

The Witness

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. *Acts 1:8*

Ascension Lutheran Church

LCMS

Phone: 847.647.9867

Ascensionniles.com
office@ascensionniles.com

+ + +



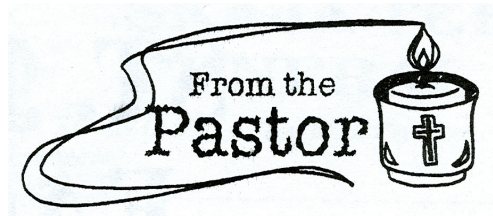
7429 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Niles, Illinois 60714



January 2020

The Witness

January 2020



Volume 6 No. 1

This year, Pastor Gunia will be writing on piety and spirituality. The intention is to help you live your life with increasing joy, closeness to God, and love for others. Don't take these as the Law, but rather think of them as suggestions from someone whose been working on his personal piety for quite some time now and who would love to see your faith grow stronger.

Give. Generosity is an act of courage, which stems from our faith in God's promises.

This is exactly the way I shouldn't start out this series, but I'm going to do it anyway. I'm going to start by talking about your money. But the only reason I'm starting off this way is because you should be receiving this newsletter right before the beginning of 2020 and I imagine some of you are doing long-range budgeting or making new years resolutions. So, I'd like you to encourage you to think of generosity as you make your 2020 plans. We begin our consideration with the words and promises of God.

God has revealed himself as "Our Father who art in heaven." He instructs us to pray: "give us this day our daily bread." By calling himself our Father, God has obligated himself to lovingly provide for his children. God would not instruct us to ask him for the things we need to support our bodies and then tell us "no!". When Jesus fed the 5,000, he did it by taking the very little that the assembly had, he looked up to heaven, and then he instructed his disciples to give that very little bit away. In looking to heaven, Jesus teaches us about the love of God and the fact that he is the source of all that is good. In instructing the disciples to give the meager portions away (the disciples presuming they would go hungry for giving away their food), Jesus tests their faith. In multiplying the bread and fish, Jesus demonstrates the faithfulness of God.

Paul writes of God's faithfulness in the book of Romans. He writes, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (8:16-17a, 31-32)

In the book of Malachi, the Lord speaks through the prophet and condemns the Israelites for withholding their contributions. The Israelites were withholding their contributions (in part) because they no longer a prosperous people and they were afraid that they would bring themselves to financial ruin if they contributed the full tithe. However, God commands them to give the full tithe anyway and gives them a promise. "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts." (3:10-12).

This is the only place I can think of in the entire Bible that God actually commands us to put him to the test. God made a promise and God instructs his people to hold him to his promise—test me and see whether or not I'll be faithful. In a Bible study, Pastor Julio Orozco (one of our members) said that he believes that the United States is the most prosperous country in the world because Americans are the most generous people in the world. He makes this claim based on the prophet Malachi. I think this is a brilliant insight and I'm pleased to share it with you.

Therefore, I encourage you to grow in your faith by giving away that which is yours. Give away your money for the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel and to the poor. Give away your precious time to those who would benefit from your friendship or help. Give away your talents by doing some work pro bono. If you're an artist, create some art and give it as a gift; if you're a carpenter, help someone fix something around their house. I know of a group of Christian women in Israel who set aside a few days per month and use it helping overwhelmed housewives clean their home from top to bottom.

Doing this is frightening. When you're trying to make ends meet or save up for retirement or you're living on a fixed income, your instincts are shouting "No! Don't give that much!" But the shouting actually comes from your sinful flesh, which believes that God is a liar.

I can tell you from personal experience and from the stories people tell me that God keeps his promises with regard to giving. The more Kathy and I give away, the better financial position we find ourselves in. The same is true of others I've spoken with about generous giving. Every single one finds their needs met with something left over.

God is faithful; generosity is an act of courage which confesses our belief in God's faithfulness. Generosity puts our money where God's mouth is.

Now, for some practical suggestions on how to grow in your faith through generosity.

1. Pray as you prepare your offering or contribution, especially reminding God of his generosity, his Fatherhood, and his promise to provide.
2. Increase your planned giving by 1% per year until you are giving 10% of your income away (note: the New Testament does not assign a percentage like the Old Testament does; but the New Testament does instruct us to give cheerfully).
3. Find someone at church to befriend and plan out time to give them regularly. Invite them out for lunch or coffee. Spend at your house or hers drinking tea and telling stories. Encourage one another.
4. Set aside time to purposefully pray for a person or group. There is an online community where members select public figures and dedicate time each day to pray for him or her. You could do that. You might instead select a friend or neighbor. Or you may decide to pray for those afflicted by a particular disease or recovering from a tragedy (it takes more than a few weeks for the emotional wounds to heal). Plan out that time and give it away in prayer.
5. Dedicate time to working for free. Bake a pie for someone. Help plant the garden of someone with health problems.
6. Volunteer to help the poor. Soup kitchens, food pantries, refugee organizations, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, crisis pregnancy centers, and other organizations run on volunteers.

God's promise is that by faithfully doing such things, he will work through others to bless you. We don't give from a selfish motivation, though. We give as a loving response to all that Christ has given to us---which is everything.

Pastor Gunia



**Lutheran Women's
Missionary League**
Lutheran Women
In Mission

Where Mites Go

Laborers of Love - Lutheran Braille Workers

Grant: \$100,000

Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW) has been providing God's Word to the visually impaired since 1943, utilizing the New International Version of the Bible for the past 25 years. With the use of the English Standard Version (ESV) by the LCMS, LBW desires to offer people with visual disability the opportunity to worship and study with the same translation of the Bible as sighted people of the Church. These funds will assist in the cost of the production of the zinc plates for each Braille Work Center along with producing the ESV Bible in large print.

Love Packages

Testimony from Ghana

Praise be to God. He is doing wonders through the village ministries and the prayerful use of the materials you've given to us. God is wonderful. Many souls have been saved in these villages. I am an eye-witness. I saw 6 Muslim families come to Christ when they were given Bibles to read. The pastors distributed a lot of Christian literature in those villages where I went. Each week new members are joining their church. I am shocked.

At times, we go out to hospitals, clinics, prisons, communities, schools to share with them God's amazing grace and to preach about His wonderful love. Your free literature is helping meet today's problem of false teaching, occultism, idolatry, alcoholism, fornication, teenage pregnancy, divorce, and other sinful likes.

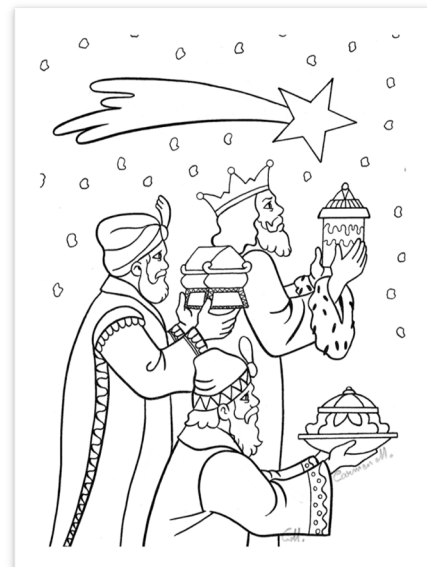
Arletta A. Stuebe, President

Money principle #10: Prosperity Can Be a Blessing

The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.—Deuteronomy 28:12

As God lays out the potential blessings for Israel's obedience, he includes this promise: "you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow." This promise comes from a time when debt was reserved for the most desperate situations, and could quite literally make someone beholden to their debtor. The writer of Proverbs communicates this well when he says, "the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." (Prov. 22:7)

In this time period, debt was tied to slavery. Because of this, being a lender as opposed to a debtor was linked to having power and, in this instance, God's favor. With this promise, God tells the Israelites that their obedience would lead them to a place of prominence and power over other nations.



Time & Talent

Deacons

January 5 Jim Jenne
 January 6 John Stuebe
 January 12 Jonathan Schultz
 January 19 Tom Friedewald
 January 26 Jim Jenne

Ushers

January 5 Ron Albrecht
 Sarah Lindahl
 Jonathan Schultz
 John Stuebe
 January 6 Matt Giannopoulos
 Nick Giannopoulos
 Jim Jenne
 Bonnie Schultz
 January 12 Tom Friedewald
 Steve Galka
 Sarah Lindahl
 John Stuebe
 January 19 Lance Ahlgrim
 Tom Ahlgrim
 Bonnie Schultz
 John Stuebe
 January 26 Ron Albrecht
 Matt Giannopoulos
 Nick Giannopoulos
 John Stuebe

Greeters

January 5 Judy Darville
 Rosalie Streng
 January 6 Judy Darville
 Lois Marten
 January 12 Pam Hrajnoha
 Lois Marten
 January 19 Judy Darville
 Gail Bujnowski
 January 26 Lois Martin
 Rosalie Streng

Altar Guild

January

Sue Gunia
Arletta Stuebe

* * *



Epiphany Party

Sunday, January 5th

Join us immediately following our Worship service as we celebrate the arrival of the Magi and toast in the New Year!



Giving from the Heart



We congratulate the following members of Ascension as they celebrate their **birthdays** in January.

January 5	Kelee Schwenn
January 8	Lance Ahlgrim
January 12	Rudy Oliva
January 15	Jenna Uffenbeck
January 16	Rev. Julio Orozco
January 22	Carolyn Jannusch
January 25	Eleanore Bailey
January 29	Mark Plucinski (Skip)
January 31	William Powyszynski



And we congratulate the following couples as they celebrate their **wedding anniversaries** in January.

None on record

These are the **birthdays** and **wedding anniversaries** recorded in our church records for the coming month. If any birthday or anniversary was omitted, please notify the church office.

According to the legend, a desert wanderer happened upon a spring of cool, crystal-clear water. The water was so delightful, he decided to bring the king a sample of it. Barely quenching his own thirst, he filled his leather canteen and began his lengthy journey in the hot desert sun to the palace.

When he finally reached his destination, the water had become stale because of the old leather container in which it had been stored. The king graciously accepted the gift of his faithful subject. He tasted it with an expression of gratitude and delight, and the wanderer went on his way with a joyful heart.

After he had gone, others in the king's court tasted the putrid water and asked why the king had pretended to enjoy it. "Ah," responded the king, "it was not the water I tasted but the spirit in which it was given."

During the Christmas season, in what spirit are we receiving and giving our gifts? Are we going to be like the wise men who came in search of the newborn King, bringing their gifts and bowing before Him in adoration? They offered the Christ Child the gifts they had brought for Him with love and adoration in their hearts.

The shepherds adored Him, too. They heard the angels while watching their sheep and ran to Bethlehem to see the Christ Child. They didn't have gifts to bring as the Magi did, but they, too, responded in adoration.

God gives gifts to each of us and uses us to tell the Good News of the birth of His Son who came to bring us forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Some of us, like the Wise Men, are blessed with monetary gifts to be used to support mission and ministry. Others of us are more like the shepherds, able to "*make known what has been told {us} concerning this child.*" By God's grace, we can all respond by giving our time, talents and treasures from hearts filled with God's love. In these ways, we adore our Savior.

ASCENSION 2020 BOARD MEMBERS

President:	Tom Friedewald
Vice President:	Jim Jenne
Treasurer:	Coby Mueller
Secretary:	Audrey Schultz
Financial Secretary:	Sandy Friedewald
Board of Deacons:	Jim Jenne (Chair) Hal Downs Tom Friedewald Jim Jenne Jonathan Schultz John Stuebe
Board of Mercy, Missions, Spiritual Growth	Lois Marten (Chair)
Board of Trustees:	Jason Romano (Chair)
Board of Youth:	Sarah Lindahl (Chair)

* * * * *

OFFICIAL ACTS

None on record

Do you have an announcement to share about your family such as a birth, death, engagement, graduation, etc., **let us know! We'd love to hear from you!**

CHURCH NAME AND ADDRESS

Ascension Lutheran Church #106244
7429 Milwaukee Avenue
Niles, IL 60714

TELEPHONE

847 647-9867

CONTACT

Audrey Schultz

SOFTWARE

MSPublisher 2016
Adobe Acrobat Standard DC
Windows 10

PRINTER

HP Photosmart 7510

EMAIL

office@ascensionniles.com

TRANSMISSION TIME

Monday 3:00pm

NUMBER OF PAGES SENT

1 through 8

NEWSLETTER DATE

January 2020

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

of copies: 200

Expected delivery: Friday, December 20, 2019