

Generosity in Motion ~ February 2021



Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

-II Corinthians 9:7-8

It's nearly Lent, and so I suppose now is as good a time as any for public confession: I have experienced great mirth as a pastor in the season of Lent through the use of ELCA Piggy Banks, like the one pictured here. I'm sorry, but it's true.

One of my favorite ministries was preparing devotionals or distributing inserts that highlighted some of the ministries our ELCA World Hunger contributions would benefit. Those flyers or announcements would say things like, 'this piglet is a lifesaver' or 'help a family spread their wings!' How can you not chuckle just a bit when reading this...when writing this?!

It didn't matter if you were young or old. Anyone and everyone who wanted a 'Piggy Bank' could make one for themselves to use if we ran out of the ones we ordered. This ministry: it was always accompanied by eager enthusiasm if not earnest intention (I love thinking about the way a young child focuses while trying to insert change or a dollar bill in their Piggy Bank). It added to all the good ministry we already were apart of and also energetically committed to. And yet this little act of giving left us feeling like we were not doing something alone or as some small group, but part of a larger body, the body of Christ that is the congregation, with that expression of the church -the congregation- being joined to the larger church begetting more blessing than it could ever accomplish alone! This seasonal discipline of being intentional about making special offerings above and beyond what we had already thought about giving for this year – it was fun, joyful, lifegiving! It was playing, like a child, at being that new creation St. Paul tells us we have become in Christ (II Cor 5:17). And there was a certain kind of pleasure in doing this. And yet...and so maybe I'm not really confessing here...and yet, I don't believe it is the kind of 'pleasure' we are called to let go of, retreat from or deny. To the contrary, it seemed to be the epitome -one of the concrete ways- we would put into practice what we said we would do when we began our Lenten observance:

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline...I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent -self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love... [ELW, Invitation to Lent]

Dear family in Christ, it is such a joy to be drawn together -to be called onto a pathway that is not a geographic place but a Life. And it is a Life that absolutely finds joy and completion through teaching and learning about offerings and generous giving; that it is a feeling and experience we want others to have; and that it is a feeling and experience we are grateful for having been shown or taught. It may have looked like an ELCA World Hunger Piggy Bank. It may have looked like the offerings a parent stuffs into the hands of their child to be shared in

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their Sunday School meeting. Or, it may have appeared to be that serendipitous moment we witnessed a person or family of modest means make significant giving a priority in their life not as a burdensome duty but a pursuit which flows from love! Sure, it may have looked like this. But really, in each and every one of them, *it was God at work blessing you. And it was God at work becoming a blessing through you.*

Thanks be to the God of joyful giving!

In the name of Christ,
Rev. Dean Brown
Assistant to the Bishop