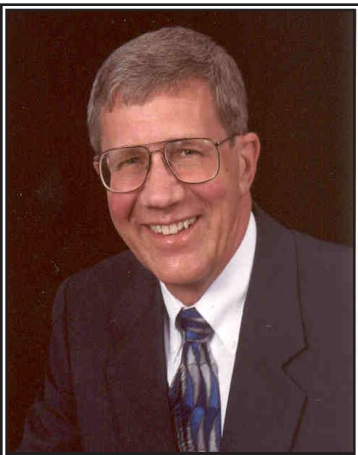


## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Growing in Stewardship: A Holy Loan



**LIFE  
LINES**

Gerhard C. Michael, Jr.  
District President

In this issue of *Lutheran Life*, which reports especially on our District's performance financially in the past year, I thought it would be helpful to devote my column to a consideration of stewardship. Recently I ran across the phrase, "a holy loan,"

**Jesus ... "a holy loan" ... was lent to Mary for a time, so she could nurture and care for him. Then she would have to give Him back to His heavenly Father.**

which impressed me as capturing the essence of stewardship's meaning.

Occurring in Richard Bansemer's oratorio, "Mary, Mother of Jesus," the phrase was used to describe Jesus as "a holy loan" who was lent to Mary for a time, so she could nurture and care for him. Then she would have to give Him back to His heavenly Father.

Isn't this what stewardship is all about? We often restrict thinking of stewardship to matters of money, but it is much broader than that. It en-

compasses the people given to our care, the time we are asked to manage, the talents we are challenged to employ, the Gos-

**Stewardship encompasses the people given to our care, the time we are asked to manage, the talents we are challenged to employ, the Gospel we are called to invest, the financial resources we are called to oversee, the creation for which we are tasked to care.**

pel we are called to invest, the financial resources we are called to oversee and the creation for which we are tasked to care.

Thinking of all of these aspects of stewardship as "a holy loan" can assist us in carrying out our responsibilities now while we have opportunity.

As in Mary's case, the stewardship of people is often a temporary responsibility. A teacher has a year or a few classes during which she can influence and mold her pupils. Similarly, the window parents have to raise their children as

The adjective "holy" is critical in using our special phrase to promote a healthy stewardship practice. Jesus was loaned to

Mary but remained God's Son. Our houses, cars, clothes, and books are ours only temporarily; they really belong to God.

Seeing what we have as a

**Through the perfect stewardship His Son exercised for His short 33 years on this planet, the Owner ransomed us from the enslaving bondage that we are in charge to enjoy the freedom of sons and daughters of the King. There's power for stewardship!**

trust from God can help us care for it in a new way. Knowing the time-boundedness of our stewardship, we can use, care for, manage what has been loaned to us responsibly and enjoy it as a mark of God's generous nature. With Job we can say when these things are taken away, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (2:21)

What can promote such a view of stewardship? I know of people for whom a life-threatening illness suddenly helped

God's children remains open only so long, and they are on their way,

How about our stuff? We may speak about "my house, my car, my clothes, my books, etc.," but the reality that they wear out, can be destroyed, or taken from us, should help us treat them as "a holy loan."

**The Lord of all has invested deeply in us, that we might be freed from the illusion that we are the owners when we are only the managers.**

put things into proper perspective. It released them from an obsession with things, from possessing and controlling rather than managing. It freed them to enjoy and care for others while there was time. Impending death confronts us that stewardship is not forever but must be exercised now.

More powerful as a motivator than the short-term nature of stewardship is the eternal, unchanging character of the One to whom all belongs. The Owner is loving, faithful, caring. His person is revealed in the "holy loan" He gave to Mary — and the world. In Jesus we see a God who loves us, who can be trusted, whom to serve is the highest privilege.

The Lord of all has invested deeply in us, that we might be freed from the illusion that we are the owners when we are only the managers. Through the perfect stewardship His Son exercised for His short 33

2. **Manage your money** this way. Make the first expenditure on your list that which you specifically designate to promote who the Lord is and His work. Make it a generous portion, so that it actually influences the house you purchase, the car you drive, the clothes you wear. By putting His portion first, it can help you fight greed, overreaching for more than you really need. It can promote contentment, generosity and thankfulness.

3. **Worship faithfully**, week by week, with the people of God, where the reality of to whom things really belong can impact your heart and mind, helping you to resist the upside down values the world often pushes: you first, more, more, more!

4. **Engage in small group Bible study** whereby you can join in an intimate way with fellow stewards in seeking the Lord's wisdom. Through mutual support and prayer, you will recognize that seeing life as "a holy loan" is not a lonely way, but a path worth traveling with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Knowing the time-boundedness of our stewardship, we can use, care for, manage what has been loaned to us responsibly and enjoy it as a mark of God's generous nature.**

What can help us practice seeing life as "a holy loan?" Let me suggest a few ideas ....

1. **Daily pray the Lord's Prayer**, being especially conscious of these petitions, "Thy will be done on earth," and "Give us this day our daily bread." Remembering "God's will" can help you guide your management according to the Owner's purposes. The plural nature of the 4<sup>th</sup> Petition can protect you from a selfish preoccupation in your stewardship and remind you to think of others as you manage what has been loaned to you.

As we Lutherans know, mature, healthy stewardship is not ever fully accomplished. Our sinful nature asserts itself and we slip back into patterns of selfishness and ownership. By hearing the Gospel anew and then sharing it, we can help one another see that we have been bought with a price; God owns us; and our highest privilege is to glorify Him in our bodies. (See I Corinthians 6:19f.) Life becomes "a holy loan," that we want to pay back with our stewardship!

-gcm

## Concluding Comments and Observations about District Finances

As your District president, I want to commend you and your congregations for your support in FY2007. Through your generosity, we had the highest total ever for unrestricted receipts from congregations. Thank you!

Due to some unexpected income from the closing of a

mission (which we obviously did not desire), even though revenue from our capital campaign, *Forward Together* — *Servants in His Mission*, is tapering off, we were able to end the year with a slight surplus.

I urge you and your congregation to promote firstfruits giving both personally and corporately, teaching members to give to the Lord first, and organizing your congregation's spending so that what

is paid first is that which goes beyond your congregation (District commitment, etc.), even as we seek to practice firstfruits giving on the District level with our commitment to Synod (which equals 20.5% of receipts from congregations in FY2008).

Together let's keep on practicing Biblical stewardship, that we may enjoy doing it as we carry out the Lord's mission He has entrusted to us. □

**Save these dates! The 2008 President's Convocation will be held in Daytona Beach from September 24-26.**



Every congregation is a church in mission, and every member is a missionary; with all of us working together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, empowered by His Gospel to share His love.

Lutheran LIFE is the official newspaper of the Florida-Georgia District/Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Lutheran LIFE is designed to inform LCMS church and school members of the activities, the personalities and resources offered by the Synod and the District. Lutheran LIFE may also provide a forum for Lutherans to express their views and ideas on a wide range of topics. We welcome and encourage editorials, emphasizing that the views and opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by the editors or District or Synod personnel. Lutheran LIFE is published monthly, with occasional combined bimonthly issues. Editorials, press releases and photos are encouraged and must be received at Lutheran LIFE publication offices no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the publication date. While we make every attempt to use submitted information in the next issue of LIFE, space considerations prevent us from guaranteeing that stories will be used immediately. Advertising is welcome; information is available from our production office. Changes of address or new subscriber information should be directed to our production office as well.

District President  
Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael Jr.

Florida-Georgia District Office:  
Lutheran Ministries Center  
7207 Monetary Drive  
Orlando, Florida 32809-5724  
Telephone: (407) 857-5556  
FAX: (407) 857-5665  
www.flga-lcms.org

Lutheran Life  
Editorial & Publishing Office:  
One South Ocean Blvd., Suite 11  
Boca Raton, Florida 33432  
Telephone: (561) 417-5605  
FAX: (561) 417-5606  
e-mail: LutheranLife@aol.com

Publisher, Executive Editor and  
District Public Relations Director  
John List

Editor-in-Chief  
Eileen Bishop

Art Director & Layout Coordinator  
Chris Utech

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