saturday, May 9th at 9 AM. Many thanks to Lea Bouchard who pampered us all by serving breakfast! Following breakfast, the women had a quick rehearsal for the Mother's Day service.
- **Mother's Day, the Women of the Cross** prepared the service, honoring several of the very special women of the Bible. For those who weren't there, this was a very special and moving service. Our thanks go out to all the women of our congregation who participated in this wonderful service!
- **Our birthday celebration on May 17th** was a great success. We all enjoyed celebrating our birthdays with others who have birthdays the same month. The cakes were yummy. I think we all sampled a few different cakes – not just the one for our birth month. Many thanks to all the terrific bakers!

JUNE AND BEYOND

Scrip Program for June – the order date will be Sunday, June 7th, with the card pick-up date being June 14th (just in time for Father’s Day - think of that nice meal out!!) If you miss the order date, or decide mid-month that you need more gift cards, all is not lost! We now stock gift cards for the most popular venues; grocery stores and local restaurants to name a few, which can be purchased throughout the month based on availability.

Mainspring, on June 13th, is being coordinated by **the Graden family**. This month, the Graden family are planning to treat the people at Mainspring to pulled pork barbeque which they are going to purchase. Therefore, rather than having people make meals, they are looking for cash donations to help offset the cost of the meal. Please see either Stacey or Mike Graden if you would like to make a donation.

Thursday evening summer services are here! Thursday evening services at 7:00 PM will be held now until the Thursday before Labor Day. The first service will be Thursday, May 28th and the last will be August 27th. Please note the time change this year – 7:00 PM rather than 7:30 PM!

The Lutheran Church of the Way 6th Annual Golf outing is scheduled for Sunday, June 7th. This golf tournament is an event to raise money to sponsor people willing to take time out of their busy lives to go on mission trips to Kenya, for example. We have 3 or 4 foursomes participating in the golf outing this year – should be a great time.

The Annual Congregational Picnic is scheduled for Sunday, June 14th, at the Williamson’s house! Harriet and Bill want to host this traditional event once again! And how many of us realize they have been doing this for 30 years! A sign-up sheet will be on the bulletin board this coming Sunday (6/7) so that we can get an idea of numbers. Bring a lawn chair, a dessert or salad, a friend, an appetite (get the gist). We will be collecting a free will offering to offset the cost of the food. **BUT WE CAN PLEASE USE SOME HELP!!** We will need help getting some tables and chairs over to the Williamsons prior to Sunday. Also, we need someone to do the shopping. Jill Chiarelli has donated hotdogs and hamburgers left from the coffeehouse picnic (don’t worry – they’re frozen) to the cause, but will still need some more “stuff”. Please call the office if you are able to help out!

VBS 2009 – July 20-24 – SAVE THE DATES! This year our theme will be Discovery Canyon Adventure. We welcome all children age 3 to those entering the 4th grade. A registration form is included in the newsletter. Older children and adults who could help during the week would be greatly appreciated. Please see Cathy Hayes for more information.

The flower chart needs some attention over the summer months. The cost for altar flowers is \$30.00, and you can take the flowers after the service. Sign-up is on the bulletin board.

Dana McGivney has offered to supplement the Capital Fund Drive campaign by offering his services to post and sell things on Craigslist that are currently cluttering our attics, etc. More detailed information on this fundraising opportunity is included in the newsletter, but this is a wonderful way for us all to help the church without all the work associated with a yard sale or auction! Thanks Dana for taking this on!!

Hanover Day is coming, June 20th! This is a special day to promote and recognize all the businesses and organizations in Hanover. Our evangelism committee is busy getting ready for this event. We will have a table with information about our church. We need people to set up, man the table and clean up.

Please see Carla Errichiello-Hill or Holly Brazel to volunteer. Everyone is encouraged to stop by (at the field in the center of town) to show their support!

Volunteer Opportunities

The strength of our church has always been largely due to the commitment of our members. It is important that we all continue to help and volunteer, which is even more important as we help support a new pastor. There are many ways each of us can choose to help. Below are just a few...

Interior and Exterior Help Jackie Johnson, the Deacon of the Interior, would love the help of someone with a 30 foot sep ladder and a love of heights to help change some of the burned out light bulbs in the church.

Hanover Habitat for Humanity – Plans for the house being built in Hanover by Habitat for Humanity are well underway. Each Hanover church is being asked to support this endeavor, both by supplying volunteers and food as the building starts, projected to begin in May.

- Stacey Stahl and Kyle McGivney have volunteered to coordinate food. We will be supplying food for the volunteers every sixth week. A sign-up is on the bulletin board for people to volunteer for food detail. Please sign-up and include phone number and email address so that they have the means to contact you when it is our turn.
- LCC Habitat Volunteer Coordinator needed: Please contact Nick Iovino (volunteer@sshhabitat.org or 781-843-9080 x18) if you would be willing to coordinate volunteer workers on behalf of our church. Also, please let our office know (781-826-5121) if you volunteer for this position so that we don't keep asking...

Mainspring – We supply meals to Mainspring on the 2nd Saturday of each month. A menu is usually posted around the first of the month and we can always use a few more cooks and bakers. The last few months we have been feeding close to 100! There is a **sign-up for 2009 on the bulletin board** for volunteers to coordinate each month in 2009! We still need volunteers for several months. This involves picking the menu, taking the meals to Mainspring and serving the meals.

Remember the Hanover Food Pantry, it can always use more donations! Also, the Food Pantry would like to help the environment and save space in their facility by giving out reusable grocery bags to patrons. This will eliminate the need for a mountain of plastic/paper bags on the premise. So, in addition to food items, the Hanover Food Pantry would love donations of reusable bags which can be purchased at any grocery store for \$1.00 per bag. Other specifics needed by the pantry are bar soap (no Ivory), and paper products.

Vacation Bible School is scheduled for the week of July 20th, from 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM, **BUT** we could still use some more volunteers; teachers, kitchen help and older students to help in the classroom and on the playground! Please see Cathy Hayes if you can help!

Coffee Hours – This year we need people to supplement the confirmation families in hosting the weekly coffee hour after church. A sign-up is on the bulletin board for volunteers to help out! So far everyone has been great in keeping the coffee and food coming after church. Thank you!!

Help with the Congregational Picnic – We really need someone to step up and coordinate this event. This would entail making sure tables and chairs get to the Williamsons, doing the shopping, and whatever setup is required to ensure everything goes smoothly!

June 20th - Hanover Day - Please help us make this a success for LCC. We need folks to help set-up, break-down and "man" the booth that day. Only 1-2 hours are required. Please see Holly Brazel or call her or Carla Hill for more information.

Personal Mention

- **Happy Birthday wishes in June** are extended to **Destiny Anderson, Pat Beal, Kate Brooks, Amy Costa, Frank Costa, Zachary Graden, Jacob Leahy, Marly Leahy, Grant Royek, Megan Royek and Tyler Royek!**
- **Happy Anniversary to Hugh and Beth O'Connor and a special anniversary wish to Bill and Harriet Williamson who just celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary!!!**
- **Congratulations to our high school graduates this year! Marielle Bouchard, Alison Costa, Heather Graden and Matt MacDougall!**
- **Congratulations to Janet and Dean Fisher, the proud grandparents, and to Matt and Casey Fisher, the proud parents of Desmond Fisher, born April 28th. The Fishers will be heading to California in the middle of this month to meet their new grandchild!**

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER...



Rob Hendrickson, for continued health and healing
Carla Errichiello-Hill, for continued health and healing
Audrey Yeingst, undergoing treatment for cancer of the liver and bile duct
Bill Sweetser, recovering from surgery this past week
Jodi Gries, Jerry and Barbara Gorichs' daughter, recovering from cancer surgery
Harrison Collett, 6 yr. old brother of one of our Nursery School students, diagnosed with bone cancer
Harriet Williamson, for health and healing
Elsie Vuilleumier, dealing with loss of sight after surgery for macular degeneration
Lloyd Prestridge, Dan Prestridge's father, living with cancer
Bella and Brayden Orrall, for continued health and growth.
Anna Fitzgerald, Agnes Abrahamson's granddaughter, dealing with epilepsy and autism
Jennifer T, in thankfulness and gratitude for continued recovery
Ethan Darcy, for continued healing related to his congenital heart defect
Joyce Linde, for health and healing
Marie Bain, for good health
Beth deConinck-Smith, a friend of the Hendricksons, undergoing debilitating treatment for cancer
Jon More, friend of the Sweetsers diagnosed with lung cancer

Jerry Haley, friend of the Sweetsers, diagnosed with a brain tumor

Ministry to the Persecuted Church:

More than 80 Christian families are homeless and living on church grounds following the recent and continuing political unrest in Pakistan. Unlike Muslims, who have been housed and provided for by the government, more than 300 Christians have been displaced and left to fend for themselves. Local believers told contacts that before this war the Taliban was treating Christians as “infidels.” They stopped them from holding prayer meetings and threatened them, firing guns near Christian homes to stop them from praying. Pray for believers who have lost their homes and are living in refugee camps. Ask God to encourage, provide for and protect them.

Information from the Congregational Meeting held May 31, 2009

A congregational meeting was held on May 31st. The theme of this meeting was to get an update on the achievements of the various council positions over the past year and to elect the slate of officers for next year, starting in September. Included in this newsletter are the minutes from the last congregational meeting, which were reviewed and approved, a combined and summarized highlights page from all the deacon positions, the pastor’s report, and a list of those individuals elected to new 2 year terms in the church council.

Lutheran Church of the Cross

Congregational Meeting Minutes 3/29/09

Opening Prayer: Pastor Stahl

Old Business:

Secretary’s Report: 1/25/09 report reviewed. M/S/C

New Business:

Financial Secretary’s Report: Report for two month period ending 2/28/09 reviewed.

- *Offerings are off from last year to this year.
- *Consecrated Steward Attainment Rate raised from 82.7% January to 87.8% February
- *M/S/C report

Treasurer’s Report: Cash Flow Summary for two month period ending 2/28/09 reviewed.
Utility/Snow Removal Cost Comparison report reviewed.

- *Currently (\$7,728) year to date deficit
 - Utilities and snow removal are up, report shows \$2,550 increase 2008 – 2009.
- *Bulk of expenses are over except insurance. Usually pay insurance in one lump sum annually. Now due to lower checking account balance, will pay quarterly.
- *Checking account balance is \$4K. Budget is very tight, but majority of large annual expenses are over.

*Summary: Are in fairly good shape.

*M/S/C reports

Public thank you to Ernie and Kevin for handling church expenses

Capital Fund Drive Statues: Report reviewed

*Mailings went out to 240 names. 96 are active in church. Others are former members.

*44 mailings to active members returned w/commitment

*\$5,000 one time contribution received from Lutheran Nursery School. THANK YOU!

Other Reduction in Deficit Initiatives: Report reviewed.

*Tri-fold Sunday bulletin appears to be going well.

*Monthly mailings are down

*SCRIP Gift Card program going well, sales of "on-demand" cards (cards available for purchase every Sunday) being sold weekly.

*Adopt-an-Expense has not yet been emphasized. Will be highlighted more in April/May.

Organist Update:

*Recent apprentice organist/music director resigned one week ago

*Discussion re: candidates available, and that George can't do this position b/c he works full-time.

Next Congregational Meeting:

*Next meeting 5/31/09. Agenda includes Slate of Officers. To express interest in current openings on church council, please see AI.

Motion to Adjourn.

Meeting started at 10:40 a.m. and ended at 11:09 a.m.

53 were in attendance

Deacons' Report Highlights 2008 - 2009:

Education: Very successful year, due to the hard work and dedication of staff, Heather Ali, Jen Dwyer, Jackie Johnson, Cheryl Koertje, Janet Costa and Jay Freeman as well as Sunday school helpers Matt MacDougal and Heather Graden and Pat Beal, Denise Henderson and Carla. New addition to program was new opening and Sunday school choir, average weekly attendance was 30. Projects this year were Hanover Food pantry, Christmas program, puppet ministry, shut in remembrances and Mother and Father Day gifts.

Exterior: Oversaw multiple exterior projects both at the church and parsonage

Church – fall and spring grounds cleanup, snow removal, removal of tree that fell against Fellowship Hall.

Parsonage - removal of poison ivy, replaced storm/screen door, sprayed parsonage for bugs

Interior: Oversaw multiple interior projects at the church

Church – painted both bathrooms, cleaned interior windows for Christmas, coordinated trash removal, cleaned church and set up for Sunday school on a weekly basis.

Parsonage – Obtained an exterminator for parsonage

Missions: Supported multiple mission projects, Voice of the Martyrs, Special Kindness in Packages, Inc. for military overseas, Thailand Bagna Day Care, services at Norwell Knoll, and Brazilian ministry, a joint venture between First Lutheran of Boston and LCC temporarily on hold for various reasons; however a group from LCC attended a meeting in May at First Lutheran Church to discuss the continuation of this ministry on the South Shore.

Publicity/Evangelism: Facilitated the posting of LCC events, such as fall auction, movie night, Pastor’s sermon series in the newspaper and on cable TV, as well as posted online advertisement for position of organist. Participating in Hanover Day in June

Shepherds: This year’s ministry included, visits, meals and rides to hospital and doctor appointments for ill members of the congregation, as well as cards. Care packages were sent during the school year to college students from our congregation. Membership directory and call lists have been updated

Social Ministries: Coordinated monthly meals at Mainspring, lending assistance and guidance when needed.

Worship & Music: Very busy year,

Worship - instituted new Tri-fold bulletin to support budget reduction, weekly greeters and ushers goal of making visitors feel welcome, power point slides to highlight ministries/programs supported by LCC, and puppet ministry

Music – coordinated visit from Concordia Choir scheduled for May 2010. Working with committee to obtain new organist/choir director.

Pastor’s Report
Congregational Meeting,
May 31, 2009

- Numbers for me since January 1, 2009:
 - Visits with shut-ins: 12
 - Counseling sessions: 27
 - On-site meetings: 34
 - Off-site meetings: 7
 - Phone ‘meetings’: 69
 - Defined as conversations usually lasting *at least* 20-25 minutes related to ministry here at LCC.
 - Visits with members in their homes and/or in the hospital: 10
 - Additional Services: 12
 - Nursery: 6
 - First Communion classes: 6
- Our monthly Friday night movies ended this past Friday with the movie, “Saint John in Exile.”
 - Because attendance at these have not been great, I’m wondering if we should continue with this in the Fall. I’d appreciate any input.
- Our Thursday evening worship services started this past Thursday.

- These services are at 7:00 and offer an alternative to Sunday morning worship for those who are out-of-town on the weekends during the Summer.
- The services are a little more reflective and since the number of attendees are fewer, more interactive.
- Our theme throughout the Summer will be the “I AM” statements of Jesus in the book of John.
- Speaking of series, I would be interested to know your takes on having sermon series.
 - More and more churches of all denominations are moving towards the series approach, and we as a circuit are sharing series we’ve done at our next meeting in Dedham on June 10.
 - What are some series you’d like to have?
 - I’ve already received a couple of requests, but would like to know more.
 - Do you find the series approach to sermons effective?
 - This question actually ties to my last point, the ‘Tough question for the day’:
- Here’s the tough question for the day: what does 21st Century Ministry look like?
 - Are there things we should be doing differently to be an effective outreach to the unchurched while still being faithful to unwavering Biblical truths?
 - How are we as a church reaching out to the unchurched?
 - This goes way beyond having social events, special programs, etc.
 - This is about *doing church on purpose* without compromising the tenets of the faith.
 - This is something I would like to talk about/explore with a small group of people as we look into the future of LCC and answer the question, “What do we want to look like in 5 years?”

*Looking forward to the future
with you,
Pastor Michael*

Elected or re-elected council positions for a 2 year term, starting in September 2009

Treasurer	Kevin Hayes
Financial Secretary	Ernie Hill
Recording Secretary	Shelly Chaston
Elders (3 year term)	Chris Donahoe
	Jim Tracey
Deacon of Education	Patty Owen
Deacon of the Exterior	John Muller
Deacon of Missions	Dottie Hayes
Deacon of Music & Worship-	Jay Freeman
Deacon of Parish Life	Cory Burroughs

Earlier in the newsletter we mentioned that Dana McGivney has offered to help the Capital Fund Drive by coordinating for members, items to be sold on Craigslist. Below are the details...

Capital Fund Drive

We will be posting donated items online to sell to help with the CFD. Members can decide to donate 100% of the proceeds or a portion. Similar to our auction except these items might be too big to bring to the church. This also has the potential of bringing in double or triples what the auction does.

The items posted will have great exposure and potentially see hundreds of would-be-buyers. Most of us are sitting on something we would like to get rid of. (See list below).

Dana McGivney will do all the work, taking photos, posting online and follow up with buyers. No personal information is given; only the item you are selling. You will only have to get involved when the purchase is made, cash only. I am certainly available to help facilitate the sale if anyone needs me to be there during time of purchase.

ITEMS TO BE SOLD:

Furniture: Sofa, Loveseat, Chairs, Recliners, Beds (not bedding) Dressers, Chests, Tables and chairs, Coffee and End tables, TV stands, Desks, China Cabinets Curios.....

Outdoor Items: Patio furniture, Swings, Tools, Lawnmowers

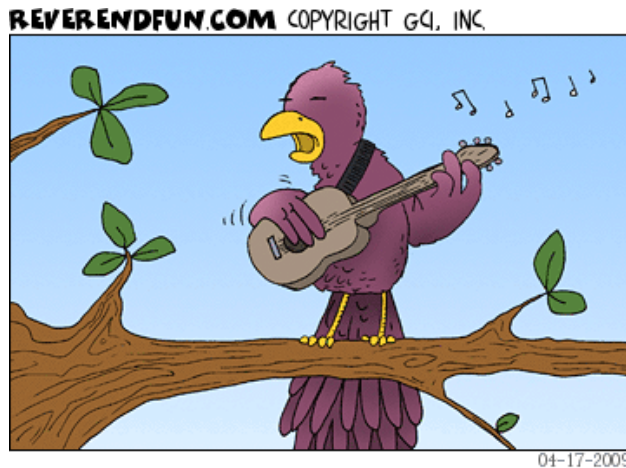
Electronics: Cameras, DVD players, any functioning electronic.....

Kids Toys: Gently used indoor toys, Games, Bikes, Outdoor toys.....

Think reasonably with expectations about 70 to 80% off retail prices and we are sure to get rid of the piece.

Contact info djmack.ent@hotmail.com or Dana McGivney 781-733-4918

On a lighter note:



SOME BRIGHT MORNING WHEN THIS LIFE IS
OVER, I'LL ... WALK AWAY ...

Tips for Experiencing God in Your Home

By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Today's kids are part of a generation that values experiential learning. Educators are beginning to understand the trend and are including more opportunities for students to be involved in active learning strategies as opposed to only listening passively to lectures. Well, when it comes to matters of faith, the same issues apply. Kids today don't want to only learn information about God. They also want to experience Him. Recently, I had the privilege of speaking with noted author, Phillip Yancey, whose updated book, [*Finding God in Unexpected Places*](#) sparked my own thinking about the need for parents to help their kids learn not only *about* God, but to *know* God. As parents, we can help our kids to experience God first-hand if we are willing to take a fresh approach to how we live out our faith and communicate about God in our homes. Our homes are our children's primary laboratory for life and faith, so it's up to us to set the pace when it comes to helping our kids experience God. Here are some ideas for doing just that.

1. Pursue Knowing Jesus and a Life of Faith and Obedience. We can't pass along to our kids what we don't have ourselves. So, when it comes to experiencing God, we need to be intentional about our own passion and commitment to know and experience Him. Then, our kids will be able to see what experiencing God looks like. This generation of kids are motivated by sincerity and turned off by pretense. Today's kids have a built-in, highly sensitive "Hypocrisy Detector". So, if you're trying to come across as perfect to them, they'll see right through you – and that's a big mistake on your part. It is much better to live out an authentic life in front of your kids – and how you follow Christ and experience Him despite your mistakes and failures along the way – in order to display the example of what it looks like to live as a Christian in the real world.

As a parent, it's important to note that the spirituality of your kids is very dependent on the examples they see you setting at home. You must set the pace! If you desire your children to have vibrant spiritual lives, then they need to see an authentic faith lived out in your life. No one expects perfection, but a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude is not likely to produce a vital Christian lifestyle in your child's life either.

2. Show Respect for God's Word. This point flows from the one above. Demonstrate to your kids that you hold Scripture in high regard. Psalm 119:115 reads, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." You may *feel* that in your heart, but if you don't *live it out* in front of your kids, they'll never have any idea.

3. Be Yourself. You don't need a seminary degree to experience God or to talk to your kids about God. You don't have to speak in King James language to send a message that you want to talk about spiritual issues. In fact, if you do, your kids will think you're really weird! You don't want to unintentionally send the message to your kids that only strange people experience God!

I know an excellent pastor who does a great job caring for his congregation, and his sermons are usually right on the mark. I have only one minor complaint. It's the way his voice changes whenever he talks about "GAAWD." His casual conversation changes to an extremely formal tone when he emphasizes a spiritual word. Actually, it's rather funny.

I've met parents who have the same problem. They communicate well with their kids, but when the conversation turns to spiritual issues their mouths freeze, their countenances change, and words come out in a manner that the kids hear only when their parents talk about God. So, be yourself! Share your understanding of who God is and how you experience Him – in a way that reflects the real you.

4. Don't Limit Spiritual Conversations With Your Kids to Sunday Mornings! This is not to say that Sunday morning is off-limits for spiritual discussions, but don't get caught in the trap of compartmentalizing faith issues to certain days or certain times. Doing so, again, may communicate that experiencing God is only something we do on Sundays, at church! Let your kids know that spiritual issues are important in your life all of the time! This is exactly the issue that Deuteronomy 6:6-7 speaks to – talking about God when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up! Experiencing God is to be part of an ongoing discussion in our homes, with our families!

5. Look for natural opportunities to raise spiritual issues. This takes some intentional work by parents to be on the lookout for opportunities “along the road” of life, where issues almost beg to be discussed in light of our Christian commitment and faith. Many opportunities will arise at home as your kids watch you live life. How do you, for example, demonstrate how you experience God when the neighbor's dog has been barking incessantly all evening long?

6. Expose Your Kids to Others Who Know and Experience God. Don't go it alone in trying to help your kids experience God. In addition to their parents, our kids need other, positive role models of people who know and experience God. Make sure that you make an effort to expose your kids, in your home, to these kinds of people. You'll be teaching your kids that God is at work in others and not just in your own family!

7. Expect God to Show Up. Become intentional in looking for moments and circumstances at home where you can see God at work, like when your son or daughter does something unexpectedly or unusually loving. Make sure you make the most of opportunity by pointing out to your kids when those times come along. In doing so, not only will you be helping your kids experience God, but you'll also be training them to look for God to show up in everyday moments.

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Congregation commits to family torn by tragedy

By Linda C. Hoops

"We are committed to support this family, no matter what it takes." These are the words of Rev. Donald C. Porter, pastor of Mount Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

The family he is talking about is that of 3-year-old Laura Lynette VanNiekerk, who police believe was killed May 1 by her father, Johan VanNiekerk, in a motel in Battle Creek, Mich. Also found dead at the scene was Laura's grandmother, Brenda VanNiekerk, 72.

Laura's two sisters, Samantha, 11, and Olivia, 6, attend Unity Lutheran School, which is sponsored by Mount Calvary and Peace Lutheran Churches in Fort



Laura VanNiekerk

Wayne, although they are not members of either congregation. This is the first year the girls have attended the school.

"LuAnn Lebeau, the principal at Unity, called me on the Saturday morning after the bodies were discovered to come to the VanNiekerk's apartment," Porter said in an e-mail to Reporter. "Donna (the mother) had no idea what to do about planning a funeral. After I offered to make the arrangements for her, she accepted willingly, very grateful not to have to worry about all the arrangements."

Randy Keplinger, a member of Mount Calvary, donated the services of the funeral home. Other costs related to the funeral, such as the casket, grave site, and opening and closing of the grave, were paid by a person who wished to remain anonymous.

"In addition, people stepped forward to take the family on a shopping trip to purchase appropriate clothing for the family for the funeral," Porter wrote.

The grandmother's remains were cremated and sent to the residence of another son in Florida.

Principal LeBeau shared the ways faculty, staff, and students at Unity had supported the family, including giving them a portion of the profits from the school's annual spring carnival, selling bracelets, and planning a benefit in June.

"We also set up a calendar so parents could sign up to bring evening meals to the family," said LeBeau. "So far, we've got all their meals covered through the end of the school year."

Special compassion has been shared with both first-grader Olivia and sixth-grader Samantha, who is also receiving academic support with LeBeau's daughter in a study group.

LeBeau feels the sisters were blessed to be enrolled in a Lutheran school when the tragedy occurred.

"That's the wonderful thing about our Lutheran schools, that this event did affect our whole school family with everybody reaching out with their prayers and love for this family. It's been incredible."

She also praised the Indiana District crisis team for providing informational sessions for teachers and parents on helping children deal with tragedies and for counseling the students.

Although information about the killings from court documents and police remains sparse, it appears that the "weapon" used in the killings was a drug overdose. Fort Wayne police say VanNiekerk, a native of South Africa who emigrated here, had recently separated from his wife and lost his job. Sometime on Friday, he left the area with his mother and daughter. Investigators have not determined whether he abducted his child and mother or whether they went with him willingly.

Police were able to locate VanNiekerk at the motel by tracking his cell phone use. He apparently had tried to take his life and suffered minor injuries when police arrived on the scene. VanNiekerk, 41, is charged with two counts of open murder and one count of first-degree child abuse.

With the outpouring of support for the family from the community, Porter said there were many "unchurched" people who attended the funeral.

"I used the opportunity to ask the question many were asking themselves: 'Why did this happen?' Of course, that's not the right question. That's attempting to blame God for this tragedy. I explained how sin and evil came into the world through the fall of mankind, not through God. It was important to tell this story to the audience; it was a great witnessing opportunity," Porter said.

"The support given to this family by our churches, school, and community says that we are not going to allow anyone to be isolated when a tragedy like this happens. We live in difficult times, and we are touched by evil. Nevertheless, we have a powerful weapon against evil, and that is Christ and His love. We will smother the VanNiekerk family with that love."

Linda C. Hoops is a freelance writer and a member of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Sunset Hills, Mo.

Posted May 20, 2009

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

July 20 - 24

Join us as we go to **DISCOVERY CANYON*** at this summer's **Vacation Bible School** program to be held at the Lutheran Church of the Cross in Hanover. Children from the age of 3 through those who are entering 4th grade are invited to join the fun as they explore the wonders of the word. Each day from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM the children will hear a special Bible story and learn a Bible verse, participate in a craft project and learn new songs as part of our adventure. There will also be supervised outdoor play and a snack served each day.

VBS teachers and helpers are volunteers and the program is offered through the Lutheran Church of the Cross; not the Lutheran Nursery School. The volunteers are primarily members and friends of the Lutheran Church of the Cross.

The cost is \$30.00 for the first child, \$50.00 for two children, with a maximum of \$70.00 for three or more children per family.

If finances are an issue, call 781-826-5121 & make alternate arrangements with complete confidentiality.

Registrations should be sent to: The Lutheran Church of the Cross,
PO Box 54, Hanover MA 02339.

Please make your check payable to Lutheran Church of the Cross.

For more information, call Cathy Hayes at 781-829-6795.

*The program is provided by Augsburg Fortress VBS 2008.

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Student's Name: _____

Age/Grade comp.6/09: _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Emergency Telephone: _____

Allergies or Medical Concerns: _____

Parent's Names: _____

Home Church: _____

Other family attending: (names & age) _____
