



A Word from Pastor Jessica

The other night I was driving the gravel road between Sutton and Hannaford. It was a gorgeous night: a star filled sky with the full moon beaming down over the fields. It was dark, save for the light of the moon; but the moon did provide enough light to see the harvested fields and the movement of night animals going about their nocturnal business.

It had rained hard the previous two days, but the wind that day had dried the road well. So, I buzzed along in my little car and marveled in the beauty of the night landscape. Coming over a crest, I saw the moon reflected in the water of two sloughs, which blanketed each side of the road. The sight was so beautiful as I headed down into the dip of the road that I was distracted. Suddenly I began to feel the change in the traction of the tires on the road and before I knew it realized that it was a lot muddier and my car was beginning to slide. The car headed into the area between the sloughs, sliding to the left, and I thought, "this is it, I'm gonna get wet." But at the last second, my front tires hit a bit of harder soil, the car righted itself back onto the road and I made it on through the slippery patch.

Isn't that just life. We get distracted by things and then suddenly something comes along and blindsides us; or as in my case, I knew that there could be a slippery road ahead but plowed right along and allowed myself to be distracted. We get distracted from the important things, the obvious things. I'm a good driver, but a full moon, lunar eclipse, beautiful sunset, or amazing sunrise can distract me from my driving. You'd think I'd know better.

So many things in our lives can distract us from the good that is right in front of us. Just think of all those things that distract us from prayer, devotions, scripture, or just paying attention to what it means to be a follower of Christ. All those distractions aren't necessarily bad things – I dare anyone to tell me that a North Dakota sunset is a bad thing! But...they are distractions nonetheless.

Oh, we know what's good for us. It's what we attempt to imbibe in our children and grandchildren every day. They are instructions on how to have a better life, a safer life. And they're simple things really: love God, be nice, share your toys, be considerate of others, show respect, etc. Jesus gave us the simple rules: love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it. Sounds really good for us too.

But we do get distracted, don't we? We're busy people. We have places to go, people to see, things to do. Sometimes we get even more distracted when things are moving along very nicely, thank you very much. Things are just fine; and then we begin to peer off at the moon lit harvested fields and...

See, watching the moonlit fields is what I want; watching where I'm going is what God wants. We run into trouble when what we want — what distracts us — is not what God wants. God has set a goal for us and doesn't want us to be distracted from that goal. God has done all for us in preparing us for that goal. God has set the good right out there in front of us: Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of Baptism, Holy Communion, and the Bible.

Well, that seems simple enough, right? Seems to be something anyone can handle, right?. No problem, right? So...what distracts you?

"A woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10: 38-42



“Fall back!”

Daylight savings time ends November 2.

Don't be late for church;
set your clocks back Saturday night!

Thanksgiving Services

Wednesday, November 26

6:30 at Faith in Hannaford

7:00 at Trinity in Binford

7:30 at Lutheran Church of McVile

8:00 at Trinity in Cooperstown

Soup, Sandwiches, & Pie

Saturday, November 15

McVile Auditorium

11:00—1:30

Sponsored by Our Savior's Lutheran,
rural McVile

Homemade vegetable soup and
dumplings, shredded beef sandwiches,
egg salad sandwiches, homemade pie

Raffle drawing for three treasure
baskets at 1:30.

“Longest Night” service planned

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light:
Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them the light shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

Christmas can be a painful time. It may be the first Christmas without a loved family. It may be a reminder of a broken relationship; the insecurity of unemployment; the weariness of ill health; the pain of isolation. All of these things can make us feel very alone in the midst of the Christmas celebration. When that's true, we need encouragement to live the days ahead of us.

Come and join in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture and music that reminds us that **God's presence is for those who mourn, for those who struggle . . .** and that God's Word comes to shine as a light in our darkness.

The site and date of this special service will be announced in next month's newsletter.

Healing Service

Sunday evening, November 23

7:00 p.m.

Trinity in Cooperstown



For all the people of our communities

TCM in mission

Tri-County Ministry's confirmation classes will serve at Northlands Rescue Mission in Grand Forks on Saturday, December 6, helping to prepare and serve the evening meal. The thought to serve started in a family and youth committee meeting of TCM this summer. The idea has since grown to help supply the current needs of the mission in addition to serving a meal. Our group will also prepare personal hygiene bags for the residents of the mission. Boxes are being placed in our churches to collect toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, and razors.

The following is taken from the Spring 2008 newsletter of the Northlands Rescue Mission from the website www.northlandsrescuemission.org

Northlands Rescue Mission has been serving the homeless and near homeless of our area since 1942. As the needs have changed, we have changed to meet them! Here are the Christ-centered services we provide:

- Emergency shelter for men and women
- Free on-site meals and food boxes
- Life-skills classes
- Case management, including payee services, birth certificates and IDs
- Referrals to other social service agencies
- Rescued Treasures Store

God's love works through compassionate members of our community to provide these services for the homeless and poor. To all who have prayed, volunteered or given sacrificially, thanks for living from your hearts!

Items desperately needed right now:

<i>Coffee</i>	<i>Tennis shoes</i>	<i>Bikes</i>	<i>Towels & Washcloths</i>
<i>Spices</i>	<i>Duffle bags</i>	<i>Winter coats</i>	<i>Warm snow boots</i>
<i>Warm gloves</i>	<i>Plastic totes</i>	<i>Sweaters</i>	<i>Flannel shirts</i>
<i>Wallets</i>	<i>Phone cards</i>	<i>K-Mart gift cards</i>	<i>Laundry soap</i>

If you would like to participate in this mission out reach, please talk to any of the pastors of TCM.

Pastor Marli Danielson

Dinner Theatre

Sunday, November 30

Trinity in Cooperstown

Potluck at 5:30 p.m.

Skits from each triad beginning at 7:00

Freewill offering for Northland Rescue Mission in Grand Forks

November at Red Willow Bible Camp

Creative Memories Scrapbooking

November 14-16

(6:00 p.m. Friday — Noon Sunday)

Coordinated by Jill Haugen of Hannaford.

Contact her at 701-769-2218 or 701-769-2251,
jkhaugen@yahoo.com

Jill Haugen, 11530 9th St SE Hannaford, ND 58448

Cost: \$115

Learning to Use My Bible

November 21-22

(5:00 pm Friday — Noon Saturday)

Students will learn how to navigate the Bible, learn about the different books of the Bible, and why God gave us the Bible. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to get to know the Bible better. Bring your Bible to this retreat.

Grades 3-6

Cost: \$45, or \$40 for additional members of same family



Subscribe to our eNewsletter at: redwillowbiblecamp.org/subscribe.htm

www.redwillowbiblecamp.org

676-2681

Looking for a quilting project?

The following info comes from Jan Johnson, mother of a deployed soldier and member of First Presbyterian in Cooperstown.

In 2003, Catherine Roberts of Seaford, DE, started the Quilts of Valor Foundation when her son and his 630th MP Company were being dtdo Iraq for one year. She started the group by appealing to both quilt-toppers and the long-arming group to volunteer their fabric, their talents and time to make wartime quilts of valor that would comfort our wounded. Presently, Quilts of Valor has delivered over 15,000 quilts.

QOVF-UM covers Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin and is part of the national Quilts of Valor Foundation. Individuals and quilting groups may participate in this program in various ways:

- **Make a finished QOV** (minimum size of 50" x 60", maximum size 72" x 96") and quilt by hand or machine. It should include a label (with the name of the piecer, the quilter and a line for the recipient's name) and a presentation pillowcase. It is also nice to include a hand or typed message to the soldier.
- **Piece a quilt top** and include the backing, binding, pillowcase and preferably the label. Volunteer machine quilters will do the rest.
- **Machine or hand quilt** a QOV top. Contact one of the Upper Midwest QOV Coordinators if you are willing to volunteer.
- **Donate funds** to the QOV non-profit foundation to offset the costs of making and shipping the quilts.

To learn more or to view quilts made by the group serving the upper Midwest, visit their website:

www.qovf-um.org

If you know of a soldier who could use one of these quilts, please contact one of the following:

Jan Johnson of Cooperstown (797-2376 evenings)

LaRae Wimer, Stirum, ND, 701-678-2293, wimer101@drtel.net OR

Beth Cole, Jamestown, ND, 701-320-9107, willowlake@daktel.com

No, they're not all sick!

That prayer list you see each week in your bulletin? The one that lists people from various congregations in the Tri-County parish? Well, here's the low-down on them: *they're not all sick and they don't necessarily have special needs!*

The parish evangelism committee thought it would be a good thing if we all prayed for each other. So Connie Eslinger (Faith, Hannaford) compiled a list of every person in every church in the parish, put them in random order, and divided them into separate lists. Those lists are being rotated around the parish so that over a span of about 3 years, every member will have been prayed for in every church.

It's a good thing for us to pray for each other, whether there are special needs or not. And even if you don't recognize all the names on the list, God recognizes them. God knows what they need. So just lift them up in your prayers . . . God will do the rest!

Seminary on the Prairie

January 12-16, 2009
Red Willow Bible Camp

*“Development and Redevelopment
of Rural Congregations and
Ministries”*

Co-sponsored by Tri-County Ministry
and Luther Seminary

Brochure / registration form available
at www.tricountyministry.org
or call Theresa to have a brochure
sent to you.

(Want to house a seminarian for the week?
Give Theresa or Pastor Marli a call.)

Writing the Last Chapter

My mother died in a way that seemed quite sudden to my family. We had not had an opportunity to adjust to the fact that she was dying, let alone look toward the responsibilities that would fall to us following her death.

But my mother blessed us in that difficult time by having earlier put together plans and information—even to the extent of writing an obituary—that supported us in the arrangements we needed to make. It meant so much to us! Marli and I hope to offer the same gift to our children; and we need to begin that process now because we don't know when it might be needed.

Tri-County Ministry has a booklet available that will help us all with that task. It's called “Making Funeral Preparations: A Guide for Preparing for Death and the Funeral Liturgy.” This booklet is appropriate for both Lutherans and Presbyterians who are looking ahead toward their own funeral preparations. It details the funeral service and offers suggestions for hymns and scripture readings; it also addresses “Some Practical Matters in Preparing for Death,” such as making a will, making funeral plans and deciding what to do with the body. It gives some things to think about and do when a death occurs, and includes a funeral planning form and a listing of legal and financial information.

This booklet will soon be available in each church. It will be also be on the TCM website, downloadable in a format that will allow you to save and update your plans on your computer.

If we do some planning now, it can be of immense help to the loved ones who must see to arrangements following our deaths. Will you join us in providing a last blessing for those who must take over when we are gone?

Pastor Cheri Danielson

IRA Rollovers to Charity Extended Through December 31, 2009

*The information in this article may be of great interest to you if you are over 70 ½ years old **and** have one or more Individual Retirement Accounts. The information shared below may be pertinent to charitable gifts made to a variety of organizations, including annual church offerings, gifts to church endowment funds or capital campaigns, as well as gifts to the Eastern ND Synod Endowment Fund, ELCA social ministry organizations and ELCA churchwide initiatives.*

Overview

Many individuals have been interested in giving IRA assets to their favorite charities. However, until the year 2006, their ability to use IRA assets to make gifts had been discouraged because such gifts were includable in income (even though there has been an offsetting charitable deduction). Legislation passed in August, 2006 allowed certain tax-free IRA rollovers to charity through December 31, 2007. **Fortunately, the “Tax Extenders and Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act of 2008” (part of H.R. 1424), which became law in October, 2008, has extended this favorable tax incentive for the tax years 2008 and 2009.**

Previous Problems: Prior to this favorable legislation, funding charitable gifts through IRA withdrawals had created many tax problems, including:

1. The charitable income tax deduction for cash gifts is limited to 50% of one’s “adjusted gross income” in the year of the gift. Fortunately, unused deductions may be carried forward for up to five years. If the taxpayer was already subject to this limitation, additional gifts funded by IRA withdrawals received an unfavorable tax result.
2. For some smaller IRA gifts, there was no offsetting charitable deduction if the taxpayer(s) did not itemize deductions. **[Since the majority of Americans are unable to itemize deductions (and use the standard deduction instead), IRA rollover gifts are a wonderful opportunity for millions of Americans.]**
3. The inclusion of IRA gifts in income may have increased the percentage of Social Security benefits that were taxable.

The inclusion of IRA gifts in income may have caused a reduction in such items as deductible medical expenses, overall itemized deductions and personal exemptions.

The Present Opportunity The Pension Protection Act of 2006 (extended recently through 2009) allows some individuals to make distributions to public charities directly from their IRA accounts without including the distribution in income. This rule pertains to IRA owners over age 70 ½ and is limited to charitable IRA “rollovers” of up to \$100,000 per year, per person, through December 31, 2009. If you are over 70 ½ years old and have an IRA account(s), you are required to take distributions from your IRA(s). It is fortunate that qualified direct IRA transfers to charity will count toward this annual “required minimum distribution”.

Why is this new provision helpful? Since qualified charitable distributions from IRAs are now not included in income, the “previous problems” listed above are eliminated.

What contributions qualify under this provision? The contributions must be made directly from the IRA to “public charities” such as your own congregation. For instance, gifts to private foundations, donor-advised funds, supporting organizations, charitable trusts and charitable gift annuities do not qualify.

How do I make a qualifying IRA rollover? You should contact your IRA custodian to make the contribution directly from your IRA to the organization(s) you choose to favor.

How will this IRA “rollover” to charity affect my tax return? It is essentially a “non-event” if it does not exceed the \$100,000 annual limitation. It is not reported as income, nor is it deductible as a charitable contribution.

In Summary If you have an Individual Retirement Account, are over age 70 ½ and want to make tax-favored gifts, you should strongly consider this new opportunity. As noted above, you can utilize this planning during the rest of tax year 2008 and throughout 2009.

For more information or questions, please contact Julie Johnson, Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership Coordinator at: 701-232-1480 or 701-388-4781 or by e-mail at: JulieJohnson@cableone.net

TCM Council Highlights — September 24

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education, Youth and Family: Continues to discuss and organize the November 30 dinner theater.

Plans are moving forward for the mission trip to Northland Rescue Mission in Grand Forks on December 6. Our group will serve an evening meal and possibly sort and bag personal hygiene items for incoming residents. A drive will be held in TCM for the hygiene items, as well as for other items needed by the center. Freewill offering from the dinner theater will go to the mission needs.

The upcoming Bible studies in TCM were discussed. The committee recommends that a book study be done for 4 weeks in each triad; one hour on a Sunday afternoon; video and workbook would be one possibility.

Committee is also looking ahead to the Mexico mission trip next spring and the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans in July 2009.

Evangelism and Mission: Website work continues. Committee also would like suggestions for the new Tri-County Ministry mission statement.

OLD BUSINESS

Intern Handbook: Handbook is complete. Supportive material needs to be added.

TCM Website: A photographer from each church could be designated to e-mail church life pictures to Theresa for use on the site.

Confirmation: The pastors began by stating the confirmation is voluntary, unlike baptism and communion, which are sacraments. They shared some of the difficulties they are having with setting up the confirmation program, mostly having to do with scheduling. They also shared some ideas on how our program could be changed, such as opening confirmation classes up to younger students. The confirmation program will continue to be discussed

during the coming several months, and council members are asked to share their ideas.

RWM/TCM Agreement: The 2009 agreement between Red Willow Bible Camp and Tri-County Ministry was approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Intern Application: Pastor Cheri is currently working on the application, and is requesting the 2008 budget from each congregation for use in answering financial questions on the application.

2009 Budget: Approved as recommended by the Finance Committee

2008 Mileage: Increased by 10 cents per mile, retroactive to July 1, 2008

TREASURER'S REPORT

General Fund 8/31/08: \$44,626.20

Parsonage Fund 8/31/08: \$2,574.11 (\$725 earmarked for Cooperstown parsonage)

Special Funds 8/31/08: \$6,851.04

CORRESPONDENCE:

Theresa read a letter from Denny and Becky Goetz, thanking TCM for the gifts given to the camp for the chapel fund.

Pastor Marli Danielson read a thank you letter from the Seafarer's Ministry for work done by our group during the Dash to Duluth.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, October 22, at Binford (Committees at 6:30, council at 7:00)

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Check out our new and improved website!

www.tricountyministry.org

It is still “under construction,” but new material is continually being added.

(Wanted: a photographer from each congregation to submit pics for the site. Contact Theresa if interested.)