



Quick Notes



December 2009

Season Greetings

This year has been a remarkable journey as the spirit of God has moved in our lives, continuing to challenge and inspire each of us to respond to the gift of Christ.

After the Fall Conference, I felt more inspired than ever to embrace the adventures ahead in 2010! And, I marvel at how many of you have continued to unselfishly dedicate your time and talents to support our congregations and members. As we go forward, I humbly pray for God's continued guidance and direction.

In this Advent season, I pray that every one of you may know the true joy of Christmas as the Prince of Peace fills your homes with His wondrous love, His unending hope, and His perfect Peace.

In Service to Christ,
Wayne Rogers

Dear Friends,

I keep a file of letters I've written, so in preparing for this one, I reread last year's message to you. When I look back, I see that challenges I thought were almost overwhelming were handled with relative ease. It's clear that the mission center's prayerful preparation for each challenge has encouraged us to listen and respond to the Spirit – praise be to God.

Son in spite of next year's challenges – and there are some pretty big ones – I know that we will proceed with the Spirit's guidance and companionship. It's a privilege to be in this place and in this time, serving with each of you.

May the season of God's grace and mercy be filled with joy, hope, love and peace for you and your families.

Grace & Peace,
Charlie

To all the members of Headwaters Mission Center: May the meaning of Christmas be truly yours this Advent season. May the Christ child open up for all of you the hope, joy, love and peace that comes through following the Bethlehem star.

Blessings to all!
Mary

Peter and I wish each of you the joy and hope of Christ this season. May you be surprised by the ways and places the Spirit encounters you, and may you find the rebirth of Christ in you once again.

Your companions on this journey,
Kris and Peter Judd

Stranger in the Pew

Our apostle, Mary Jacks Dynes, told me recently of an experience she had in her home congregation many years ago. On this occasion, Mary wore a wig that overwhelmed her face and was dressed up in holey gloves and shabby clothes that had been "perfumed" by foul smelling substances. She made herself look as unrecognizable and unappealing as possible, and slipped into a pew in the front of the church after the service had already begun. She intentionally coughed and hacked away, smelling up the pew and challenging her unknowing friends with her disguise. Mary interrupted the pastor as he shared the message and created a scene. One lady who sat next to her thought twice before sharing her hymnal with her, but she did. The pastor did ask for someone to bring Mary a cup of water, which they did.



Quick Notes



Mary didn't do this on a whim. As a consultant to the congregation, the pastor had invited her into this ruse. You see, homeless people frequently visited that congregation and the pastor wanted to help the congregation prepare themselves for this. Though uncomfortable, they responded well.

There are times when I challenge congregations to prepare themselves to provide hospitality to the stranger. At other times, the looks I receive have more to do with deer and headlights than glasses of water and throat lozenges. Through honest conversations, one reason for the response has emerged.

If we don't know one another and we've worshipped together for years, how are we supposed to get to know the stranger?

The question is not how to greet the stranger in these cases, but who is the stranger? And why are they the stranger?

Will Willimon, in a comment on community, says "What passes for community (in the modern world) is, 'You stay out of my life, and in exchange for that I'll stay out of your life, and we'll call that community.'" I have heard this version of community spoken of and lived out in some congregations, and simply put, it is playing church.

One pattern that has been uncovered in churches that no longer want to play such games is the practice of creating redemptive relationships in community. In these social or communal relationships, people take time to listen to one another, are actively helpful toward each other, refuse to allow the differences between them to create boundaries, and they bear with one another. These are not complicated practices. They are Christian practices, and are witnessed in communities where God's word is proclaimed in worship and relationship.

Listening to one another is a fundamental practice in churches where redemptive relationships are the expectation and the experience. Let's be honest, though. How many of us have the time, or make the time, to truly listen to ourselves, let alone another. Time spent together as the church goes beyond the Sunday morning worship hour to meals in one another's homes, phone calls, home visits, and friendships. This may be happening for some selected individuals in the congregation, but are there strangers among you?

Are there those who have no one to talk with, no one to eat with?

Are painful burdens being shared in community, or only the joys that life brings?

Where and when are the important conversations of life taking place?

What must be given up in order to allow time for this practice to be lived out?

Tough questions to answer, perhaps, but critical questions if we as members of congregations are to live out the gospel in more authentic and relevant ways, to bring healing to brokenness, to bring hope to the hopeless. To give voice to the gospel that is to be proclaimed from every pulpit and pew and within every relationship.

This Sunday, take a look at the people around you. Do you know them? Do you really know them? If not, consider a deeper relationship. And listen. Listen "with the ears of God so that we may speak the Word of God" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).



Quick Notes



FINANCIAL REPORT - OPERATIONS – AS OF 13 DEC 09 (in 000's)

Actual vs. Budget

	Actual	Budget - DEC	Difference
Income	\$ 57.2	\$ 60.8	\$ (3.6)
Expense (incl. dist. to OH)	70.3	74.4	(4.1)

Projected vs. Budget

	Projected	Budget	Difference
Expenses	71.0	74.4	3.4
Off-budget expenses: Legal Fees & Settlement (ELCRC)*	38.0	0.0	(38.0)

* EL Res Fund Balances total \$87.9

Cash

	Current	One Year Ago	Difference
Cash Balance	\$ 7.4	\$ 11.9	(\$ 4.5)

Investments

	AUG 09	Deposits (Withdrawals)	JUN 08	Difference
Fund A	\$173.3	\$ 0.0	\$206.6	(\$33.3)
Fund B	28.9	(12,000.0)	38.7	(9.8)

Notes Receivable

	Outstanding	Interest Earned
Eau Claire	\$ 2.3	\$.1
Eagle Lake CRC	3.8	.3

Fall Gathering - estimated

Income	Budgeted Supt	Expense	Net Gain/(Loss)
\$2.6	\$1.5	\$3.4	\$.7