

Messenger of Faith



God's Grace in Giving

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish do-

ing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2 Corinthians 8:1-12 (ESV)

From our earthly perspective it would seem that our congregation is in a pretty tough spot, financially speaking. The offering totals from 2009 will not meet the expenses of 2010. Again, from our earthly perspective, if ever there was a time to begin preaching sermons about Christian giving, now would seem to be the appropriate time. Often times, when you hear talk about giving, it is from the perspective of trying to raise more money. It is very easy to use the Law and threats or guilt to try to pry open the wallets and purses of God's people to give more. It is also very easy, in a sense, to bribe people to give more by promising that if they give, God will prosper them with more money and resources in return. Of course it is not wrong for us to consider God's words as it applies to the thank-offering that we give to the Lord as long as we do so from a Scriptural perspective and not an earthly driven perspective.

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9, Paul approaches the subject of Christian giving from the perspective of the Gospel and what God has already given to us. The Bible speaks from this Gospel perspective of the joy of giving. In this first section of chapter eight, Paul speaks of the Grace of Giving. As we have learned, the word grace means "undeserved gift." Giving, by its very nature, is associated with God's grace. God's giving is much different from the giving associated with the world's concept of giving with the goal of getting something in return.

Giving finds its power in the grace of Christ toward us.

When we talk about giving, we always have to begin with the grace of God that has already given His Son into death for our sins. It is God who loved the world so much that He gave the incredible gift of His one and only Son Jesus. God gives because God is love. Though Jesus was rich, He became poor. Jesus, the Son of God, as the Creator of all, is thus the owner of all. The grace of Jesus was revealed in the manger where He laid this all aside for our sakes. Jesus became poor. Jesus emptied Himself of His divine glory and power and became true man. He had no earthly riches. He did not even

God's Grace in Giving, *(continued)*

own a home of His own. He was despised and rejected of men. Jesus permitted Himself to be nailed to the cross for our sakes. Through His poverty we have become rich beyond anything we could ever imagine in this world. We have been made spiritually rich. We possess all the treasures of the Gospel. Through the grace of Jesus, we have the free forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

Giving finds its fulfillment in giving toward others.

Paul uses the example of the Macedonian (Northern Greece) believers to encourage the Corinthians in their giving. These Christians gave as much as they were able and even gave beyond their ability. They gave because God had given them so much. It is a remarkable fruit of faith to see how Christians give willingly and joyfully to others. It is amazing to see how often people who have nothing give more than those who have a lot. Think of the widow in the temple who gave two mites (everything she had), and thus gave more in the sight of God than those who gave of their abundance.

This giving is a result of the grace of God. We do not HAVE to give 10% of our income. We do not HAVE to give in order to be blessed by God. We do not HAVE to give at all. We give because God first gave to us. This is the grace of giving.

God's Grace is the source of giving as God has given to us.

Paul encourages Christians to willingly give our gifts according

to what God has given to us. Remember again what God has given to us, His own Son into death! Paul's advice is to finish the intended giving. Follow through on the grace of giving. *"Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it."* Realize that the grace of giving is not measured by how much you give but why you give, your attitude in giving. *"Now if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."*

This joy of giving is against the backdrop of the opportunities that God has placed before us as a congregation. Our congregation has experienced a lower than anticipated offering this past year that has not allowed us to meet the budget that was agreed to by the members of our congregation last January.

The temptation is to attempt to use these "needs" to raise more money so that we can carry out the work and pay for the new addition to the church building. But let's continue to remind each other that all of this is God's work. We will make the best use of the resources God provides through His faithful people. We want to be wise stewards of the gifts God gives to His people, and this means that we do not spend more than we have available.

As we take a practical look at the situation we find that the offering deficit from 2009 was \$12,090.96. This translates into

an average short-fall of \$233.00 a week. If we divide that among the 30 family units (local and distant members) that make up our congregation, an \$8.00 increase in weekly offerings for each family would make up the shortage. Of course \$8.00 a week may be more than some could afford, but others could probably increase their weekly offerings by more than this amount.

We are not here as a congregation to dictate what everyone must give. Rather we are here to remind one another and encourage one another in the grace of God as we gather to repent of our sins and rejoice together in the forgiveness that Christ freely won for each of us. And so, we must each, as individual Christians consider what we will give to the Lord for the work of this congregation as we go about the privilege of serving God with our time, talents, and treasures.

At our Annual Meeting we asked our Treasurer to present a budget that reflects the expenses and opportunities that the Lord gives us to proclaim His saving Word. This budget will be a needs based budget. The budget will then be presented to God's people here at Faith with the prayer that the Lord will bless our efforts and move the hearts of His people here at Faith to meet the needs and opportunities before us as we go about the privilege of serving Him as individuals and as a body of like-minded believers.

*(adapted from a recent monthly Pastoral Letter from CLC President—
Pastor John Schierenbeck)*

Reports from the Congregation

Annual Voters Meeting Report —

Len Benter called the Annual Voters' Meeting to order on January 17th. Pastor Ohlmann presented his report in which he summarized the ministries of Faith in 2009, and laid out a schedule for another busy year in 2010.

The elders reported that Karen Rieken has resigned her membership at Faith. Pastor also reported that the elders had met with Karen personally before the excommunication of her husband Dave and that he has corresponded by phone and email with offers to meet personally again to no avail. The voters regretfully acknowledged her resignation. Karen, along with her daughter Freya will be removed from the membership list of congregation.

Art Pontow then presented the treasurer's report. The report detailed a net loss in 2009 of \$12,091. At the end of 2009 the general fund had a balance of \$16,423.58. The total cash balance including the general fund, building fund, Arise & Shine fund, and Family Assistance fund totaled \$36,708.90.

Len Benter presented the voters with a report on the expenses associated with the building project. The report indicated that the total cost of the project was \$178,363.61. Just about all of the expenses have been paid with the exception of signage for the front of the church, the deck off of the back of the parsonage, and a few minor projects still to be completed.

Art Pontow presented the voters with a proposed budget for 2010. After lengthy discussion and debate over the shortfall of offerings in 2009 and a discussion of the use of the remaining funds in the Building Fund, the budget was approved as presented with the encouragement that each member of the congregation prayerfully consider if they would be able to increase their offerings to the congregation so that we can continue to faithfully carry out the blessed work of the teaching and proclaiming God's saving Word. The budget figure for 2010 is \$91,060. This represents a modest 2% increase over the 2009 budget but it should be noted that this figure is \$20,000 more than was received in offering during 2009. The next quarterly voters' meeting will be held on April 18th.

Submitted by
Robert F. Sauers III

Financial Report —

Financially speaking, this was a very difficult year. General Fund offerings were off 17% from budget and down about \$15,000 from 2008 actual expenses. Our 2009 expenses were up about \$10,000 from 2008. The first partial year of mortgage payments accounted for about \$6000 of the increase with utility cost increases accounting for about another \$900. Our overall 2009 expenses were still under budget by about \$3000.

The voters approved a very tight budget for 2010. We budgeted an overall increase of 1%, with the bulk of the increases to account for a full year of mortgage payments, a 10% increase in utilities,

a 5% increase in CLC support and about an 18% increase in health insurance. Pastor's overall compensation increase of just under 2% is entirely due to the increase in health insurance. Pastor Ohlmann will receive no increase in salary this year. The voters did approve cuts for Vacancy/Guest Pastor, Telephone, Office, and General Maintenance. We also eliminated Vacation Bible Camp support.

Mortgage payments have been and will continue to be made out of the general fund bank account since this is an ongoing expense. In view of our current financial situation, the proposed parsonage deck was put on hold and will be reviewed after final completion of the remaining items on the sanctuary addition and church signage.

In summary we would very strongly encourage our members to focus on our general fund needs to support our ongoing regular operating expenses. No further offerings to the Building Fund are needed. We fully realize that individual members may have specific funds or "special needs" that are important to them. We would only ask that they prayerfully consider that we first and foremost need to pay the every day operating expenses in order to viably function as a congregation. Finally, we each need to prayerfully consider the blessings we enjoy as a congregation and as we go forward in 2010 ask for the LORD's guidance and blessing as we seek to do His will as we undertake the work that He gives us the blessed opportunity to do in service to Him.

Submitted by,
Art Pontow, Treasurer

Excerpts from Pastor's Annual Report to the Voters

New and Expanded Duties – As of January 1st I assumed the position of chairman of the CLC Board of Missions. With this election come the responsibilities of overseeing and monthly requisitioning of the budget as well as organizing, overseeing, and delegating the work of the board. While this will entail more responsibility and time I do not anticipate that it will infringe upon the ministry here at Faith. I have also been given the assignment of essayist for the CLC Convention this summer.

New Adult Instruction Classes – It has been awhile since we have had any new inquires for membership in our congregation. I am praying the Lord will soon lead a couple of frequent visitors to take my offer to explore the teachings of Scripture with a goal toward membership.

Mid-Week Bible Study – In 2009 we concluded our study through the book of Daniel. Currently we are studying the New Testament books of James and Jude. We continue to meet in the church fellowship hall, but have occasionally met at the home of some of our members. Mid-Week Bible Study continues to meet on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 am.

Meramec Bluffs and Garden View Care Center – The Lord continues to bless our efforts to spread the Word with op-

portunities to conduct weekly Bible studies and devotional services at two area elderly care facilities. Each Thursday morning an average of 25 individuals gather at the Garden View Care Center at 9:30 am for a worship service. At 10:45 approximately 8 individuals, including Anne Joest, gather in the dementia care unit of Meramec Bluffs for a simplified “round table” Bible study. Praise the Lord for this opportunity and privilege to share His saving Word.

Confirmation Class – Caleb Ohlmann has begun his first year of the three year confirmation course.

Mail Ministry – We continue to proclaim God's word beyond the four walls of our church building through the U.S. Postal Service as we record and send seven copies of our weekly worship service on DVD to members who live at a distance. We also send four audio tapes of the sermon only in addition to the Ministry by Mail sermons, bulletins, and Newsletters that go out to six distant members and college students.

Ministry Via the Internet – Each week on Tuesday a video of the sermon from the previous Sunday is made available on our congregational website at: www.StLouisLutheran.com. With the statistics provided by a free application, it is estimated that 4 individuals watch the sermon video weekly while we average approximately 30 new

visitors to our website each week, with total visits numbering over one hundred each week. Visitors from all over the world have visited our site but the majority are from the U.S.

Bible Camp – The camp has been canceled the last couple of years because we did not reach the required number of visiting families. With the decrease in children in the congregations here and in the Kansas City area, and the limited financial resources available, I am recommending again this year that we scale down the camp this year by simply organizing a weekend camp with tents and family prepared meals for anyone who would like to participate. Now that the congregation in the Kansas City area has a full-time resident pastor, I plan to be in contact with him to see if the members there are interested. Initial thoughts are to hold the camp at Babler State Park in Wildwood on a Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night and have all participants attend church at Faith on Sunday morning with a potluck meal to follow. We will have more information and ideas by the next quarterly voters meeting. There should be no expense to the congregation except some extra photocopies.

Arise and Shine Retreat – The tentative theme for 2010 will come from a study through the Gospels as we focus on the life of Christ. The retreat is scheduled for August 5-8. We are expecting another great crowd of enthusias-

tic Christians from around the CLC. We hope to enlist the services of several gifted CLC pastors and laymen to share the Word of God as we gather to encourage one another in our Christian lives. The financial report from the 2009 retreat is attached.

Annual Mission Trips –

Plans for 2010 are still a bit tentative due to financial constraints on the CLC Board of Missions budget. Tentative plans include a late August or early September visit to the Congo in an official capacity as Chairman of the Board of Missions to assist Missionary Koenig in resolving some difficult issues that have developed with the work and leadership of the church body with

whom we are in fellowship. If time and finances permit I will travel from the Congo to East Africa to become more familiar with the various church bodies that we assist in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda.

Membership – We end the year with a total membership of 84 souls (63 communicant members and 21 pre-communicant). Of these 84 souls, 25 live at a distance greater than 3 hours away. That would then bring our “local” membership figure to 59.

Statistics in 2009 – God’s Word was preached and heard on 66 occasions in regular Sunday worship services and other special services with an average attendance of 34.6 on Sunday

morning services and 28 for special services. This represents no change in attendance for regular Sunday morning services and an increase of 1 in average attendance for special services compared to 2008. The Lord’s Supper was offered 25 times (twice monthly and at one special service on Good Friday) with an average attendance of 18. The average attendance at the Lord’s Supper increased by 1 as compared to 2008. Attendance has not been recorded for Mid-week Bible Study or Sunday Bible Study and Children’s Sunday School.

E-mail Pastor Ohlmann
tohlmann@swbell.net

We’re on the Web:
www.StLouisLutheran.com

Ministries	
of Faith Lutheran Church for the year 2009	
Baptisms (4)	
Nathan Raymond Joseph Hull_____	July 2, 2009
Emma Lillian Wunderlich_____	September 27, 2009
Evan Carter Strumpler_____	September 27, 2009
Brian Eugene Roose_____	November 1, 2009
Confirmations (2)	
Max McDonald_____	June 7, 2009
Rusty McDonald_____	June 7, 2009
Marriages (2)	
Keith* and Ashly*** (Wunderlich) Strumpler_____	April 25, 2009
Rob ^v and Kate* (Friedrichs) Sauers (at Immanuel Lutheran, Mankato, MN)_____	May 16, 2009
Funerals/Deceased (4)	
Grace Kelpo*_____	March 31, 2009
Mark Fogg*_____	May 29, 2009
Joshua Maynard***_____	June 30, 2009
Betty Kelly*_____	December 31, 2009
Membership Transferred Out (1)	
Peter Evensen ^v _____	December 6, 2009
Membership Terminated (1)	
David Rieken* (by excommunication)_____	December 6, 2009

*Communicant member
^vVoting and communicant member
 ** Pre-communicant member
 *** Non-member

OUR SCHEDULE

- ⇒ **Adult Bible Class** —
Sundays at 9:00 am
- ⇒ **Children's Sunday School** —
Sundays at 9:00 am
- ⇒ **Sunday Worship Service** —
Sundays at 10:00 am
- ⇒ **Confirmation Classes** —
Wed. and Fri. mornings
- ⇒ **Mid-week Bible Study** —
Wednesdays at 9:30 am
- ⇒ **Garden View Worship** —
Thursdays at 9:30 am
- ⇒ **Meramec Bluffs Dementia Unit
Round-Table Devotion** —
Thursdays at 10:45 am
- ⇒ **Garden View Game Night**
2nd Wednesday of the month
6:30 to 8:00 pm
- ⇒ **Mission Society Meeting**
Last Wednesday of the Month

- ⇒ **Mid-Week Lenten Services —
At the Garden View Care Center**
Ash Wednesday— 2/17
Wednesday— 2/24
Wednesday— 3/3
Wednesday— 3/10
Wednesday— 3/17
Wednesday— 3/24
Services at 7:00 PM
- ⇒ **Good Friday Service** —
April 2nd at 7:00 PM
- ⇒ **Easter Day Breakfast**
April 4th—8:00 to 9:30 am
- ⇒ **Easter Day Worship**
April 4th at 10:00 am
- ⇒ **Quarterly Voters Meeting, Care
Committee Meeting, and Pot-
luck** — Sunday, April 18th

2010 Church Officers—

The following men were duly elected at a meeting on December 6th and were installed into their respective offices during our worship service on January 3rd. Please remember these men and their willing service to the Lord as they serve us and our congregation. We also appreciate those who have served in the past.

Chairman _____ Len Benter
Vice-Chairman _____ Chris Fletcher
Treasurer _____ Art Pontow
Secretary _____ Rob Sauers
Financial Secretary _____ Chris Fletcher
Elder _____ John Elliott (2nd yr)
Elder _____ Rob Sauers (1st yr)
Auditing Com. _____ Steve Maginnis (2nd yr)
Auditing Com. _____ Bob Maynard (1st yr)

We're on the Internet
www.StLouisLutheran.com

Mission Society Report —

The missionary society meets the last Wednesday of each month except during Advent and Lent. We encourage the members of Faith Lutheran to become involved in our Mission efforts. One of the activities of the Mission Society is to sponsor a game night the second Wednesday evening of each month (6:30 - 8:00 P.M.) at Garden View Care Center for those able and willing to play cards, pig mania, rummy cube or whatever is your favorite game that the residents can play. Each game night is started with a devotion led by Pastor Ohlmann followed by games. During the Lent and Advent Season, the game night is pre-empted by an evening worship service.

In early Spring three mailings were sent out to new comers to the Faith Lutheran area. An initial post card was sent inviting them to attend a Sunday service. The second mailing was a tri-fold pamphlet explaining what our church believes and the third mailing was an invitation to the ILC Tour Choir Concert held at Faith Lutheran Church. In May and again in June the Mission Society went canvassing in the Valley Park neighborhood. On September 11th through the 13th the Mission Society participated in the Manchester Homecoming by walking in the parade and having a booth to share information about Faith Lutheran Church.

*Submitted by,
Len Benter*

Mission Society

*Go into all the world and
preach the Gospel... Mk 16:15*

- ⇒ Studying God's Word together.
- ⇒ Training and encouragement to tell others about our Savior in our daily contacts.
- ⇒ Praying for each other and the outreach efforts of our congregation.
- ⇒ Encouragement and support for mission efforts beyond our local community.
- ⇒ Staying informed about the mission work of our church body.
- ⇒ Exploring and consideration of missions in general.