



October 2019
Quarterly Magazine
4th Issue

The Communicator

"First Fruits" Giving vs Sacrificial Giving

by Jane Henkel

At Nativity, our "first fruits" giving goes toward the ministry we do on a daily basis as expressed in the operating budget of the church. This includes salaries, utilities, worship and music supplies, insurance, our mortgage and property maintenance. Our yearly budget is based on our promise or *pledge* of "first fruits" giving to cover these expenses.

"Sacrificial giving," on the other hand, is *in addition to* and *not in place of* our normal "first fruits" giving. Examples of sacrificial giving would be to our Food Pantry, Missions of the Month and other outside organizations that we choose to support. Our prayer life leads us to discern the level of giving we are able to sustain for both the operating needs of our church and the "sacrifices" we are called to make to support our various monthly and special outreach projects.

Nativity has experienced many deaths and transfers in the last few years which has caused our "first fruits" giving to decrease. On a positive note our sacrificial giving has increased, which means we value and support mission projects that respond to the needs of people both locally and globally. Together, these factors create a

strain on the ongoing operating ministry and maintaining the church's facilities and grounds. With large budget expenses looming—refinancing our mortgage, rising utility charges and other projects our committees have planned for the growth of the church—asking for additional "first fruits" giving becomes a necessity.

But how do we do that? It can be easier than you think! How many times do we spend money on fast food, a restaurant meal, specialty coffee or a magazine? Each one of these purchases are between \$5-\$30/week and could be saved from our own budget and put towards our church's operating budget. These are just a few specific examples. We may choose our preferences and then multiply them by the number of times weekly we make that purchase. This action would become a "sacrifice" by excluding those items from our daily life. Directing those monies towards the operating budget would ease the strain on our church.

If we all participated, our church would be healthier financially and ready to face the future without the burden of uncertainty that financial issues cause. Please consider how your personal sacrifice can help.

Sunday Worship Services
8:30 & 11:00 AM

Adult Forum & Children's Sunday School
9:45 to 10:45 AM

PASTOR'S PASSION



by Rev. G. Mattei

Have you ever felt so excited about something that you went out of your way to obtain it? Maybe it was a new job position, the perfect gift for your spouse, special tickets to a concert or a ball game. Jesus, the One who incarnated God's passionate love for the world (John 3:16), has also shown passion for you and me, and for the hurting world (John 15:13; Mark 6:34; Luke 4:18-19). Jesus' passion for us saw him all the way to Calvary in a total and extreme act of generosity and dedication. Touched by that love, we are empowered to respond in kind and are called to follow him.

Our attempts at showing gratitude to Him in service to the world are a manifestation of God's Spirit operating in us. We cannot on our own profess Him Lord unless it comes from the Spirit. This is our witness and our celebration.

We "ritualize" in church what we celebrate, "God's presence and love", in our service to the world. That which we ritualize manifests God's doing; in us, with us and through us. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the various rites of passage such as

Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination and funeral services are the discernable forms of our commitment. We don't want to undermine or simply take too lightly our "church stuff", our spiritual growth, our involvement and commitment to a life in God. Rituals help us to visualize and make public our dedication. However, we must not neglect the time required to prepare in order to truly participate and make meaningful these rites and rituals.

Our Christian life should not be limited to only private and collective prayers. It's the ministry we do on behalf of the Kingdom; it's the sharing of resources, time and talents; it's the commitment to studying, learning and sharing our skills. All of this takes time and Sunday morning alone is not enough to do a proper job. Love of God through Jesus in the Spirit takes every second of our day. Our entrance into heaven has nothing to do with keeping score of our "good" deeds or fulfilled church "requirements". It has everything to do with the excited effort and committed pursuit of our Christian life.

Major Mile Stone for Days for Girls at NLC

On Saturday, Sept. 14th Jill & Carlan Helgeson dropped off our Days for Girls kits in St. Pete! Jill wants to thank you all for all your hard work and dedication. Because of you, 150 girls in one of the refugee centers, will have dignity during her menstrual cycle.

The next batch of kits has been started. There is an added change in the kits. As more and more countries are banning plastic bags, the transport bags for the kits will have to be made rather than using Ziploc bags. Jill

stated "I really appreciate that Days for Girls is not satisfied with what has been done in the past but continually seeks to be the best that they can be for those we all strive to serve with our kits!!! Amen and Amen!!!"

For Thrivent members who have not used your \$250 cards, we can certainly use them for: PUL fabric for the transport bags plus panties, wash cloths, ribbon, snaps, fabric and thread.

Lyn G. Derenski



Material included in The Communicator for Nativity is gathered from Committee Reports. If you would like material included in the publication, please submit your Committee Report to your ministry area leader (MAL).



4 AREAS OF MINISTRY

To accomplish our mission, we organize our ministry teams into four areas.

Spiritual Life

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Ruth Ann Hoy

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Columbarium

Mercy Ministry

Communion
& Visitation

Grief Support
Prayer Chain

Pavers

Stewardship

Worship & Music

Acolytes & Crucifers
Altar Guild
Assisting Ministers
Audio-Video
Bulletin Folders
Choir
Greeters
Nativity Ringers
Nursery
Readers
Sanctuary Team
Ushers

* Under consideration

Outreach

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Backpack Ministry

Communication Team

Food Pantry

Fund Raisers*

Membership Team

Mission & Outreach

(Assist internal & external ministries)

Angel Tree

Global Missions - Haiti

Golden Rainbow
Ranch

Luther Springs

New Generation

People Helping
People

Resurrection House

World Hunger - ELCA

Mission Endowment

Thrivent Action Team

Christian Ed

OPEN

Adult Forum

(Sunday Bible Study)

Archives

Bible Study

Ceremonies

Baptism

- Cradle Roll

1st Communion

Confirmation

Funerals

New Member Class

Weddings

**Children's Sunday
School**

Library

Vacation Bible School

Youth Ministry

Luther League

Youth Advisory

Council

Community Life

Susan Lee

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Book Club

Coffee Hour

Dinner for Eight

Fellowship

Finance Committee

Audit

Counters

Data Entry

Gardens

Golf

Hospitality

Lay Leadership

Memorial

Men's Group

Mutual Ministry

*Parish Nurse**

Property & Safety

Women of Nativity

(all women are members)

Cards R Us

Crafty Ladies

Days for Girls

Friendship Circle

Mary Joy Circle

Sarah Circle

Nativity Lutheran Church Website

nlcww.org

OUTREACH

by Evelyn W. Galli

COMMUNICATION TEAM

Since the Communication Team was formed, we have been extremely busy. One of the main goals of the team is to keep both our congregation and visitors informed about the various committees and groups that make up our four areas of ministry and what they do and what they have done

We look to make sure we get the word out to the community about Nativity Lutheran Church (NLC) and what we, as a loving and caring congregation, offer both onsite and with our outreach efforts. Here are just a few of the things that our team works on:

PR and Advertising – Each month we send out information to Scene Magazine and Tampa Bay Times on upcoming events/services at NLC. When various programs or events are undertaken by NLC members, we send out photos/captions to the Tampa Bay Times and many of them appear on the Hernando Happenings section on Fridays. Recent items that have appeared include the donation to Golden Rainbow Ranch, the U.S.P.S. Food Drive, Vacation Bible School, among others. In addition, it is the team’s responsibility to make sure NLC’s ad runs each week in the “Celebrate Your Faith” section in Hernando Happenings. The team places ads in the newspaper for Holy Week,

Easter and Christmas services. All of this helps to educate the community about what we do.

Website – The Communication Team manages the NLC website (nlcww.org). Here both members of NLC and visitors can learn in more detail about who we are and what we do. There is a multitude of items that can be found on our website such as past services, sermons, photos, calendar of meetings/events happening at church, newsletters, just to name a few. For the first 8 months of 2019, the NLC website has had 17,316 visitors looking at 78,087 pages.

The Communicator – We are responsible for this quarterly magazine which showcases the activities and accomplishments of our ministries. This is not only to be informative to our members but helpful to shut ins, sharing with potential members and the community at large. Each issue can also be found on the website.

The Communication Team of Lyn Derenski (chair) Evelyn Galli, Susan Nordstrom, Jane Henkel and Linda Hengesh are always looking for new people to join us in helping get the word out about NLC ministries and event results. If you are interested, please contact Lyn Derenski at 352-587-2624.



Jane



Susan



Lyn



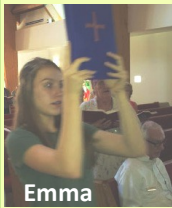
Evelyn



Linda

Spiritual Life

by Susan Nordstrom



Emma

READERS



Cam



Michele



Lyn



Ginger



Dan



Sharon



Carlan

The role of the reader is to proclaim the Scripture readings as prescribed in the Liturgy of the Word from the official liturgical book or lectionary. At Nativity Lutheran Church, Readers are a sub-committee under the Worship and Music Committee because they are part of the worship services responsible for reading the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures.

At Nativity, the reader is responsible for carrying the lectionary from the baptismal font as part of the processional at the beginning of worship. The lectionary is held high and brought forward behind the cross. The reader places the lectionary on the pulpit. Readers are provided the scripture lessons a few days prior to Sunday so they can prepare. The reader is expected to read through the lessons, check for words that may be difficult to pronounce, learn to pronounce those words, and practice reading so the presentation is smooth and meaningful. Some readers take the time to underline words they want to emphasize or place marks where they intend to pause or take a breath. This preparation by the reader is extremely important as it leads to a presentation of the lesson that becomes meaningful for all who are listening to the Word of God.

Ed Lewis does the scheduling quarterly. He maintains a list of volunteers, noting their service preference 8:30 or 11:00, whether they are choir members and when the choir sings. This tracking method ensures the readers preferences are met. Ed sends the schedule via email so everyone can verify the dates he has scheduled are not in conflict with their personal calendars. Conflicts can be easily resolved by contacting someone on the schedule with whom you can trade. If a change is made, the person initiating the trade just needs to notify the church office so the correct names can be placed in the bulletin.

Ed is planning to hold some training sessions this fall. All current readers will be encouraged to select a time to come for some training so we can improve the overall presentation of Scripture readings during worship. If anyone would like to be part of this active team, please contact Ed via email at Ed.Lewis@nlcww.org or calling him at 813-235-6541. He is always looking for people who are skilled readers and are looking for a place to serve.

THRIVENT ACTION TEAMS

by Evelyn W. Galli



**THRIVENT
FINANCIAL®**

Connecting faith & finances for good.

What is a Thrivent Action Team Project?

Thrivent Action Teams make it easy to live generously on your “Wise With Money Journey”. It starts with a simple question: “Who can I help and how?”

The teams bring people together to make a positive change in our community! When you see a community need, grab friends and family to form a volunteer team and brainstorm ways to address it. Thrivent provides promotional resources and seed money to jump-start your fundraiser, educational event or service project. Your team provides the people power to bring it to life.

Once your idea is approved, a Thrivent Action Kit is delivered to your door. It’s packed with everything you need to help make your project a success. It even includes \$250 in seed money to help get your project started.

If you are a Thrivent Benefit member, you are eligible to lead two Thrivent Action Teams per calendar year. If you are not a Benefit member,

consider becoming an Associate Member of Thrivent. The cost is only \$19.95 a year and there are “no strings attached”. Once you become an Associate Member, you can participate in a Thrivent Action Team Project for our Mission & Outreach to the community. You will receive seed money, a \$250.00 credit card (free) for your project. You must be 16 years or older to lead a Thrivent Action Team. Nativity members who are either Benefit or Associate Thrivent Members have done 24 projects totaling \$6,000. See or call Ernie Horeis at 352-666-7584, for an application or for more information.

PROJECTS WAITING FOR SPONSORSHIP:

Global Mission – Haiti

Angel Tree Christmas Gifts (children)

**New Member Class Materials/
Refreshments**

NAMI – Educational Brochure

**NLC Choir Christmas Cantata –
Advertising/Music**

Completed Thrivent Action Team Projects 2019

<u>Outreach</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>
Fellowship Hamarama	Social Get Together	Vivian Deon
Fellowship Veterans Day	Recognition	Tim Cotter
Fellowship Memorial Day	Remembrance	Art Alt
Fellowship Fall Festival	Music/Food/Fun	Patti Cotter
Homeless T.L.C.	Hats, Gloves, Blankets	June Heinecke
Luther League Breakfast	Youth Conference	Lilo Horeis
Cards R Us Material	Pastor's Discretionary Fund	Susan Nordstrom
Weekend Blessings	Food for Backpacks	Laura Fortner
Rez House Dade City	Shoes for Children	Joanne Boggus
Sarah Circle Prayer Shawls	Shawls for the Ill	Sharon Schroeder
Police/Fire/Rescue	Stuffed Animals for Children	Judy Dietz
Days for Girls	Stud Puncher for Kits	Olivia Haaland
Brownies Trop #24401	Cookies for the Military	Tim Horeis (NJ)
WON Lenten Soup/Sandwich	Food for Food Pantry	Doreen Davis
WON School Supplies	Local Families in Need	Doreen Davis
WON School Supplies	Food Pantry Children	Pastor Mattei
New Generation Coins	Baby Bottles, Diapers	Pastor Mattei
Golden Rainbow Ranch	Craft Items for Children	Ernst Horeis
U.S. Postal Food Drive	Food for Clients/Family	Art Alt
Lighthouse for the Blind	Cook to be Independent	Pastor Schroeder
VBS Planning	Advertising/Paperwork	Gil Dietz
VBS Water Slide	Experience Joy/Fun	Madeline Johnson
VBS Crafts	Material for age groups	Clyde Rosten
VBS Decorating	Super Heroes Theme	Barbara Hofving
VBS Food	Pizza for volunteers	Ruth Ann Hoy
NLC Food Pantry	Food for NLC Food Pantry	TOPS Friday

*A special thanks to all the sponsors and Ernie Horeis our
NLC Thrivent coordinator for making these projects possible!*

Christian Education

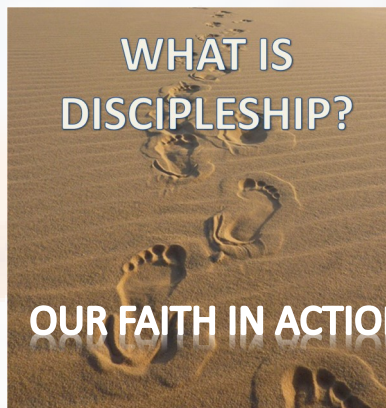
by Rev. G. Mattei

Christian Education or Discipleship?

When I think of Christian Education, the catechism comes to mind, along with other spiritual and theological books, classes, lectures and workshops. These are meant to build expertise, skills and a comfortable, clear and practical ways to articulate and share the faith. It's easy to think of Christians as students of the Teacher, the extraordinary Rabbi who taught with authority, who left everybody speechless and in awe. We want to learn, feed our minds and be inspired to conduct an ethically virtuous life. Some have even suggested that the word Bible is an acronym for **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. It's cute, but that's not what the Bible is. The word Bible comes from the Latin "Biblos" or "books," a collection of accounts that relate the intersection of God's story with our stories.

In the Bible, a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12) support us on our faith journey of transformation. Curious petitioners transform into disciples. We can move from relating to him as the Teacher to relating to him as our Lord. Jesus warns us that discipleship is no walk in the park: it's not only about learning to love but it's also about learning to renounce (Jesus uses strong words to create a radical shift in the patriarchal culture of his time - see Luke 14:26) what we think is necessary to our survival; it's about embracing death (total and fearless transformation); it's about denying self (Matthew 16:24-25) and carrying the cross, giving up our stuff and privileges and loving even our enemies (e. g. John 12; Matthew 5 and 19; Mark 8). Jesus uses strong language because he is looking for a profound and unconditional commitment.

The celebration of God's love for us calls us from darkness to light. This happens through the sacrament of Baptism. There we die in Christ and rise to new life in him. A Christian life of discipleship is the daily welcoming of the death of whatever separates us from God (selfishness, greed, power, ultimately fear, especially fear of death) and resurrection (peace, joy, power to forgive and to love). Yet, how hard it is. We are not prepared to renounce the things of the world, carry our cross, give up all our stuff and follow Him. How can we be counted as disciples of Jesus when we declare the cost as excessive? Our only recourse is to the One on the cross, and to a grace that requires nothing, including discipleship. Perhaps mercy will allow us to make sense of the Master's words, calling us to give up all our plans and possessions to God and let this impossible Jesus be Lord of every relationship, and of every last penny. So, we need to view Christian Education less as merely study and move as Discipleship, to a life lived in the waters of our Baptism, trusting his promise of abundant life in the Spirit that dispels all fear (1 John 4:18-20).



Community Life

by Lyn G. Derenski

Lay-Leadership Development Committee

I'll bet many of you had no idea such a committee existed. Probably even fewer know what the committee's responsibilities and duties are. Yet this committee is of vital importance to the leadership of our congregation.

The purpose of the committee is to ensure uninterrupted leadership of the congregation. In order to have effective leadership, the committee ascertains the competencies needed for elected positions. It is important that candidates represent a cross-section of the congregation. The committee identifies members with the needed skills and secure the consent of one or more candidates to run for each position. Positions for instance, like Council and Mission Endowment require they be elected by the congregation.

Lay-Leadership is responsible for presenting a list of candidates to the Congregational Council for the election at the November meeting of the congregation. The Congregational Council presents the candidates to the congregation. The candidates are then elected at the Annual Congregation Meeting. The Lay-Leadership committee serves as the "steward" of the Annual Congregational Meeting elections.

The committee is comprised of 6 members: Linda Hengesh, Carl Fish, Evelyn Lawlor, Gary Kopitzke, Gail Zaboray and is chaired by Vicki Page. One-third of the committee changes every year to assist in the continuity of purpose and gradual infusion of new ideas. No more than 2 members can be Council members while the Pastor and the President of Council serve as non-voting members of the committee. The committee meets quarterly but may meet more frequently based on need.

A bi-product of the committee's skills review is to encourage members to use their "God-given talents" in service to "God's body" the congregation and to recommend members to ministries in need of their abilities. The committee assists members in identifying their gifts and skills, showing them how these talents can be used to further enhance the NLC mission and ministries.



If you would like to see how and where your talents are needed, you can request a skills survey from the office. Return the completed survey to the office. Your survey will be reviewed and you will be contacted to discuss the possibilities for your service.

The Lord has a plan for all of us. Let's show Him how much we appreciate what He has given us by using His gifts to serve where needed!



CHURCH COUNCIL

by Ed Lewis, Congregation Council President

As we approach the end of the year, your Congregation Council for 2019 would like to keep you apprised of the many things that we have been working on this year. This year some of our projects have been based on actions begun in 2018 and others are the result of our February 2019 Council Retreat. Often the tasks that are undertaken require longer periods of time to accomplish and usually are ongoing in nature.

In 2018, the Council reviewed the changes to the Constitution and Bylaws required by the synod and presented these changes to the congregation at our January 2019 Annual Meeting. The updates were based on action taken at the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA in 2016. The changes, after discussion were approved by the congregation and our Constitution was updated. The new version was sent to the Florida-Bahamas Synod office for review. Our Constitution was accepted and is now current.

At the Annual Meeting in January, the Council also heard that our congregation would prefer to hear more about our financial position on a regular basis. Jane Henkel and Evelyn Galli have implemented a process for reporting income and expenses on a monthly basis in our Weekly Announcement Sheet and in our monthly Newsletter. Additionally, Evelyn has continued her process of reviewing contracts and renegotiating them as needed. This process has brought several cost-savings to our church.

One of the largest undertakings this year is the review and updating of our Policy and Procedure Guidebook. Council reviewed this document at our retreat in February and found many sections in need of change. We immediately started with the establishment of small groups with Council guidance to review sections that existed and sometimes to add sections that are needed. We have been working on the sections for Weddings, Funerals, Facilities Use, and Communications (including branding, logo, website, and social media).

We have also had a committee led by Scott Henkel review the use of our Narthex and options for improving the use of the space. Scott has been gathering information from various committees and is preparing a report to present to the Council. Based on Scott's review, Council will evaluate the recommendations to assist our church in making the best use of our facility.

Not everything on our list has been brought to fruition, but we are making excellent progress. Not all your Council does is visible, but we are attempting to lead our church in ways that are more transparent, effective and efficient. Please continue to pray for those who serve on the 2019 Council and pray that new leaders will be identified for our 2020 Council.



A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Good Leaders

Dear Lord,

Thank you for those in our congregation who have accepted the responsibility and burden for keeping your house available and in good order for us to do your work through our ministries. Give them wisdom, strength and peace. Help us as a congregation to be helpful, respectful and recognize the wisdom and knowledge our leaders offer us. Amen.

Lyn G. Derenski

YOUTH

by Evelyn W. Galli & Lyn G. Derenski

YOUTHFUL VOLUNTEERS for VBS

Amber Oliver

Mark Major

Robert Oliver



Joey Rogers

Ashley Hoy

Michael Wright

ON THEIR LEVEL
AND
UNRESTRAINED!!!

Alyssa Oliver

William Wright

Gina Fell



Adult Forum

“Living the Gospel”

was presented by the Evangelism Committee. They explored how by living the gospel you can change your heart and community.

Sunday School Rally Day



Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.

Psalm 127:3



Nativity Lutheran Church

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nativitylutheran63@gmail.com

Website — nlcww.org

Hours Mon. - Fri. Hours

Office - 9AM—2PM

Food Pantry - 9:30AM—1PM

Out of the mouth of babes!



HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15%
AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

The Communicator

Director of
Design & Layout
Lyn Derenski

Editors
Evelyn Galli
Lyn Derenski

Articles by
Communication Team and
Guests



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



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