

'You give them something to eat'

*Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread*

The expectant hope of Advent is all about the coming of the Savior. Still, for too many people the longing for food or shelter or both overshadows this hope.

I love the meal stories in the Gospels, especially the feeding of the multitudes. According to Luke's telling, when the disciples encourage Jesus to "send the crowd away ... so that they may go ... and get provisions," Jesus responds without hesitation. He says, "You give them something to eat."

Jesus calls the disciples to something more than they expected. "*You give them something*"

In this season of giving, ELCA Good Gifts (www.elca.org/goodgifts) provides a number of opportunities to do just that. By sharing our own financial resources we can be part of giving to those who hunger—something to eat, something to work with, something to overcome the circumstances that overshadow their hope.

The purpose and meaning of food goes beyond satisfying an urgent hunger the way the hope of Advent goes beyond a seasonal longing for the birth of a child. Advent, like the Savior who comes, calls us to something more than a season of expectation, more than an occasional sharing to satisfy urgent needs.

Advent calls us, beckons us, to become good gifts, to embody the good news, to give something of ourselves away to others in the name of Jesus. The call to end hunger, to bear the burdens of the poor, is the call to share the abundant life of Jesus Christ, which is what our expectant hope is all about.

Blessings to you in these hope-filled days.

In Christ, our deepest hunger is fed.

Bishop Michael Burk



Bishop Michael Burk

*As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to ardent service, your abundant life to share.*

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 712)

This little piggy

In the summer of 2015, members of Peace Lutheran in West Burlington had a barnyard in their church building.

As a rural congregation, the parishioners are no strangers to dealing with lots of animals. The “Passel of Pigs” project soon had 41 pigs in that church barnyard. Members constructed a barn and some fencing to keep all those pigs contained. During one worship service, they even brought them into the sanctuary in a wheelbarrow for a blessing.

The pigs kept by Peace weren’t real pigs, of course. They were cardboard piggy banks shaped like pigs.

The cardboard pigs were stored in a little barnyard and transported by wheelbarrow as the children and families of Peace filled them.

‘Go and do likewise’

The congregation’s motivation was from the Gospel of Luke, “Go and do likewise—and until all are fed,” said the Rev. Kathleen Wohlers.

“At Peace Lutheran Church, I talk with the children and in my sermons that we are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world. So using that text from Luke and the ELCA tagline of ‘God’s work. Our hands.’ I then presented the project through the children’s sermon, introducing it using the nursery rhyme ‘This Little Piggy went to Market’ with a pink pig hand puppet. The children then passed out the pink piggy banks to everyone in worship.”

The piggy banks were one way the congregation participated in the Good Gifts program through ELCA World Hunger. For just \$30 they were able to provide a piglet to a family in need in the developing world.

When that pig grows up it can provide as many as 16 new piglets each year. These pigs can provide valuable income, food and fertilizer to the families they benefit.

Peace was able to provide 41 of these piglets throughout the course of the project. Commenting on the success of their effort, Wohlers said, “The response was wonderful! I heard comments such as, ‘This is something we can understand.’ And over and over again the question was asked, ‘How many pigs do we have this week?’ A number of people came back for a second pig bank.”

Peace celebrated the success with a piggy party that included a breakfast, which had bacon, ham and sausage, and cookies decorated like pigs.

Once the project was finished the question among



The Rev. Kathleen Wohlers, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, West Burlington, blesses the pigs during worship.

members became not “What happened with their pigs” but “What are we doing next?”

Ideas to try

Wohlers has some suggestions as you begin to think about Advent.

- How about a pink Christmas tree? Set a goal and ask folks to fill their piggy banks, return them and then hang on them on the tree. How many pigs will fit on the tree?
- Create a prayer for each day of Advent for folks to use at home. Or perhaps members can make a little chart of the ways they are thankful for the different food items in their cupboards or refrigerator, with each item having a coin amount that is put in the piggy each day.



Cardboard pigs live in a barnyard at Peace. Each pig signifies money raised to buy animals for a family in need.



Pig-shaped cookies were part of a meal to celebrate the completion of the project.

- Or maybe do something with the multiplication of pigs. Each pig is able to give birth to as many as 16 piglets. So when people return their piggy banks with enough to purchase one pig, 16 little ones could be added to a tree to show how the gifts grow for the recipients.

For more Advent ideas and inspiration, check out the ELCA Good Gifts website to see projects and ideas you can do at home or in your congregation to benefit ELCA World Hunger this holiday season. Visit www.elca.org/goodgifts. □

2016 EVENTS



Living Water
Confest 2016

January 24, 2016
Windsor Heights Lutheran, Windsor Heights

February 21, 2016
St. John's, Ely

A SYNOD-WIDE EVENT TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT CONGREGATION CONFIRMATION MINISTRIES BY EXPLORING CHURCHWIDE CONNECTIONS, ENGAGING SERVANT LEARNING, AND CREATING COMMUNITY.
COST: \$10 PER PERSON

SAME EVENT
TWO LOCATIONS
1:00 - 6:00 PM
FOR MORE INFO: WWW.SELCASYNOD.ORG/CONFEST



LOVE LIKE JESUS
JUNE 16-19 GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY

A servant leadership event for high school youth sponsored by the Southeastern Iowa Synod and Grand View University.

Leadership development, bible study, service, worship and tons of fun.
\$50 per person

FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTER ONLINE
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Questions? Contact
Event Director
Ellen Hoffmeyer at
(563) 724-4030 or
ehoffm@selca.org

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Southeastern Iowa Synod
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repeat the sounding joy



Advent Greetings from the Southeastern Iowa Synod Staff

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