

A Word from Bishop Rindy

October 2011

Organ Donors

As a parish pastor, one is sometimes asked to be with a family when a loved one is to be disconnected from life support. If the person is a donor, the family is asked if they would be willing to honor the wishes of their loved one by donating his/her organs.

In June, Zion Lutheran Church, Oriska, experienced a church building fire from which very little was able to be saved. While they could have simply closed their church and joined other area congregations, the members felt compelled to rebuild; not for their sake, but for the sake of the Gospel and their 23 active Sunday School children.

Meanwhile, Blanchard Lutheran Church, Blanchard, lived and served as a congregation for over seventy-five years. Because of local demographics in their rural community, they decided that their mission was complete and that it was time to close.

Following the fire at Zion, good conversation around how Blanchard could help Zion happened with the Blanchard leadership. While it didn't work to move their church building to Oriska, they continued the discussion.

When the members of Zion were working on their insurance settlement, they realized they would only be able to afford the shell of their new building. So... they called up the leadership from Blanchard Lutheran to see if they would be willing to donate some of their worship furnishings for Zion's new building.

Would it be OK if we got the pews? *Sure!* How about the altar, baptismal font, pulpit and lectern? *Sure!* The organ? The piano? Sound system? Windows? *Sure!* As they walked down to the basement... the tables? The chairs? Plates? Silverware? Fridge? Stove? Dishwasher? *Sure!* How about the broom and the dustpan? *Sure!*

The closing service at Blanchard was powerful. Representatives from Zion were there. During the prayers of thanksgiving at the close of the service, both presidents from Zion and Blanchard came forward for the laying on of hands. Prayers were shared, thanking God for the proclamation of the Gospel, for new life given in baptisms, and for those fed at the table. It was a powerful moment.

Blanchard Lutheran, in its closing, gave *new life* to Zion Lutheran. While the closing was sad, it was also the most hope-filled closing of which I've been a part. Blanchard Lutheran Church was an **organ donor**— and a piano, pew, pulpit, plate, and even a broom and dustpan donor! Blanchard gave away its "life" for the sake of the Gospel, which gave hope not only to the good folks at Zion Lutheran in Oriska, but also to those who let go of their "stuff" that it might continue doing what it was originally created to do: provide for the praise of the Living God.

"Tradition is the living faith of the dead. Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living." – Pelikan

By giving up the past, both congregations are living into God's future. This not only gives me great hope, but also the people of Zion and Blanchard. I hope it gives you hope, too.

Bill Rindy

Pastor Bill Rindy, EaND Synod Bishop

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 NRSV

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