

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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Enthusiastic Stewardship: Receiving and Giving Great Joy

If the Holy Spirit ever leads you to the Monday night service at St. John Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Wis., you will meet a wonderful saint of God named Lilly. Lilly is a precious little girl of the ripe old age of four. She is one of those wonderful saints who loves to come to church, and especially to pray the Lord's Prayer. While you may not have met Lilly, you know kids like her. She has an electric smile at the door, wide eyes that pay attention during the service, and so many other endearing qualities.

A stewardship leader

But Lilly is more than a cute kid; she is a stewardship leader. This comes out particularly when we pray the Lord's Prayer. When she hears the familiar phrase, "Lord,

remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray," Lilly lets it fly! She prays five decibels louder than and a half beat behind everyone else in attendance. Her pastor's heart sings and her brothers and sisters in Christ of varying decades of life find her prayer the greatest joy as well. That is stewardship!

Now, Lilly doesn't have a nickel to her name that isn't given to her. She really won't do anything to ease any congregational budget crisis. She will not be able to stand for election to any congregational office for almost 20 years. In fact, it might be easy to dismiss her as totally insignificant to the work of the Church. But if one were to do that, they would be dismissing one of the Church's great steward leaders!

All gifts are God's gifts

How can this be true? Well, listen to Jesus: "And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them" (MARK 10:13-16). Lilly isn't a "future steward" of the Church. She is a steward now!

Remember, just as Lilly doesn't have a nickel that isn't given to her, neither do any other



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 LCMS Stewardship Ministry
 1333 S. Kirkwood Road
 St. Louis, MO 63122
 888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
infocenter@lcms.org
lcms.org/stewardship

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STAFF

- Rev. Heath Curtis
*Coordinator (contracted),
LCMS Stewardship Ministry*
- Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador
*Assistant Coordinator (contracted),
LCMS Stewardship Ministry, and
Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church,
Plymouth, Wis.*
- Robbie Clasen
*Administrative Assistant,
LCMS Stewardship Ministry*

CONTRIBUTOR

- Lisa Moeller
Designer

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stewards. Everything we are and have is a gift from God. These gifts, richly and freely given, can be used for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Lilly gives joy to those who hear her bold confession of faith as she boisterously prays the Lord’s Prayer. Her faith, as young as it is, gives glory to the Lord who has created her and has redeemed her!

Some might say that this isn’t really stewardship, that it is really nothing more than a little girl parroting what has been taught her. But isn’t that the way every one of us, regardless of age, learns? Young children, when they speak their first words, don’t make things up. They learn about “ma-ma” and “da-da” from the words that are spoken to them. They receive. They respond. Sounds a great deal like stewardship, does it not? The steward receives all the gifts needed to support this body and life and gives back in response. This is exactly what Lilly does. The very same process is lived out in the life of EVERY faithful steward.

Something to get excited about

It is Lilly’s enthusiasm that might prevent others from seeing what she does as stewardship. Many Christian stewards, even those who are quite generous with their finances and service, do not see stewardship as something to get excited about. Stewardship is all too often viewed as

a necessary evil. Not too many people get all jazzed up when the time comes each month to make the mortgage payment or the car payment. Items like these are bills. Paying bills is not a source of joy. Not paying bills is a source of great headache and heartache. But when a steward is reminded of what Lilly knows, that she is a baptized child of her Heavenly Father, surrounded by a family of brothers and sisters of the same Father, then the joy comes in! This Father who creates, sustains; Jesus Christ who redeems and restores; and the Holy Spirit who calls, sanctifies and keeps; these are the real source of stewardship joy and enthusiasm. Lilly isn’t joyful because she is paying bills. Lilly is joyful because she knows that all her debts have been paid by Jesus!

There are many faithful steward leaders in every congregation. They know how blessed they are in the Lord. They know that they have been created for the task of stewardship. They know that Baptism into Christ has redeemed and restored them to the task of being faithful stewards. When you are seeking a steward to emulate, don’t just look to the seasoned saints in the pews. Look also to the Lillys in your congregation, and their energetic desire to serve the Lord. Don’t dismiss them because they don’t have offering envelopes or can’t serve on a board. Embrace them as they boldly, and sometimes loudly, confess the faith that they have received. Become a steward of their enthusiasm.