“WORSHIP, WITNESS, WELCOME”
A Ministry of Stewardship

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Additional Resources
2015-2016

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In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:
STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS
Article 1

(Use in your congregational newsletter or worship bulletin. An electronic version of this article is available on the synod website www.nglsynod.org/stewardship.)

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

We have a new addition to our family – a furry, fluffy, four-legged one! Toivo is our nine week old puppy. He’s small, adorable, fun and a lot of work! This is our first experience with raising a puppy and we are learning a lot. Here are a few lessons I have learned:

1. You can take a puppy out to “potty” every thirty minutes on the dot and they will still find opportunities to “do their business” on your carpet.
2. Silence is never a good thing. Just like children if your puppy is off being quiet somewhere he is probably either chewing your shoe or shredding the entire contents of your bathroom waste basket.
3. Puppies rely on you for everything – food, water, shelter, love – they are also loyal and faithful. I am constantly tripping over the little guy as he “follows me around like a puppy dog” everywhere I go!

As I ponder on this last tidbit, I can’t help but think about how we might learn from a puppy how to be faithful stewards of God. If we think of God as our “master” can we imagine ourselves as his puppies? After all God provides all we need – food, water, shelter and love- and all he asks in return is for us to follow him and receive his love and praise. Just like we are establishing guidelines for how we want our puppy to behave and interact with others, God too has given us his commandments for how he would like us to live our lives. Are we faithful puppies – wanting to please our God and fulfill his commands?

I have been assured through all my research that puppies want to please their owners and that my diligence in bringing Toivo outside (in some extreme temperatures I might add) and rewarding his good behavior with praise will pay off in the future. I will have a house broke puppy and my days of scrubbing the carpet will be a distant memory. In the meantime, I need to be patient and continue to model the behaviors I want Toivo to adopt.

We too have a loving and patient Master who will continually guide us to live our lives according to his plan. He provides us with everything we need, physically and spiritually. It is up to us to be loyal and loving servants – trusting in Him and the promise of his eternal love. They say there is nothing more loyal than a dog to his master. Let us be loyal servants of God – fulfilling his commandments and receiving his never ending love and grace!

Matthew 25:21 - His master replied “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness”

- Carrie Boudreau
  Christ the King Lutheran, Escanaba
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:
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WHAT IS BENEVOLENCE?

What is benevolence? Benevolence is an inclination to do good. Why do we give to benevolence? We give first because God has called us to give. We give to benevolence as our little bit joined with all the other little bits enable big ministry to take place. How do the benevolence dollars impact the world?

Let me tell you about three distinct different ministries our benevolence dollars support.

First, is the Lutheran World Service India Trust in Kolkatta, India. This agency serves those in need in the country of India. They offer disaster support to areas that are devastated through flooding, monsoons etc., They support the poorest of the poor through raising leaders within a community (slum) to lead the women in beginning, running and managing a business.

Second, let me tell you about the missionary I visited in Papua, New Guinea. Sister Ruth Ellen Rebelein, who is now retired, was a teacher at Senior Flierl Seminary in Finschaffen PNG. Her job was to teach the students basic skills of how to live beyond the communities where they were living in. The skills she taught included communicating in English, how to study, how to use a telephone directory, how to give directions, etc. Her role enabled the students to survive in the world. She also managed the seminary’s library.

Third, let me tell you about the ministries in Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. The people in ministry have goals and plans for 50-100 years in the future. And the current ministries are a reality that was dreamed of decades before. Mkuza was a piece of vacant land in the 1960’s. It was given to the church with the dream to develop a girl’s school on the property. The school would teach the girls and give them a skill that could support a family. The year I travelled there the land had two buildings on it. One building was a classroom building with a dozen treadle sewing machines with young girls learning how to sew clothing, to mend clothing and to create clothing. A dormitory was there and funds were brought with this group to afford beds for the girls. Several of the girls walked two hours in the morning to get to school and others who were from farther off, stayed in the dormitories. When school was not in session, the location was used as a retreat center.

I am proud to know that my few dollars join your few dollars and together we do big things. I don’t need to know the details or question how the funds are expended as I have seen with my own eyes and visited with our missionaries throughout the world. I praise God that I have an organization (the ELCA) that I trust and believe in. Our missionaries are well supported and they do not need to worry about raising funds to keep their support while they are in the country doing the “Lord’s work”. They can focus on their ministry and I can give a few more dollars to support them to do so.

- Pastor Bonny Kinnunen
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:  
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YEAR-ROUND PLANNING

Last fall we completed a successful annual pledge drive. So, it would be easy now to not think about stewardship until the fall. But, as we all really know, stewardship should be on our minds, in our prayers and in our activities throughout the year. The following is a quote from Stewards of God’s Love which is a publication put out by the ELCA:

“Year-round stewardship is a way to get out of the habit of just talking about stewardship in one season, like the fall, and bringing it into the life of the congregation throughout the year. Year-round stewardship enables a congregation to separate stewardship from the annual financial response and instead focus on all of the different aspects of what it means to be a good steward.”

It is the goal of the Stewardship Committee to place a focus on year-round stewardship for Christ the King Church. Therefore, the Stewardship Committee will be meeting early in the year to begin plans for the whole year. So, look to hear more about stewardship throughout the year and we promise that it won’t just be about giving money but will include many of the ways that we can be stewards of God’s love.

- Christ the King, Escanaba  
Stewardship Committee

YEAR ‘ROUND STEWARDSHIP PLANNING

Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette has a Stewardship Team made up of 8-10 members, including one of its pastors, who meet every month (except January) to plan its program for member’s use of their time, talent and financial resources to promote the work of the Lord to its members.

Newsletter articles highlight the ways members are serving the Lord by volunteering to work in one or more of its many ministries. A monthly reminder of our need to be good stewards is also included in the newsletter and frequent “Temple Talks” are geared to stewardship. The annual fall campaign has been set for September/October and a plan to meet face to face with all members is taking shape.

Helping members to learn the joy of giving is a year ‘round effort to help members understand that giving is an act of faith that grows out of a relationship with Jesus Christ and not just a way to “meet the budget”.

- David Blomquist  
Messiah, Marquette
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Article 4

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PRISON MINISTRY - DOES IT DO ANY GOOD?

Christian Prison Ministry began as an official ministry in our Synod in 1995 and has been ongoing in one form or another since that time. Former Bishop, Dale Skogman, secured a grant to fund Christian programming in all of the prisons in the synod. Many of them are still functioning. Congregations in our synod contribute to this ministry.

One ministry in which we are active is the Keryx program at Marquette Branch Prison. Recently, 32 prisoners and 25 volunteers spent parts of four days in an intense, short course in Christianity. The purpose was to prepare inmates to be “Christ Bearers” in the compound.

Does it work? Here are some of the testimonies of men who have experienced the weekend and worked to be Christ’s presence in the prison.

“Thanks to Keryx, today I am free! I am a productive member of society, I am employed, I attend church and am back with my family.”

“I’ll be graduating from ITT training with a degree in Electrical Engineering and have a job with a good company. I will be praying for the upcoming Keryx weekend.”

“I’m still in prison so it may appear that nothing has changed, but, I have changed! I have HOPE, which I have never had before. My hope is in the Lord, Jesus. My life has been changed forever!”

- David Blomquist
  Messiah, Marquette
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STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

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HOLYDAYS AND HOLIDAY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Bethany Lutheran Church in Escanaba has a long tradition of supporting ministries beyond its walls. For over 30 years, one of the ways Bethany Lutheran has worked and continues to develop our stewardship is by designating offering collected during the worship services of Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The recipients of these offerings are designated by the congregation at the beginning of the year.

Each year there is the temptation to stop these designated offerings, especially for the highly attended Christmas and Easter worship services. However, the members of Bethany Lutheran Church have continued this mission not only through voting to do it at each year’s annual meeting, but most importantly through their financial support. These offerings are a big part of the way the people of Bethany celebrate and give thanks for God’s gift of the birth of our Savior, the Easter gift of salvation, and God’s gift of creation.

Ministries that have received these offerings vary and include global, national, and local concerns. Over the last five years (since 2010), $38,787 has gone to support ELCA World Hunger ($9,214), Rock (MI) Food Pantry ($2,777), Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp ($15,021), St. Vincent DePaul ($886), Hope at the Inn ($4,369), and Reformation Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI ($2,536). These holiday offering designations account for around 12% of our annual benevolent stewardship and are a part of the people of Bethany Lutheran do “God’s Work with Our Hands”.

Pastor Erik Heskin
Bethany, Escanaba
HOPE AT THE INN ENDS SECOND SUCCESSFUL YEAR IN DELTA COUNTY

Saturday night, April 25, was the last night for the Hope At The Inn (HATI) program for the season. The host site was Immanuel Lutheran in Escanaba. Christ the King Lutheran Church was the host site for two weeks during this second year of the HATI program here in Delta County. Immanuel Lutheran and Christ the King Lutheran have been host sites this year from the ELCA Delta Conference and the other Delta County ELCA churches have generously contributed funds and volunteers for the program. This year there were 10 host churches and another 10 support churches. The season ran for 23 weeks and there were approximately 550 bed nights which is nearly a 75% increase from the first year when there were 318 bed nights. Almost \( \frac{3}{4} \) of the guests were from Delta County this year which is similar to the first year of operation.

Exciting News! At least four guests have been placed in apartments/homes since the beginning of this year and another 4-6 guests are expected to find permanent homes in the near future. The Social Worker located at the Salvation Army warming center has assisted the guests in obtaining MSHDA housing vouchers, subsidized apartments, or private landlord rentals.

Presently there are 491 trained volunteers for the program. During the summer there will continue to be efforts to recruit more churches and to train more volunteers.

Thank you and God bless everyone for your support and prayers. We look forward to your continuing support and prayers for this important ministry to those in need within our midst.

Roland Jacobson
Christ the King, Escanaba
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:
STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

Article 7

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FOOD PANTRY

The food pantry is still going strong. It varies from week to week. We are always in need of goods. We have anywhere from 10 to 37 participants on a typical give away day.

We started working with the Backpack Program a few years ago. It is all done very privately; we have no names, so there is no reason for a child not to participate. They are given a number and the backpack is numbered. They pick it up on Friday and return the empty backpack on Monday. During the Christmas vacation, Easter, and Spring break, the backpacks are filled to capacity. They try to have enough food in them to carry the child through the time they will not be in school.

We thank our volunteers and the people who do collections for us. We couldn’t do this without them.

We have been working with Bethany, Escanaba for a few years. The first challenge was toilet paper. Fill the choir loft!!

- Lucy Lampinen
Faith, Rock
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:
STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

Article 8

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BUILDING TO SERVE

Looking back: It was a very difficult time, the economic outlook nationwide was in a tail spin, this Synod was to lose nine congregations, and closer to home, pastoral leadership had changed with the arrival of a new Pastor, and personally our family business was looking at financial ruin…chaos and uncertainty were what my days were filled with.

As I have learned and profess, “ALWAYS WE BEGIN AGAIN.” This time I/we had divine leadership and the earthly leadership of Pastor David Van Kley.

+ Began with the foundation building block of “mission advancement.” We defined our faith community as it is, where we have been, and where are we being lead. Two years of monthly meetings and an ever changing and evolving group of people affirmed the call to continue to care and share God’s love in our community and beyond with both new and rejuvenated ministries.

+ Evolved into the “BUILDING TO SERVE” team who began with a three year capital campaign. Criticism was plentiful given the state of the nation, local economics and the enormous changes at Messiah, but we had done our homework when it came to defining our Mission, embracing that Mission, and then following through on our Mission objectives. We raised approximately $600,000 in campaign pledges. And now after 3+ years we have seen those pledges honored with a total of $600,000 given.

Mission objectives met were numerous: Mission Dollars went to Lay Caregiving, Fortune Lake, Youth Ministry, Staff Development, New Outreach, Global Mission, and Room at the Inn.

We believe we are called to be good stewards of our church building and properties. We are called to enrich the faith and worship experience of our current members. We are called to “grow” by reaching out to the community, inviting people to worship and serve with us in a warm and welcoming space.

+ Building renovation and repair: we have a multi-use fellowship atrium that has been a terrific catalyst in uniting our church family that worships at three separate and very different services. It is an intimate space in which we Welcome, Witness, and Worship. There were no buckets this winter from leaking roofs and our pipe organ has been brought into the 21st century. Sanctuary renovation: contractors began demolition the Week of April 13 and plan to be done in June!

+ The challenge of this project required us to raise funds above and beyond regular giving support of our annual ministry budget. And with that we humbly sing the hymn:

“Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live...let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true...let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat...let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone...let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard. ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE.”

- Lou Ann Balding, Messiah, Marquette
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STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

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STEWARDSHIP: ENDOWMENT MINISTRY

The focus of our Stewardship Committee has broadened to include other aspects of stewardship. While the annual pledge program and the need to ensure the resources to support the congregation’s ministry will always be a central aspect of stewardship, stewardship is concerned primarily with each person and their relationship with God and giving many opportunities to grow in that relationship. Therefore, the Stewardship Program will also provide information and support for the mission endowment fund at our church. The mission endowment fund at Christ the King was established a number of years ago after receiving a generous gift from the estate of a former member. In 2014, the endowment fund made gifts amounting to approximately $3,000.00 to places such as Fortune Lake, Perspectives, seminary students, and Hope at the Inn. The mission endowment fund will be doing the same this year. Mission endowment funds give faithful members the opportunity to complete a whole-life stewardship plan! What a blessing!

The Stewardship Committee initiated this effort this year by inviting Pastor Larry Westfield, Lutheran Planned Giving, to give a series of presentations. It was a great week-end loaded with great information. The presentations by Pastor Westfield centered around the opportunities for growth of one’s Christian stewardship even after death. Pastor Westfield will be returning for follow-up visits and this will also be an opportunity to learn more about the mission endowment and the possibility of giving future gifts such as by wills or life insurance designations.

In so many ways, God’s work has spoken to us and we look for ways to respond. Whether it is a gift today or in the future, the mission endowment fund can be one opportunity to respond.

“Praise the Lord, all people on earth; praise his glory and might. Praise the Lord’s glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple. Bow down before the Holy One when he appears; tremble before him, all the earth!” Psalm 96:7-9.

- Roland Jacobson
  Christ the King, Escanaba
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STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

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STEWARDSHIP CELEBRATION:
THE UPPER PENINSULA STATE FAIR

There is a strong ELCA presence at the Upper Peninsula State Fair, “Michigan’s ONLY State Fair”.

The congregations of the Delta County Conference (www.deltacountyelca.org) have sponsored and staffed a booth in the Ruth Butler building. The rental fee for the week and the daily passes for the volunteers are paid with dues from the conference churches. Each day one of the seven churches sends 6-14 volunteers to answer questions, visit with fair goers, and hand out various items such as Bibles, devotionals, and kid pages. Men, women, and children serve 156 hours to help spread the Gospel message, and to welcome and invite people to worship with one of the Delta County Conference churches.

Last year Bethany Lutheran Church of Escanaba felt a call to serve those that attend and those that work at the Fair. Just off the midway a large tent with tables and chairs was set up offering a “REST STOP” for all. Individuals and families stopped to rest, to eat together, and to get out of the sun or wind. In the afternoons children were invited to come in and make a free “sand cross’ necklace for themselves to wear. Over 440 children made crosses. To help draw attention (and because it is a fair) men and women handed out free gifts to fair goers. Over 4,000 bracelets with a variety of Bible verse were given away along with hundreds of pencils. Worship services were held at the tent the Sunday evening during the fair set up, and Sunday morning of the close of the fair.

This year look for both the Delta County Conference booth in the Ruth Butler building and for the Rest Stop of Bethany Lutheran just off the midway.

- Pastor Erik Heskin
  Bethany, Escanaba
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:

STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

Article 11

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WORLD HUNGER

Through the NGLS World Hunger Appeal, we participate in ministries in over 60 countries. In 2014, 19.3 million dollars was raised to aid people all over the world. Our synod sent $123,879 to this effort in 2014, an average of $4.45 per baptized member. Our synod assembly “Quarter Offering” is one of the most visible ways we promote World Hunger and we are happy to say that nearly all congregations in the synod participate. In 2014, this offering totaled $18,500.

Our synod’s World Hunger Committee recognizes individuals and congregations that have made special efforts each year at the Synod Assembly. The individual award is the “Bread Basket” and the congregational award is a travelling “Big Bear”. The committee also encourages congregations to keep Hunger Issues at the forefront and to promote the sale of Fair Trade products.

In addition to the Hunger Appeal, the Malaria Fund and Lutheran Disaster Relief also fall under the auspices of World Hunger. In 2014, 2.8 million dollars was contributed to Malaria and 6.1 million to Disaster Relief.

This is one of the most important ways we do ministry in our world and deserves our strong support!

- Mary Lou Blomquist
  Messiah, Marquette
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:
STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

Article 12

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WE BOUGHT THE FARM!

GOOD NEWS! WE DID IT! Members and friends of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Escanaba, Michigan rallied together and embraced the challenge to buy a farm and that's exactly what we did. The Parish Life Committee and Sunday School students and staff put together an aggressive Lenten project which bought an animal of every kind available to combat World Hunger. We used the ELCA program "God's Global Barnyard" and will soon be submitting to them $2,180 to be used to purchase these animals.

The idea all started with the committee looking at ways in which to create more enthusiasm around the “Buck-a-Chick” activity. And so the excitement took life. We did that by creating a contest around it as well as adding a few other fun elements. You purchased a chick for a dollar, colored it and returned it so it could be hung on the wall. The congregation was invited to vote for the cutest picture by placing change (green stuff worked too!) in a piggy coin box which was identified as theirs. To help create some excitement about the need to participate in this activity the three top vote getters received movie passes to the local cinema. To make it fair for all who took part their name was thrown into a drawing for a movie pass. Another attraction that gathered a lot of attention was our “egg sale”. Two hundred plastic Easter eggs were filled with a bite size candy bar, Bible verse and approximately 20 of them had a note indicating that they had won something special. For $1 you could take a chance at maybe winning a movie pass, Subway or McDonald’s food card, stuffed barn animal or maybe a special theme basket loaded with fun stuff. The barn coin boxes provided in the ELCA resource package were made available to our members with an encouragement to take them home and use them in their daily devotions during Lent. Sunday school students and families took it upon themselves to raise enough money to purchase the sheep. They did that and then some. The monies taken in at our Soup Suppers and Easter Breakfast were even designated for this project. We noticed that because there was a cause associated with these activities along with a challenge to give, our members were much more generous at these meals.

Just imagine the ways in which the gift of these animals will impact a family. Not only will they be able to feed their family but they will be able to sell at the market eggs & milk which can be used to make cheese, yogurt and other dairy products. The soft fleece of an alpaca can be spun to make clothing, bedding and rugs. The benefits of these animals go on and on. Thanks be to God for the gift of an animal and thanks be to God for the excitement and support of this congregation.

- Arlene Cody
  Christ the King, Escanaba
In the Northern Great Lakes Synod:

STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

Article 13

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WALK FOR WARMTH

For the past 23 years, the Community Action Agency of Menominee, Delta and Schoolcraft Counties has sponsored the annual Walk for Warmth. This fund-raiser helps residents in these three counties with heating assistance, with every dollar raised used for direct services in the county in which it is raised. Walks are held in Menominee, Escanaba and Manistique, usually on a Saturday morning in February to encourage people to remember their neighbor in need who may be challenged to heat their home during the cold U.P. winter months.

Rev. Tom Lindblad, retired Northern Great Lakes Synod pastor and longtime Menominee resident who passed away in March of this year, was an enthusiastic supporter of the Walk for Warmth. Pastor Tom saw this event as a great way to give of his time, talent and treasures. For many years he gave the invocation at the opening ceremony, then walked alongside the other participants as they traversed the course around the city. He helped to promote the Walk through publicity announcements in Emmanuel Lutheran’s bulletins and by gathering pledges and inviting others to take part with him. His generosity in support of those who were in need is an example for all.

Since 1992, over $220,000 has been raised by the Menominee County Walk for Warmth. Through the generosity of people like Pastor Lindblad, more than 1,800 people have received assistance with their heating bills. God bless all those who come out on a cold winter morning to walk so that others may be warm and safe.

- Pastor David Christenson