

NOTES & QUOTES

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IN THANKSGIVING FOR “ANXIETY!”

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

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We have had ample reason to be anxious in these last months. The financial panic that has plagued Wall Street and Main Street has given many sleepless nights. Deep breaths are needed when one opens a pension or mutual fund account. The politicians have been about as clueless as the investment bankers. The planned anxiety of a presidential election has given way to the external shocks of an economy heading into recession.

People are changing their plans for retirement, for winter vacations, for that new vehicle or that second home. Bob Dylan famously sang, “The times they are a changing!” So it goes!

I have been practicing my “non-anxious” presence lately. In seminary, pastors learn that a key part of dealing with uncertainty or conflict is to face it without having your emotions controlled by it. Congregations are thinking about the future and the fears are close to the surface. “What ifs” abound: “What if the offerings drop by 20% because of the economy, or because of the issues surrounding the study of sexuality in this church? What if heating prices rise and we can’t afford to heat the church? What if we cannot get a pastor? What if there are no Sunday School teachers or, worse yet, no Sunday School students?

And since I can be an anxious person, too, I can add my own “what ifs” to the mix. Being fairly creative, I can generate all kinds of doomsday



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THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

scenarios. But I will not. Anxiety can disable and cripple our actions. Anxiety can freeze us into an attitude of resignation or cynicism. However, anxiety can be a wake-up call and act like a shot of caffeine. Anxiety can force us to look inward and to honestly face reality with hope. Jesus reminds us in John 14: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid...”*

No doubt about it - these are anxious times. However, as any of us who have read church history know, there has never been a generation when people of faith have not faced difficult moments. As I write these lines, I am reminded of the Fred Green hymn:

*“The Church of Christ in every age beset by change, but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.*

*Then let the servant Church arise, a caring Church that longs to be
A partner in Christ’s sacrifice, and clothed in Christ’s humanity.*

*We have no mission but to serve in full obedience to our Lord;
To care for all without reserve, and spread his liberating Word.”*

“Every one of our congregations has faithful leaders. Some leaders in our churches and church institutions are ordained and some are lay persons.”

IN THANKSGIVING FOR FAITHFUL LEADERS

You know the type! Every one of our congregations has faithful leaders. Some leaders in our churches and church institutions are ordained and some are lay persons. All have been called by Jesus Christ to make a difference in the Synod, the community and the world. I am thankful today for:

+Congregational pastors and council members who meet and pray, reflect and plan God’s work for each of our ninety-four congregations. Thanks be to God!



THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

+The leaders, both clergy and lay of our church college, our Bible Camp, our campus ministries and our social ministry organizations in this Synod. I am thankful for our seminaries, our world missionaries, and our churchwide staff. This is God's church - alive and serving the world. Thanks be to God!

+The faithful people who assist you in your ministry, and who work out of our Synod Office. Thank God for Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege, Wendy Black, Roger Knuth, Kay Benedict, Louise Ingalls and Betsy Koski. Thanks be to God also for our Synod officers, Executive Committee, Synod Council and committees!

**IN THANKSGIVING
FOR GENEROUS HEARTS**

"We Thank God" continues to be our stewardship theme. Reports from congregations indicate that it is being used along with the materials prepared by our Synod Stewardship Committee. Thanks be to God for the women and men of faith who are alive with the fire of generosity. Our work as congregations and as a church body is only possible because the Holy Spirit has placed within you generous hearts. On behalf of our synodical ministries, and on behalf of those who benefit from hunger and other social ministries, companion synod work, and a multitude of specialized efforts - thank you, and thanks be to God!

**IN THANKSGIVING
FOR A NEW PASTOR**

A called servant of Jesus Christ, James Wendt will be ordained into the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament by the laying on of hands and with prayer on Sunday, November 16, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. CT at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1600 University Drive in Marinette, Wisconsin.

Pastor-elect Wendt has been called to serve as the pastor at Our Savior's, and will also be installed as its pastor at the service.

You are invited! Rostered persons are invited to process. The color of the day is red.

TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to the people of **Salem in Bark River (Pastor Len Gilley)** on the celebration of its 125th Anniversary of the congregation - September 28, 2008. Congratulations also to the people of **Christ the King in Escanaba (Pastor Peter Andersen)** as they celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the congregation. The founding pastor of Christ the King was present, Pastor Erling Carlson, for the celebration on October 19, 2008.

+Congratulations to **Pastor Kevin Kaiser** on his installation as pastor of **Bethany in Amasa and Trinity in Stambaugh**. Welcome to the Synod, and God bless your ministry in our midst.

+I had the privilege of baptizing Andres Michael Abdo, son of my Goddaughter, Anna Laakko Abdo and her husband, Andres, on October 11, 2008. **Pastor Michael and Denise Laakko (United, Crystal Falls)** are the proud grandparents. Thanks be to God!

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

GETTING HIS LOVE INTO OUR HEARTS

Pastor Chad Christensen, Emanuel, Skandia

A pastor once heard a parishioner after church talking about a stewardship program that his church was doing. The phrase that really caught the pastor's attention was, "Ah! The church is trying to get their hand in my wallet again!" The pastor didn't respond at the time, but went to his study to think about what he had heard. He was hoping that the

attitude that he heard expressed was not the attitude commonly held by most of his parishioners. The attitude was certainly not what the church was trying to cultivate. As the pastor thought about it, he had a thought about how he could respond to his parishioner's statement.

The next Sunday, he saw the same man standing in the entryway, and the pastor approached him and took him aside and said, "Knut, I couldn't help but overhear what you were saying last week after the service about the church trying to get their hand in your wallet, and I think you really have it wrong. We *do* need money to function as a church, there is no denying that. But *the point* of Christian stewardship is *not* for the congregation to get their hand into your wallet. The point of stewardship is God trying to get his love into *your* heart. What we give to the church ought to be a response of thanks to God for all that God has done for us. Stewardship is more about your heart than it is about your wallet. The biggest beneficiary of the gifts you give to the church is you. It's good for all of us to give. Generosity is a wonderful thing. Everybody benefits from knowing they've done something good and helpful. Giving reminds us of lots of things that the Bible says about money and possessions, like that everything we have is a gift from God including our life, or that we are caretakers and not owners of the world, or that we can't serve two masters, or what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose their soul? If you took away everything God gave us there wouldn't be anything left. Stewardship is more spiritual than it is economic. Money is a tool, not an end in itself."

Knut thought for a moment and said, "I'm kinda' sorry for what I said, but times aren't easy and everything is more expensive and then the church asks for money, too. I guess I was feeling a little squeezed. I really am thankful. I guess I got a little bit too focused on me and not on God."

The pastor replied, “I understand that the times aren’t easy. Costs are going up for the church, too. And just between you and me, it isn’t easy for the pastor to speak to the congregation about money since I’m one of the biggest line items on the budget. But I *believe* in what we are doing as a church, or maybe I ought to say what God is doing through our church. And with tough times, people need our ministry all the more. They need to know that some things are still certain in an uncertain world, like God’s love and grace. I’m sorry, Knut, I don’t mean to turn this into another sermon.”

“That’s okay, Pastor. You gave me some stuff to think about.”



Thank You

World Missionary Support

Trinity, Stambaugh

Trinity, Rhineland

Calvary, Rapid River

Pioneer Lake, Conover

Lutheran World Relief

Gloria Dei, Hancock

Messiah, Marquette

Our Saviour’s, Iron Mountain

Bethany, Negaunee

Trinity, Rhineland

Calvary, Rapid River

Immanuel, Negaunee

Zion, St. Ignace

Zion, Marinette

Holy Trinity, Chassell

ELCA Disaster Funds

Messiah, Marquette

Seminarian Support

Grace, Gwinn

Lay School for Mission

Trinity, Rapid River

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Grace, Gwinn

Calvary, Rapid River

Bethany, Amasa

Companion Synod

Trinity, Rhineland

Endowment Fund

Dave & Pat Holli



+ From the Assistant to the Bishop +
Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;

for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said,

"See, I am making all things new."

Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Revelation 21:1-6a

I will be visiting my mother's grave on Sunday, November 2nd – All Saints' Sunday. The casket which held her body was lowered into this grave on a cold, cloudy and windy afternoon last February. Though my father visits the cemetery regularly, I have been there on just one other occasion – one morning last spring. There were no flowers there then, or even grass. The soil that covered the vault was sunken and uneven with the ground surrounding it. Back last spring, there was as yet no head stone. A temporary marker indicated where her body was laid to rest.

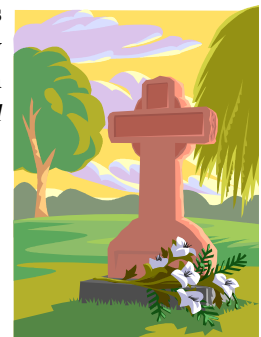
I missed seeing the bright summer flowers placed there by my dad and brothers. I did not observe the new and plush green grass sprout, grow, and cover the grave with signs of life. I did not take in the stunning beauty of the trees as the leaves burst forth dressing branches in every color of spring green, nor have I seen those same leaves turning red and amber and yellow. I have not been present for the songs sung or the prayers prayed by those who gather there from time to time. I have missed my mother.

On All Saints' Sunday, I will bring my candle and I will visit my mother's grave. I will light the candle and remember the light and love of Christ that made its way to me through her. I will cry and pray and sing, I hope, with whoever else is there. I will remember that she is not there! She has risen, just as Christ has risen from the grave.

Later in November, when my family gathers for turkey on Thanksgiving Day, she will not be sitting in her chair at the table. But, I will be so very thankful for her and for the wonderful gifts she shared with so many during her life on this earth. What a wonderful Mom! And, I will give thanks to God for his steadfast love, mercy and grace. I will give thanks that God himself is with her (and us), has wiped every tear from her eyes (and ours), that death will be no more for her (and, someday, for us), and that mourning and crying and pain will be no more for her (and, someday, for us).

I will give thanks, and I urge you to give thanks as well, for all the good gifts that God so abundantly pours out upon all of us even as God's promise to *make all things new* is taking place.

Blessings!



Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams

Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor John Autio

Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt

Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Chad Christensen

First, Ewen & Our Saviour's, Paynesville - Pastor Gerald Anderson

Bethany, Perkins - Pastor Peter Andersen

Concordia, Palmer & Our Saviour's, Negaunee - Pastor Virginia Eggert

Immanuel, Negaunee - Pastor Peggy Rose

Holy Trinity, Chassell - Pastors Jimalee Jones & Peter Gundersen

First, Trenary - Pastor Stephen Gauger

St. James, Rudyard - Pastor Barry Levine

Prince of Peace, Eagle River - (April 2009)

As we finish the third quarter (or 75%) of 2008, eighty congregations have given 50% or more of their yearly pledge, while only thirty-six congregations have given 75% or more. Calendar year giving in 2008 is \$10,039 less than 2007. The fourth quarter of the year is often the strongest giving quarter in congregations, and we strongly encourage all to make a real commitment to meeting or exceeding their pledge to the work of the Synod and the ELCA in 2008. Together we do make a difference. We give thanks to God for His generous blessings!

Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 9/30	2007	2008	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,045,301	1,032,591	-12,710	-1.2%
Amount Received	702,477	692,438	-10,039	-1.4%
Designated Gifts	121,344	146,289	+24,945	+20.5%



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ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR
NOVEMBER 2008

www.prayfaithfully.org

Nov. 2-8 / Pastor Bonny Kinnunen, First, Iron River

Nov. 9-15 / Pastor Scott Williams, United, L'Anse

**Nov. 16-22 / Gisele Duehring, Prince of Peace, Mar-
quette**

Nov. 23-29 / Tim Mulvaney, Bethany, Escanaba