



The Messenger

St. John's Lutheran Church

Pastor Liz Erickson

July 2017

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Cemetery bench offers rest, information

The bench is in place and completed, a welcome addition to St. John's cemetery. Tyler Russell, who lives just south of the cemetery, approached Lisa Dietrich and Randy Stephenson with the idea of the 'informative bench'. His plan was to complete the bench for his Eagle Scout badge and the cemetery map as his senior project at Southland High School.

Though it was a long project (creating the map alone took 109 hours) and at times, tedious and frustrating, Tyler found it to be a rewarding experience.

Lisa Dietrich, who worked with Tyler during the mapping process said this:

"There is an anonymous quote that states, 'We meet people for a reason; either they're a blessing or a lesson'. For me, Tyler was both.

The first time Tyler came to my house to discuss mapping the cemetery for his Eagle Scout project, he came, not with an attitude of, "I have to", or "I just want to get this over with," but with an attitude of eagerness to contribute to the community and grateful to St. John's for the opportunity, and I felt sorry for him. He did not yet know what he was signing up for...but I did. He was not about to take the easy road to his Eagle Scout badge. I had started and stopped mapping the cemetery myself two or three times, each time running into a different snag, so when I handed Tyler what I had (which was not much), I also gave him an "out". I let him know that if at some point he decided to pursue a different project, we

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Tyler Russell, creator of the bench, will be heading to the University of Wisconsin – Madison this fall, majoring in biochemistry.

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Letter From Rev. Daniel Rift

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In the book of Genesis, we read of generations of people who only by the sweat of their face were able to eat bread (Genesis 3:19). But the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve are quickly drawn to hold on to their own and hold out on others.

Barriers are built between families and peoples. Divided, some are in plenty and some in want. It is an apt description of the world, even to our day. The symptom is a distribution of resources in which hunger flourishes for some. The dis-ease is the way in which some are excluded. The book of Genesis also offers an alternative narrative. It is one of the Garden, where we are drawn to see that all humanity arises from a common ancestry.

I have a friend who says, “My feet are planted in this world, but my vision is drawn to Eden.” She says it when she sees situations like the emerging famine in South Sudan. She says it, as well, when those of faith help communities to claim the

promise from which they have been shut out.

We will never be able to overcome hunger until communities are able to act as their own agents to fulfill the basic needs of all. We can feed a person for today, but hunger will not end until all are able to both feed themselves for a lifetime and share with their families and neighbors in a spirit of abundance.

Thank you for the ways in which you support this work that brings those who have been left out and pushed off into renewed hope. Thank you for your financial support to the work we share in ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. Our work is made possible by the support you and others provide each year.

We invite you to catch a glimpse, in the mirror of the work, toward a shared vision of Eden.

With gratitude for you and all you do to live in faith.

Mission Moments

Rev. Rift is director of the ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal

Financial report through May

	2017 Income	2017 Actual	Budget	Actual vs Plan		2017 Expenses	2017 Actual	Budget	Actual vs Plan	Thrivent Care Amount
General	\$39,613	\$44,250		(\$4,637)	Pastor	\$33,415	\$33,016		\$399	
Benevolence	915	875		40	Utilities	3,579	2,896		683	\$563
Missionary	677	500		177	Organist	3,090	3,243		(153)	
					Other	6,702	7,333		(631)	

Circles this month:

Joint Bible study followed by separate meetings, then joint potluck; Wed., July 19; 10 a.m.

July WELCA

July's WELCA meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 5th at 1:30. Linda Johnson will host and Ruth Circle has the program.

No business meeting was held in June since the group was on its annual trip, this year taking in the sights of the Bily clocks at Spillville, IA followed by lunch at Teluwut in Cresco.

Day with women of SE Minnesota Synod

Mark your calendar for Saturday, September 16 for an informative day with other women from around the synod. This year, the group is gathering at St. Olaf Lutheran Church in Austin.

The afternoon mini-sessions will feature the following speakers and topics:

- Mower County Sheriff Terese Amazi, speaking about child abuse
- Lieutenant Christina Bogojevic from the Minnesota State Patrol talking about distracted driving.
- Darrel Hildebrant, the Crime Prevention Specialist from the Rochester Police Department, addressing the issue of scams.

Pastor Liz will be part of this event, so please watch for a sign-up sheet in the narthex later this summer.

July Bible study

All Anew Bible study continues in July, with session 2 titled "Stand With the Least of These".

The study, created by Kelly Fryer, asks the participant to center on these ideas: "The biblical story tells us that whenever God does a new thing, it happens in, through and with people who live on the margins. With whom is God calling you to align yourself? In whose corner are you being called to stand? Are you ready?"

During study, we will be looking at the book of Micah and Paul's Letter to Philemon. We will also be looking at these issues in light of Martin Luther and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

All women are welcome to join in on the study, the fun, and the fellowship.

Mission items needed

Last year, the congregation joined in with gathering items needed for the Lutheran World Relief personal care kits and layettes, as well as bibs for area care centers. If you'd like to help out again this year, items needed include:

- Dark-colored lightweight bath towels (20"x40" or 27"x52")
- Hand towels
- 24" lightweight towels of any length
- Soap and wide-toothed combs

From the Pastor

A new group is forming at St. John's to reach out to our members who would enjoy a visit as they are recuperating from an illness, or with on-going health issues, and those unable to leave their homes.

Norma Klaehn and Linda Johnson will be coordinating the team of volunteers who are ready and willing to come and visit. Norma Klaehn is our communications coordinator and will make a phone call to inquire if someone would like a visit from our Caring Ministry Team. If so, she will set up a date and time for the visit to occur. Caring Ministry team members will be ready to bring listening hearts, prayer quilts, treats, devotional booklets and the Sunday bulletin as part of their ministry with this group.

The Caring Ministry team will keep all conversations confidential and will ask each person whom

they visit whether or not there is anything that they want others to know about their situation. Most likely, one would be asked this question: "If people ask me how you are, what would you like me to share?" Another question that will be asked is if that person would like to be included on the prayer chain list or prayed for in church on Sunday mornings. Nothing will be shared without permission of the person being visited.

If you know of someone who would like to be visited and hasn't been contacted, please ask that person if they would like a visit and then contact Norma Klaehn (923-5582; njklaehn@frontier.com) so a visiting time can be scheduled.

We pray God's blessings upon this new ministry team and upon all whom they will be visiting!

"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

— Teresa of Avila

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Cemetery bench (cont. from page 1)

would understand (or at least I would.) Tyler gave me an appreciative smile, but I could tell that giving up was not an option for him. And yet, I kept waiting for Tyler to inform me that he was throwing in the towel, but as we all now know, that never happened.

We met periodically over the next two years and each time he had the same enthusiasm and determination that he displayed the first time we met and he was clearly making progress. To put this into perspective, when I was attempting to map the cemetery, my enthusiasm died in the cemetery the first time I went there to start the mapping as I realized the task was going to be much more difficult than I had anticipated.

When Tyler came to my house to hand over the completed project, I could see that he was proud of his work, as he should be, and relieved to be done, but for a busy senior that probably had as much to do with checking one more thing off his list as completing the project itself. When I asked about his future plans, he said he hopes to become a pharmacist. Having observed Tyler's work on this project, his determination and attention to detail that is wrapped with a very pleasant demeanor, I can say without a doubt, that Tyler will be an excellent

pharmacist or excel in whatever career path he ends up taking. If you are wondering what lesson I learned, there were actually several, but the one that it most important to me is, if you feel like there is little hope for the future, you just need to look for a Tyler Russell and your hope will be restored."

The informative bench was donated in memory of Elvern Mees, and people are already appreciating what it has to offer. When Sam Klaehn was mowing there a few weeks ago, two different groups stopped by the cemetery and were appreciative of the bench. Sam says two Jech brothers, who plan to be buried at St. John's, spent about a half hour looking at various gravestones. They were intrigued by the bench and map, even asking if they could get a copy of the map.

That same day, a family stopped by. The couple and two children were on their way home to Albert Lea after camping in Lanesboro. They told Sam they were driving by and were in need of a break. They walked around the cemetery, sat on the bench and proclaimed it 'a really nice place to rest'.

Cemetery board member Randy Stephenson, too, compliments Tyler on the good job he did with the cemetery bench and encourages everyone "to go look at the map".

Thank you to all who helped make this project a reality, especially to Tyler!

Following Jesus into changing world, Part 2

Sunday started out with a worship service that had us on our feet singing, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. With all due respect to the song's original melody that I do love, the version we sang was contemporary and I'm almost certain (at the risk of dating myself) that even dancers on Dick Clark's American Bandstand would have rated the contemporary version as, "having a good beat" and "easy to dance to". And why shouldn't we dance to God being our mighty fortress?

Sunday's agenda brought more engaging speakers such as Reverend Stephen Bouman who shared with us the fact that Lutherans serve more people than any other network in the United States and that almost 100% of Lutheran congregations do something to address food insecurity. So despite our lack of diversity, we Lutherans are still a good bunch! Rev Bouman also shared his grandfather's story of immigration to the United States and that the reasons for immigrating were very much the same as for those who immigrate to the United States today – escape from undue hardship and a safe place that offers a better chance to raise a family. He made me think about my own ancestors who immigrated from

Norway when he spoke of how it makes him angry to think about his grandfather being treated as immigrants are being treated today. His anger took him to the streets in the name of his grandparents to protest the stigmatizing of immigrants and challenged us to stand up to stigmatization of immigrants in honor of our own ancestors.

Then there was Reverend Dr. Eric Barreto who lead us in a Bible Study by taking us through the Book of Acts, pointing out both the humor that can be found in this book and that it is not a roadmap to the perfect church, but rather, how in these changing times, "it can push us to imagine how we can lead a church that we cannot yet see." He also made the point (and I love this) that our differences are a gift from God. Doesn't that put a different spin on what tends to divide us? Rev. Dr. Barreto ended by saying he is no longer buying into the "narratives of the church's decline" and challenged us to imagine the future into which God is calling us. That's a lot of food for thought!

In all honesty, it was hard giving up an entire weekend to attend the Assembly, but in the end, what I

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Account and musing from the 2017 SE MN Synod Assembly

By Lisa Dietrich

Following Jesus

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gained from thought-provoking speakers far outweighed the time I gave up to be there.

If you are interested in hearing any of the speeches for yourself, you can go to the SE MN Synod website and find links to recordings posted on YouTube.

Directory photo op

A mailing is going out now with a copy of the photo op schedule for the upcoming church directory. Soon calls will be made to each household to schedule photo appointments for July 18 and 19.

A thought to ponder.....

“The English word *miracle* comes from the Latin word *miro* (“to wonder”) and *mirus* (“wonderful”). It is the same root from which we get the word *mirror*. When you look in the mirror, do you wonder and admire the one-of-a-kind miracle you are? Or when you look in the mirror do you see more copy than copyright? Jesus does not want look-alikes, only love-alikes.”

(from the book *The Gospel According to Starbucks* by Leonard Sweet)



Open baby shower for
Amber Jacobson &
Courtney Stejskal
At St. John's on
Saturday, July 8 from 9a to 11a

July Calendar

- Sun, July 2 Worship w/Holy Communion 9a
- Wed., July 5 WELCA 1:30p
- Sun., July 9 Worship w/Holy Communion 9a
Council meeting 7p
- Sun., July 16 Worship 9a
- Tues. & Wed., July 18-19 Church directory pictures 2-7p
- Wed., July 19 Joint circle mtg w/potluck 10a
- Sun., July 23 Worship 9a
- Sun., July 30 Worship 9a

St. John's Lutheran Church
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July 2017

Ushers: Doc and Sam Klaehn

Lectors

Servers
Ron Hamilton

July. 2	Doug & Linda Johnson
9	Dick & Barb Ferson
16	
23	
30	Linda Johnson

Look for us on the Web and on Facebook