



# Generations of Generosity

I will  
extol you, my God  
and King, and bless your  
name forever and ever.  
One generation shall laud your works  
to another, and shall declare your mighty  
acts. On the glorious splendor of your  
majesty, and on your wondrous works, I  
will meditate. The might of your awesome  
deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your  
greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of  
your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your  
righteousness.

—Psalm 145 NRSV

Annual Report  
2005

## Every family, when it gathers, tells stories.

We pull out the photos, gather around the elders, laugh, cry, sing, and know that we belong.

Your ELCIC is a family with God as parent. It's a big family—182,000 children and counting. Like all families, the siblings don't always get along. There are disagreements, debates, even discord, but overriding it all are three things. The love of our parent for each of us, the amazing potential of people working together for a single purpose and the stories.

God has called our church into mission for others. Stories give us the courage and inspiration we need. God's marvelous doings are headline news. God can never be praised enough.

Thank you to the authors of the stories featured here. Complete versions are posted on the ELCIC Stewardship webpages.

[www.elcic.ca/steward/2005.html](http://www.elcic.ca/steward/2005.html)

Despite her shyness, God has helped Kathleen Nygren-Goodman to take risks. One such opportunity has been at the Lutheran Urban Mission Project in the core area of Winnipeg. "Laughing with the community folk, playing games, making crafts and teaching Bible stories to the children has been a tremendous blessing to me," says Kathleen.

"All I prayed was, 'Here I am, send me!' I can say with confidence that if God calls you out of your comfort zone, you can trust God to walk with you each step of the way."

At the age of 95, Olga Ostermann remembers with fondness and good humour steps along her journey of faith.

Pentecostal neighbours impressed a young Olga when they greeted her with "God bless you" and prayed for her. A Catholic neighbour's comment about the need to confess sins to the priest led Olga to reply, "We Lutherans confess directly to God." Olga heard about Baptist immersion. "I felt inferior for a while, then said, 'well, I am a Lutheran.'"

## Generations

Don't ask grade seven student, Isaiah Hoepfner what he will be when he grows up. Ask him what God is calling him to be.

When I was in grade four," says Isaiah, "I was involved in Sunday services. I really felt that God was calling me to be a pastor. As I grew older that feeling was replaced with the hope of serving God as a paramedic or firefighter."

Now Isaiah feels that God is calling him to the worship band. "I love playing the drums and being able to play them at church is a bonus. This is what I think God is calling me to at this time in my life."



Lisa Omerzu, says "When I was 10, my Opa died from a long battle with cancer. I guess you could say, that along with my Opa, went my innocence...and my faith. Losing him didn't seem fair. I began to doubt what I had easily accepted before. I had many questions."

Lisa believes, however, that when her doubts were at their highest, God was there to guide her back—often in the disguise of someone who cared.

Lisa faces the future with anticipation now. "I know that the journey won't always be easy but with God as our guide, I will be safe. There are many exciting places to visit."

A trip to Roatan, Honduras in 2000 was God's introduction to a new life for Betty Groff and daughter Allison. They felt drawn to helping the Roatan villagers.

Two years later, Allison and her husband, Mark, met an American nurse, Peggy Stranges, who had begun a medical clinic in her home on Roatan. Overwhelmed with work, Peggy welcomed Mark, a dentist. A folding cot became the dentist's chair. Diver's oxygen tanks operated the drills and plastic basins served for sterilizing. A quick 'dental assistant' lesson for Allison, and the clinic was open. "I sterilized equipment," says Betty.

Will they go back? Betty is sure of it.

Leah Book attended Sunday School by mail. "It cost 1¢ to mail materials to us, so we were expected to share some of our allowance by sending stamps to support the program—an early lesson in stewardship."

1¢

Diagnosed with an ovarian tumour, Carol Thronson voiced her fears to Jesus and felt instructed to pray everything with thanksgiving.

Obediently, she thanked God for technology that would lead to a successful surgery, for the bed that would become available and for the skill of doctors and nurses. Since God already knew her fears, she never voiced them again. Instead, Carol thanked God for calmness and for the joy and blessings that God had in store.

"Confidence that God was in control and that I was secure in that love," says Carol, "was a special gift."

"The greatest impression a mother can leave on her child is her living faith, unwavering hope and steady trust in God." Tricia Hoepfner thanks God for the influence of her mother.

"A woman of amazing strength, Mom would be the first to admit that her strength was from the Lord," remembers Tricia.

# of Generosity



At University, a friend and lifelong Lutheran introduced Matt Griener to a group called Lutheran Student Movement by inviting him to their book club. At Tuesday night suppers with the whole group, Matt found something he hadn't expected—thirty students who talked about God as if God were real. Matt says, "Being in Christian community has encouraged me as I mature in faith."

Rob Melnyk has devoted himself to attaining perfection in his marriage. He believes this is possible with hard work and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"The first step to being the perfect husband", says Rob, "is listening to your wife." Rob credits that habit with bringing him closer to God. "When I first had questions about God, my wife bought me a Bible. When I was confused, she took me to church."

"Everything that happens is part of God's plan." Kim Dyky realized this when she became Church School superintendent. "This was commitment with a capital C!" she says.

Kim discovered she had the ability to tell stories using puppets. "One of my greatest joys," says Kim, "is when I see the kids take out the puppets and reenact the stories of God's love they have heard. I know why God opened the superintendent role for me."



# Devotions for a Congregational Annual Meeting

## *Opening of a Meeting*

**Adult Reader:** I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. (Psalm 145:1-3)

**Leader:** We come together today to bless and praise God by offering what God has first given us: our selves, our time and our possessions. As we plan to serve you through the coming year, help us, God, to nurture and treasure all the gifts which you have given each of your children.

**All:** Help us to see ourselves in each other.

**Youth Reader:** Generation after generation stands in awe of your work; each one tells stories of your mighty acts. Your beauty and splendor have everyone talking; I compose songs on your wonders. Your marvelous doings are headline news; I could write a book full of the details of your greatness. The fame of your goodness spreads across the country; your righteousness is on everyone's lips. (Psalm 145:4-7)

**Leader:** Bless us, God, and help us to see and encourage the unique gifts that each of our brothers and sisters has to offer. Remind us, through the energy of youth, that every day is new, and every challenge is an opportunity for adventure. Show us, through the wisdom of age, that we are always learning, and that slowing down does not mean stopping. Empower us to tap our different strengths in our decision making process.

**All:** Help us to share ourselves with each other.

**Elder Reader:** The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. (Psalm 145:8-9)

**Leader:** As stewards of your creation, God, help us, too, to show compassion. As we review our past and prepare for our future as a congregation, let us be guided by the pasts and inspired by the futures of each one of us.

**All:** Bless us, your children of all ages and experiences. Show us to each other as individuals of equal value. All different, yet all one family. Help us to come together as a family, and learn from one another as we work together.

**Sing:** With One Voice (WOV) 748 *Bind Us Together* or Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) 370 *Blest Be The Tie That Binds* or Renewing Worship R220 *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*

## *Closing of a Meeting*

**Youth Reader:** Creation and creatures applaud you, God; your holy people bless you. They talk about the glories of your rule, they exclaim over your splendor, letting the world know of your power for good, the lavish splendor of your kingdom. (Psalm 145:10-12)

**Elder Reader:** Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. (Psalm 145:13-14)

**Adult Reader:** The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. (Psalm 145:15-20)

**All:** My mouth is filled with God's praise. Let everything living bless him, bless his holy name from now to eternity! (Psalm 145:21)

**Leader:** Let us leave this gathering and go our individual ways strengthened by the differences that bring us together, remembering that all gifts are from God, who created us all.

**All:** We have each brought what we have to give: our selves, our time and our possessions, and laid them together before God, who first gave them to us. We have learned from the carefree to rejoice, from the careful to reflect and from the careworn to respond. We have been reminded that here, in this place, all of us are welcome and worthwhile, and we leave as family.

**Sing:** WOV 755 *We All Are One in Mission* or LBW 403 *Lord Speak to Us That We May Speak* or Renewing Worship R223 *In Christ Called to Baptize*

**Leader:** Go in peace to serve the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God

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These devotions were written by Sarah Dymund, member at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Vancouver. Edited by Barb Fast, ELCIC Coordinator of Stewardship. Design by Kristen Guy. On Cover: *Generations of Generosity* artwork by Carl Meinke © 2004. Devotions © 2005 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

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