

November 2011

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THE GRAPEVINE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Feeding the 5000

By Art Nicoletti and Cheryl Frogge

Hard times continue to plague our country driven by a sluggish economy and high unemployment. One of the hardest hit areas is southwest Florida with unemployment well over 11%. The number of people who need help has grown significantly while finding the resources to help has become more difficult.

For those of you who are new to Lamb of God Church, "Feeding the 5000" is a Thanksgiving program that works to insure that no one in our area goes hungry at Thanksgiving. It is a grass roots effort of neighbors helping neighbors where every penny raised goes to providing families with traditional meals at Thanksgiving.

The effort was started by Lamb of God church nine years ago feeding about 150 people at Thanksgiving. It has grown into a community effort with over 300 volunteers feeding families in need in Lee, Collier, Hendry and Charlotte counties. Our volunteers are made up of cub scouts, girl scouts, youth groups, Florida Gulf Coast University students and other volunteers from numerous churches, organizations and neighborhoods. We have grown from feeding 150 people nine years ago to feeding over 5,000 people each of the last two years.

Some statistics from the 2010 "Feeding the 5000" include:

417 turkeys were cooked (over 5,600 pounds of turkey)

More than 7,500 pounds of side dishes were prepared

More than 300 volunteers participated

More than 5,800 meals were provided to families in need.

All of the dinners are cooked in the Lamb of God kitchen and delivered to families in the 4 counties. We provide a traditional Thanksgiving meal of turkey, dressing, gravy, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, string beans, cranberry sauce, bread and desserts. We work with different churches and charitable organizations to identify families who need our help. Our 300 volunteers spend over 3,000 hours identifying the families in need, establishing food and financial support, cooking the turkeys, preparing the side dishes, packaging the dinners, laying out delivery routes and finally delivering the meals to families on Thanksgiving morning. All accomplished between Sunday afternoon and Thanksgiving Day!

We believe the need in 2011 will be even greater. We would like to be in a position to meet that need even if means going beyond the 5800 meals we provided in 2010. We believe we have the volunteers and the energy to meet the challenge. Our ability to help families in need is only limited by the ability to raise the funds necessary to support the effort.

If you would like more information on the "Feeding the 5000" outreach or would like to sign up to volunteer or make a donation, please go to www.feedingthe5000.net.



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Come join us for
 Our 2nd annual
 "Friends and Family Night"
 At Chick-fil-a
 21900 S. Tamiami Trail
 Estero
 November 10th
 From 5pm - 8 pm

15% of all sales (dine in or drive thru) will go to the "Feeding the 5000" Outreach mission. Come and have a great dinner with your family and friends while supporting the "Feeding the 5000 mission." Be sure to mention "Feeding the 5000" or "Lamb of God church" so that we get credit for your food order!

www.feedingthe5000.net

JESUS BIRTHDAY TREE

THE HOLIDAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND SO IS THE **JESUS BIRTHDAY TREE**. We will be getting names from the Head Start Program and the trees will be up and ready on November 20th. Take one of the lambs ornaments from the tree (each ornament has a child's name and what they would like for Christmas), write your name on the list under the tree, then return the wrapped gift to the church. Make sure the lamb tag is attached to the gift when you return it. Gifts must be returned no later than Sunday, December 11th. If you have any questions please contact Barbara Tvedt at 267-7271.

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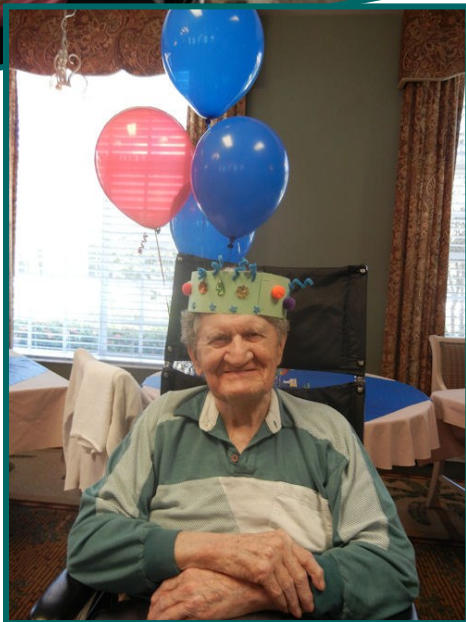
LOVING LAMBS

by Judy Rakocinski

It's a birthday party! Whose party? Everybody's Birthday Party! Loving Lambs hosted a party for all the residents at the Life Care Center in September. The residents made their own party hats and prizes were given away for the best designs. Party games were played and the residents enjoyed festive cupcakes, cookies and punch. But the highlight of the day was a visit from my dear friends at Shy Wolf Sanctuary. Two of our ambassador wolves greeted the residents with birthday wishes like they've never received before! It was a treat they will not soon forget.

Shy Wolf Sanctuary is a non-profit wolf sanctuary that is 100% run on donations from the community. I thank them for taking the time to bring the wolves all the way from Naples to add that special touch to our day! <http://www.shywolfsanctuary.com/>

As the holiday season approaches, Loving Lambs will get ready for the big Christmas delivery event. We'll be putting together gifts for every resident of the facility. Shortly thereafter, the annual "New Year's Eve Day" party will end another great year serving our friends and neighbors. Thank you, as always, for your prayers and support of this vital ministry.



Pennies for Preschoolers

By Judy Charland



Nicaragua has an estimated population of preschool children ages 3-6 of around 700,000, but only half of that amount has access to preschool education. Thirty percent of the preschoolers who have access are served by the government, the rest attend community preschools. A community preschool is a school that is formed when members of a community see the lack of early and quality education and decide to do something about the need. In Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, there are more than 2000 community preschools.

“**Pennies for Preschoolers,**” is our attempt at LOG to help one of these community preschools that is located along the way as one travels toward the city dump. Located in an extremely poor area of the city, there are currently 30 students and 2 teachers in this school. The government pays the teachers \$25 per month which is their only income. Supplies for the students are also taken out of this amount.

Last year LOG Preschool sent a suitcase full of books in Spanish as part of our Preschool Connection with Nicaragua. This year a large jar labeled “**Pennies for Preschoolers**” will be placed in the LOG Preschool and one at LOG church. Funds collected through this project will be used to purchase school supplies for this selected preschool in Nicaragua. These supplies will include items such as jumbo crayons, pencils, acrylic markers, play dough, construction paper, glue, small white boards, etc. and will be carried in suitcases by the five members of the Mission of Hope/ LOG / 2012 team to Nicaragua. So save your pennies and look for the jar that says “**Pennies for Preschoolers**” if you would like to help. (For more information contact Judy at 239-437-4133).

Preschool At The Lamb News

By Gaye Williams, Director

Preschool at The Lamb has had a great start for fall. In October the children participated in a “Trike –A-Thon” and raised \$2,280.00 for St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. We are so proud of them and are so thankful for the many volunteers who set up the riding course, helped the children ride safely and cheered each child across the finish line.

The Blessing of the Children was truly a blessing to all who were present on this special Sunday. The children sang some of the songs they sing in chapel every week and had a great time waving to all their families in the audience! We were delighted to welcome over seventy families this year.

Our parent volunteer program is proving to be a huge success. Many families have already surpassed the requested 10 hours of service. As of today families have given 1,490 hours of volunteer time to the preschool and or church.



Jesus ... said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. " ... And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

from Mark10 NRSV

Membership Service & Tracking Focus Group

by Jody Ladwig

The Membership Services and Tracking Focus Group at their September and October meetings continued discussions around the Welcome Desk and planning for the communication needs of our congregation. Working with the LOG staff, the focus group is seeking ways to do what we presently do in the communication arena, but do it better. The goal is to develop and explore new and improved ways for the congregation to relate effectively and lovingly with each other. In the interests of increasing communication across the congregation, the Communication Team at LOG has developed a home page on FACEBOOK and recently brought about the interface with E-Blast. By logging on to www.FACEBOOK.com/LambofGodChurch you can view the coming events of the week as well as interact with other members of LOG who are on FACEBOOK.

In addition, investigation of web based services has been conducted with the results on hold until the benefits of the FACEBOOK connection can fully be accessed. Depending how far the FACEBOOK application goes in enhancing our communication needs will determine the direction of future membership or church management systems efforts. There was talk about surveying various members of the congregation in an effort to better understand how individuals receive and use present communications. It is acknowledged that we are actually multiple congregations within one congregation based on the different profiles for different age groups and interests. Therefore, different means for getting information out to the congregation exists. One size does not fit all.

Under consideration is the use of a pass-around roster at church services. This is so members and guests can be recognized and followed up as appropriate. Formats for such a roster and procedures for implementation will be presented to the at the November meeting for the full focus group to evaluate.

Notes of welcome and the assignment of sponsors for new members will be a focus at the November Meeting. Presently, Marj Waskom conducts a welcoming interview with all new members who are desirous of meeting with her. From these interviews come the spot with photo and brief write-up in the Grapevine as a means for the congregation to get to know our new members. Information gathered by Marj assists new members in meeting people and being able to match talents and interests with LOG activities and ministries. Our thanks to Marj for her ongoing contributions.

FACEBOOK HAS NO UPPER AGE LIMIT

by R.C. Fleeman

I was talking recently with someone at Lamb of God and the subject of FACEBOOK came up during the course of our conversation. The person I was talking to informed me that he was “too old for FACEBOOK”. I must disagree. It is true that FACEBOOK started out as a social media Internet site for college age adults but it has evolved into a site for adults of all ages. At this point, it has more than 600,000 members with the fastest growing demographic being women who are 55 or older. Men in the same age category are not far behind. Even my father-in-law, who is 81, signed on this year.

I reluctantly joined FACEBOOK two years ago at the urging of my children. To be honest, I didn’t know much about it and therefore, didn’t see much value to it. I was pleasantly surprised after signing up however, to find people on FACEBOOK who I had not interacted with in many years ... including several relatives. I have 52 first cousins and while many of us were close as children, our lives took us in many different directions. There is no way I could visit them all because we are scattered all over the country. Thanks to FACEBOOK I’ve reconnected with many of them and we have shared a little bit of our lives with one another.

Some folks are afraid of social networking sites like FACEBOOK because they have heard about stalking and bullying on those sites. In response to that I say, “think of it as a highway. When you driving down a highway you will see good places and not so good places. Still we drive down the highway because there are people and places we want to see.” The same is true of FACEBOOK ... there are positives and negatives ... and if I encounter someone who is “negative” I just “unfriend” them ... and most of the time they don’t even know I’ve done it.

Why not give FACEBOOK a try? Jody Ladwig has already given you one reason (see her article above.) ... it is another way to keep up with all of the activities of Lamb of God Church. Beyond that it is a way to re-connect with people who have passed through your life over the years. By the way, if you have questions or want to set up some time for a free lesson, give me at call at the Lamb of God church office ... RC

Lamb of God - Well Known and Appreciated In Many Places Up North

By Pastor Walter Fohs

Recently, one of our Winter Couples returned to Florida for just a couple weeks before they returned to Pennsylvania where they live in the summer. Dick and Elaine Reimet will be returning to Ft. Myers for the winter. Dick has served as the treasurer of his ELCA synod in Pennsylvania for twenty-five years and was recently honored at a banquet given by the synod, thanking him for his dedication and faithfulness to this important task. Dick told me that during those 30 years serving as the treasurer, he worked with six different bishops and everyone of them was present at his special evening celebration. We are grateful to have so many faithful and dedicated winter visitors as members of our congregation every season.

Right after worship, the first Sunday Dick and Elaine were at the service, the first words that he said to me were, "Lamb of God is well known and appreciated in many places up north." He went on to tell me how his congregation in Pennsylvania has created a relationship with other area congregations to take turns feeding the homeless in their community. The Reimet's congregation serves the 300 people a full meal once every six weeks, through-out the year. Dick was not only pleased about this new ministry but also excited about the role that he plays when his congregation prepares and serves the meal. His job is to be the "greeter" and to shake the hand of everyone who comes to the supper. He told me about how that simple experience of greeting people in that context has changed his life. The smile on his face and the tears in his eyes spoke louder than his words, as we stood together in the empty Arbor sanctuary. Then he shared with me that in addition to greeting the people who come for the meal, he has added a second dimension to his ministry. He waits until after everyone has completed their meals and stands at the same doorway and shakes the hands of those who have been fed and gives them a farewell blessing as they walk into the streets where many of them live.

Spiritual Intelligence

by Pastor Walter Fohs

In a telephone conversation a couple weeks ago, I was speaking to a Deacon in the office of the Episcopal Diocese about creating a campus ministry at Florida Gulf Coast University that would be a shared ministry by Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Lutheran congregations in the area. This campus ministry would also provide an alternative to the campus ministry that is presently ministering to the students, faculty and staff. In our conversations, a new term was used that I have not heard before. The term was "an Intelligent Spirituality". In looking up the term on my computer I was surprised to see resources that speak to this issue.

The following paragraph is taken from one of these resources.

Why is it that some people can attend church their entire lives, without ever becoming mature? In spite of hearing scores of sermons, sitting through years of Sunday school and Bible studies, and serving in ministry for decades, very few grow up. An increasing number of researchers and pastors are raising this concern. The issue is that of Spiritual Intelligence (SI), how to keep from going from Pampers to Depends without maturing. (Alan Nelson, the author of a book entitled Spiritual Intelligence), writes that the primary reason for this phenomenon "is not lack of commitment, sin or bad attitude." He continues, "While we study what Jesus said and what he did, we rarely focus on 'how' Jesus disciplined his followers."

Anyone interested in purchasing some copies of this book and studying it with me? I am ready.

Gift Card Program - Benefits Ministries of Lamb of God

by Sherry Griffith

We are continuing the Scrip or Gift Card fund raising program here at Lamb of God that was started several years ago. I am sure there are many questions about this program, so I am going to try and answer a few of them.

What is the Scrip program?

It is a program where you can purchase gift cards for area and national retailers and restaurants. The retailer or restaurant then donates a percentage of the cards value back to us. The percentage varies between 1 and 50%. The order form will tell you what percentage each retailer is donating to us. You get to spend the FULL amount of the gift card and you make money for us. It is so easy!

These gift cards can be used nationwide. So if you have friends or family that live out of state...get them involved! If you are snowbirds, don't forget to take some home with you for the summer! Gift cards make great gifts; but they are useful for purchases you would make anyway. Keep them on hand for stores or restaurants you frequent.

I want to order gift cards for Christmas.....when is the last order date?

To ensure delivery in time for Christmas gift giving, all orders MUST be turned in to me NO LATER than **Dec. 1, 2011**.

Who benefits from this program?

There are 4 groups that participate; they are the Preschool, the Youth Group, Women of Faith and Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

Don't see your favorite retail store or restaurant?

Ask me....there are over 500 available!

How do I order?

The order forms are on the desk in the narthex of the Arbor. Please make checks payable to Lamb of God and place the order form and check in my mailbox.

How long does it take to get the gift cards?

Normally it takes about 2 weeks for the orders to be completed. I place the order on Monday morning and usually receive the gift cards by the following Wednesday. However, there are times when it may take longer. If you need a gift card by a specific date, let me know and I will try to work something out.

If you have any other questions, I can be reached at: 369-3505 or by e-mail at: SLGriffith@embarqmail.com.

Sunday's Cool

By Kathleen Busbee

One Sunday during Sunday's Cool devotion time, a discussion about our church began. The children reflected about what all this church does for them and for the community. It was amazing to see the pride and excitement spread over the faces of the children as they named all the activities and service projects that they knew about and were involved in. Here are some of the quotations from the discussion: "I love this church!" "I don't know of any other church that does so much for the community!" "I am so proud of my church!" "All my friends think this church is really cool!" "I love coming every Sunday and learning about Jesus!" Out of the mouths of babes...

3DL News

By Kathleen Busbee

Thanks to the youth for all of their hard work with the preparation and presentation of the Haunted Safari at Trunk-or-Treat. We had over 30 youth participate and what a great time they had in the jungle! Whether they were guides, Bush People, Spider Victims, Gorillas, Cave Dwellers, or Crazy Natives they did a fantastic job and successfully entertained hundreds of people. What a wonderful unique opportunity to serve our community and have fun at the same time!

God Loves Us, Now Go Share That Love With Someone In Need

by Pastor Walter Fohs

IF WE ONLY HEAR THE MESSAGE THAT GOD LOVES US REPEATEDLY, AND NEVER HEAR, LEARN, OR PRACTICE WHAT TO DO WITH THAT LOVE FOR OTHERS, THEN WE CAN BECOME IN THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL, “A NOISY GONG” ... OR AN EMPTY SYMBOL.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and 11-13

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Excellence of Love

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. ... **11** When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became an adult, I did away with childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. **13** But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Several weeks ago I had a conversation with some people from Lamb of God who wanted to talk about theology and what we believe and what we don't believe. It was a discussion that was honest and forthright with integrity and mutual respect. I wish that more people would seek opportunities to engage in these personal conversations with me, both at church and during some of our adult education opportunities.

One of the participants in this discussion made the comment that has given me the idea for this article. The person said something to the effect of, “When people come to church, all they need to hear is that God loves them”. The unspoken thought I believe was something like, “People don't need to hear anything else.”

As I have given great thought to this conversation it seems to me that this understanding of church is quite accurate, for fifty years ago. The culture of the sixties with it's student riots, “pot parties”, even the injustice of race and the conflict in Vietnam”, appear now to be “relatively mild” when we catalog all the issues that fill the world's stage in 2011. The issues we face now are how, when and where do we show the love of God to our neighbors who live across the globe as well as the “foreigner” who moves in down the street.

As a nation we can be extremely generous and caring for our global neighbors when they have natural and even political crises in their nations. When those same people decide to move to our states, cities, and communities, bringing their cultural diversity into our world, not all Christians know how to “love” our new neighbors.

It is clear to me as I listen and watch the rhetoric of too many of our American citizens, that for too long we have been guilty in our American churches of proclaiming and practicing that “God really only loves us”, and there has not been enough preaching on learning how to love our neighbors in this nation and around the globe, for who they are and what they believe.

**HAPPY,
HAPPY!**



Since no newsletter was printed in October, we send belated greetings to:

Sally Patterson who celebrated her 65th birthday on October 12th

Marge Bewley who celebrated her 80th birthday on October 19th

Judy Hardwick who celebrated her 65th birthday on October 30th

In November we honor:

Bill Nagy who will celebrate his 80th birthday on November 10th

And we wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving on November 24th!

If we missed your date or you do not want your name included, please call Marj Waskom at (239) 489-1134

Readers may or may not agree with the article that appears below, but the main point ... **EVOLVE OR DIE** ... is thought provoking. Let us know what you think by sending an email to office@lambogodchurch.net.

FROM THE ELCA E-newsletter:

BY TOM EHRICH

Change or die: Evolution is a fact of life

Institutions might think themselves eternal, but evolution is their life — and failure to evolve their death.

Don't believe in evolution? Look at churches. Better yet, look at personal computing. It took one generation — 34 years — to go from the first mass market PC to what is now called "the end of the PC era," as signaled by Hewlett Packard's decision to jettison its hardware operations. In that exciting era of technological advances and transformation, the PC evolved from a huge stand-alone box with a tiny screen and minimal capability to a slim box with ever larger screens, massive processing power and vast data storage capacities, all connected by the Internet.

Software and communications tools kept pace, a display of market economics at its best. New products created new markets. Those markets, in turn, demanded better products. Weak competitors fell to the wayside, while strong competitors prospered. The workforce adapted.

Churches went through a similar era of growth. The Episcopal Church for example, grew from 1 million members to 3.2 million between 1925 and 1965, before change-resistant leadership set off a 46-year decline. All mainline Protestant denominations [including the Lutheran denominations] saw the same cycle of growth and decline, and now evangelical churches are entering the decline stage. Christian institutions — hospitals, seminaries, colleges, camps and conference centers — that once prospered are, one by one, closing or dropping church affiliation.

Evolution is a relentless force. Now that the Internet has enabled mobile computing via smartphones, tablets and cloud-based apps, the desk-bound PC seems like a ponderous dinosaur.

What happened? This is where the PC story gets instructive for churches. In short, people's needs changed. They valued mobility more than power, especially when only a small portion of that power was actually being used. They valued the Internet's use-it-anywhere capability, even if apps ran more slowly. Put another way, the things PCs were able to do better and better turned out not to be what people wanted. Who needs a Ferrari to drive a mile for coffee?

The needs, lifestyles and human dramas that provide the context for Christianity have been changing too. Some of it has been logistical. Suburbanization changed lifestyles, families with two working parents saw Sunday as family day, children's schedules got more complex, and schools replaced churches as neighborhood centers.

Some of the evolutionary drive has been emotional. Belonging to an institution matters less than it used to, and people's questions have changed. Attitudes toward tradition and authority have changed. In an age of ideological extremism and dysfunctional government, people are withholding their trust, even from churches. People want faith as much as ever, but not by way of sitting dutifully in a pew.

In both PCs and religion, the future belongs to those who sense the shifting needs and who are motivated to keep pace. In the PC world, only Apple has managed to do this. In churches, the winners are mega-churches that read the trends and adapted.

Mainline churches now are sensing the need to adapt. After four decades of over-my-dead-body resistance by traditionalists and longtime members, mainline denominations are trying to find more promising ways to serve a radically changing world. Some are succeeding. Most, I'm sorry to say, have leaders who see no need to adapt to anything, and their days are numbered.

Evolve or die — it's a fact of life

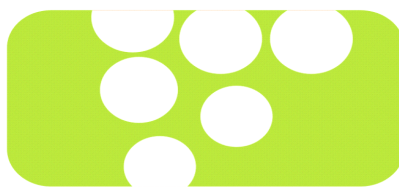
CATCH THE SPIRIT OF LAMB OF GOD !

Coming to us in January, February and March 2012

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More details will follow in the weeks ahead

Lamb of God Church



A Lutheran Episcopal Congregation

**BOLDLY
INCLUSIVE**

Embracing all people as they are, celebrating diversity and affirming the uniqueness of each person

**INTENTIONALLY
CHALLENGING**

Encouraging questions, exploring issues and finding new ways to live our faith as Christians in a changing world

**JOYFULLY
CHRISTIAN**

Connecting people to a loving community of God's grace where all can be transformed and equipped for lives of service, praise and thanksgiving