

The Gift of You

By Pastor Nancy Larson
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I had a good friend who really 'got into' gift giving. She took great care in choosing gifts for friends and family. She would choose wrapping paper that would fit with the gift or its color. Cards were equally as important in this process. She took great joy in giving the gift and often couldn't wait until Christmas or the birthday to arrive before she encouraged opening of the gift. She loved to watch! For her the real joy came in the giving and the seeing the delight of the recipient.

I recently received an e-mail from one of the pastors in the synod. She wanted to share the response of one of the seventh-grade confirmation students in her sermon notes. In response to the question, "What was the best part of worship today and why?" Ashley wrote, "Offering, because we give and it makes me feel good."

At Church this morning I listened to 5-year-old Landon answer the question, "What does Christmas mean to you?" with, "It's not about getting, it's about giving, because God gave us Jesus."

Perhaps you have picked up on the theme in these

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three stories. We have just come into the Christmas season, celebrating God's gift of



salvation in Jesus. This is the foundation for the whole tradition of sharing gifts with loved ones. We give because God first gave to us the gifts of forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. God has blessed us beyond our deserving and then opens the door for us to become signs of blessing for others.

I am delighted and impressed that a seventh-grade confirmation student and a 5-year-old Sunday school student have already learned and embraced this truth. We know that everything comes from God and we have been richly blessed not as an end itself, but in order that we might be a blessing in return. Thanks be to God for the gift that is you!

To download this article or for more stewardship and mission support resources, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp.

LYO Assembly set for Feb. 16-17



High school youth from the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to attend the annual Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) Assembly set for Feb. 16-17, 2013, at the Clarion Inn in Mason City.

The event will follow the theme "What Would Jesus Do" and will feature fellowship, group activities, workshops, worship, devotions, music, food and fun.

Scheduled speakers are Erik Ullestad, co-founder of the ministry resources Elbow Company, who will present "Wholeness & Holiness," and Susan Entriken, director of Youth and Family Ministry at St. Timothy, Hudson, who

will talk about "Self Identity." Musical entertainment will be provided by the band "AWE" from Redeemer, Waverly.

The registration fee is \$55 per participant, which includes three meals. Congregations can register by submitting the LYO Assembly Congregation registration form and payment to the synod office. Congregations can make their own hotel reservations by calling Ashley at **641-423-1640** to reserve rooms in the "Lutheran Youth" block.

To learn more or to download a registration form, visit www.neiasynod.org/youth or call **319-352-1414**.