

November 2011

# Celebration of ATONEMENT †

Newsletter of Atonement Lutheran Church,  
Rev. Tina Koenig Ray, BCC, Pastor

*"Called by God to serve and witness to all in response to God's grace."*

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When thou  
hast eaten and art full, then  
thou shalt bless the LORD  
thy God for the good land  
which he has given thee.

Deuteronomy 8:10



***From the Pastor...***

**Of urinals and the least of these by Walter Wangerin Jr.**

There's a cigarette butt in the urinal. Saddest, soppingest, yellowest, shreddingest castaway I ever hope to see again. But sadder than that cigarette is the poor soul forced to scoop it out again. I know that poor soul. I call her by name. She has children and tired feet and bills and a blessed capacity for friendship. And she is: the night-clerk here at this family owned gas station who is my friend.

But saddest of all, I think, is the impoverished soul who was first to act, flicking his unflushable butt under showers of urine, zipping up and walking away. The man is benighted. He cannot see – or doesn't care to see – that at the end of even his slightest act there always stands another person, one whom he shall have scorned or might have loved by his habitual behavior.

I wonder whether this flicker of cigarettes can claim truly to love others. Surely he doesn't love my friend. He befouled her fingers and some piece of her dignity. He didn't have to know her to know that she existed, nor to know that he made her existence a greater drudgery.

This may be the acid test of a genuine love: how do we love the ones we may never meet, those who can neither punish nor re-

ward the deeds we choose to do? True love arises, ironically, from the selves that we are not. Something from a nothing. True love loves the Lover first and then allows the true Lover to fill our empty selves with his Something. Divine Love arises and acts in us. And through us offers love unqualified and free.

Can it be true love, then - or it is a compromised love - when some threat drives us to do the right or some payoff persuades us? A goodness given for a goodness gotten is a business deal. No blame in that. No love either.

At the end of our least act, and ever affected by that act (why, the whole world is shaped by such acts), stands another human being. Always. And that human was made in the image of God.

So then: how do we love God? Answer that by asking: how do we love our neighbor? And answer that by asking: with what love do we perform the manikin acts that reach through the mists to the manikin, invisible people? Jesus I the Doer and the Done-to, the Lover *and* the beloved, the one who sends and the one who receives; for it is with these that Christ identifies the least of his sisters and his brothers.

When I lean on a car horn, I may destroy my neighbor's peace for the rest of the day. But she is made in the image of God.

When I neglect to signal a left-hand turn, I neglect the driver behind me, who might have gone forward in the right lane had he know of my intention. But cars back up behind him now, and *all* must wait for the oncoming traffic to pass: me; the drivers who have lost the green light when I make my turn; and God as well. Christian, Christian, did you think that God rides in your car only?

O man, when you dare to call your wife “the little woman” or when you declare that “*behind* every great man is a good woman,” then you belittle the Savior as well. Do you not yet know that the Redeemer approaches you in your spouse? In your partner? Your pastor, parishioner, newspaper deliver? Would you cut off any one of these? O man, O woman, you have cut yourself off from the Divine Lover who wants your heart, and the Beloved who would take it if it had been offered.

Would you assume that the only way to rate an employee is by his efficiency? Or by your unexamined feelings toward her? Would you thereby cancel the rest of this person by a stroke of your managerial pen? But “cancel” means “kill” in affairs of the spirit.

Do you understand that your mood at home (or at Little League or vacations or shipping or the sharing of meals), that your attitude in close communities (celebrations, funerals, weddings, worship, et. al.) is the air the others must breathe? The disposition you bring (which your presence imposes on the group) is, in that moment, the life or death of their spirits. It is the suffocation of their joy, or else it may grant them sweet, healthy and sparkling inhalations.

If by loud sighs and gestures of impatience you condemn the old soul ahead of you in the grocery line, who with shaking hands is counting to the penny *cash money* for the purchase - then you have lost patience with bald Elisha, the prophet of God.

And what of your father and mother when they descend into their dotage? (Teenagers often suspect that these parents have already entered the *fuddy* stage, prelude to the dimmer

*duddy* stage.) If you shoot out the lip at them because of your vaster knowledge, your keener insights, your more contemporary ethic, then you trash the instruments by which the Creator created *you*. What? Would even grown-up offspring risk chopping down the vine of which they are the fruit?

And those who assail gays in the company of like-minded friends - assuming that no one gay is injured since no one gay is there to hear them - do not recognize that their opinions become the weather that blows out their doors when they and their companions go out outdoors. Even veiled reproach is manifested in a voting booth.

And the same may be said of every group that uses its' "groupiness" to slander another group in (what is considered to be) private.

So: toss fast-food wrappers on the highway. Toss beer cans abroad. Toss the detritus of your burned-out desires, the souls of those you use and lose, in any corner where you think that others don't see you. Toss cigarette butts in the urinal, and you have once more made my dear friend miserable, she the lease of these, the children of Jesus.

And shall you rise up in church, then, protesting your love of the Lord?

But our souls are more accurately represented by the unconscious, habitual act than by acts we plan and pay for. In the former dwells our truer nature. Our love of the Lord is *first* proclaimed by our care for the faceless, for those who lack the authority to demand our service, but who shall best receive the benefit of it.

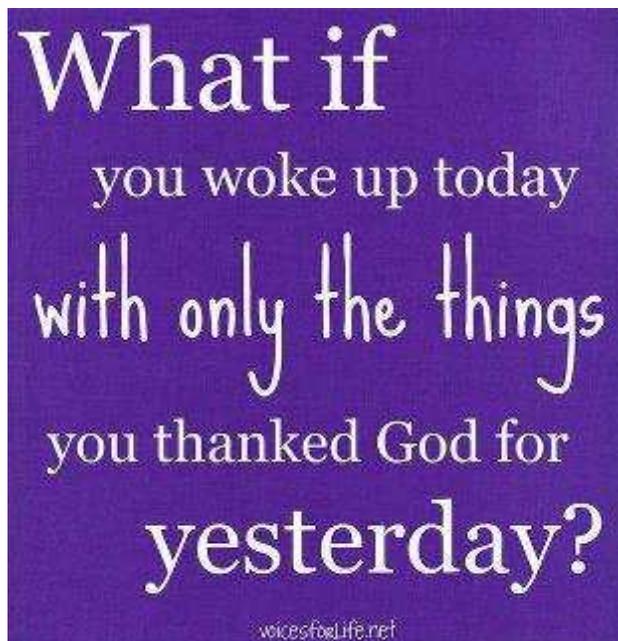
I am not writing of a democratic effort at the political equality of all individuals. I am writing rather of Christianity, the elevation of the other for the sake of God who made her and who loves her.

I am writing of love.

At the end of every act there stands the Master, cleaning urinals.

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### September/ October Worship

<u>Date</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Maint.</u>	<u>Cans</u>
<u>September</u> adults/youth				
18	67/4	\$1435.00	\$44.00	\$ 31.81
25	38/3	\$1115.00	\$ 4.00	\$ 19.17
<u>October</u>				
2	48/2	\$2743.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 31.02
9	46/5	\$1055.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 24.15
16	45/1	\$1590.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 33.64

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### Financial update as of 9/30/11

Total income Jan-Sept. 2011	\$ 80,508.65
Total expenses Jan-Sept. 2011	<u>-\$ 90,673.75</u>
Net income (Jan-Sept. 2011)	\$-10,164.10

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Due to the new privacy laws regarding health information, the hospital will not release the names of patients. So if you are going into the hospital, or know someone who is hospitalized, please call the church office or let Pastor Tina know.

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The Secretary's hours are 9 AM -Noon on Monday & Tuesday, 1-4 PM on Wednesday, and 9 AM -1 PM on Thursday & Friday.

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***Don't forget to send in your pledge or offering even if you're on vacation.  
Have you caught up?***

## **PREPARING THE WAY**

### **Ways to get ready for Jesus this Advent season**

#### **PREPARE YOUR HOME**

Decorating your home inside or out with lights, candles, nativity scenes and Christian ornaments tells all who visit you that Advent for you is about awaiting the Light of the World, the Christ Child who came to make himself at home in our lives.

#### **PREPARE YOUR GIFTS**

Much of our time during Advent involves searching for and wrapping the “perfect” gifts for friends and loved ones. But as we prepare our gifts for others, we need to keep reminding ourselves that our gift-giving represents God’s giving of the greatest Gift of all, Baby Jesus, wrapped in flesh.

#### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Spending time with Scripture and in prayer during the Advent season keeps our hearts in touch with the heartbeat of God, who is pouring out his love to us in Jesus Christ and desiring that we grow to know his Son more.

#### **DECORATING TIPS**

When you start decorating your home for Christmas this Advent, consider ways that you can highlight your Jesus-related decorations more prominently by shining a spotlight on your nativity scenes or hanging all your Christ-centered ornaments toward the front of your Christmas tree. When you receive Christmas cards with Bible verses or images of the Christmas story on them, place those cards in areas of your home where they can be seen more readily—on your coffee table, kitchen counter or refrigerator door, for example.

#### **GIFT TAGS**

As you wrap your gifts, you might want to add a gift tag with a

Bible verse on it or with a personal message of love to a friend or family member. Reminding each other the reason why we give helps to turn us away from the tendency in our culture during this time of year to think only about the personal satisfaction we might (or might not) receive from our gifts.

### **TAKE YOUR TIME**

Set aside time in your schedule each day of Advent to read from Scripture or say a prayer, alone or with friends and family. Since our time is so rushed during this time of year, it is important that we slow down to simply be with God and dwell on his Word. To help you take your time when you are praying and reading Scripture, think about taking off your watch or covering up your clock. See these suggested readings for Advent:

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 3:1-12

Luke 1:26-56

John 1:1-18

1 John 1:5-7

1 John 4:7-10

Isaiah 40:1-5

Isaiah 11:1-6

Isaiah 52:7-10

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Zephaniah 3:14-17

Hebrews 1:1-4

## CARITAS ANNUAL THANKSGIVING FUNDRAISER

Thanksgiving will soon be upon us. For some of us, this day marks the beginning of the Holiday season-a joyful time filled with friends, family, food and festivities. For others, this day marks the beginning of a time wrought with anxiety, sadness and uncertainty. Families who come to Caritas for help often share stories with us about the struggles they encounter just trying to make it month to month. Sadly, for them, the Holidays are just another thing they cannot afford.

Preparations are now underway to provide hundreds of Thanksgiving dinners for families in our community. We are asking you to consider supporting our mission of providing Holiday meals in any way you can. This year, we are suggesting a gift of \$40. This amount will help finance the cost of a Thanksgiving dinner and provide families with a "green" bag they can reuse when they visit the pantry. Regardless of the amount you can comfortably afford, any monetary gift is greatly appreciated!

*Here are some thoughts to consider:*

Get creative! Join forces with family members and friends, or any organizations to which you may belong, to cover the cost of a Thanksgiving meal.

Introduce children to the value of helping others in their community.

Sponsor a meal by writing a check to Caritas for \$40 and designate in the memo "Thanksgiving"

Encourage those in need of help to sign up at Caritas Nov 1-3.

Help us reduce our cost on postage. Receipts will be sent upon request only.

Please call Executive Director Donna Ambrose with any questions you may have and thank you again for considering Caritas as they continue to help the families of our community.

## **November Flower & Fellowship Schedule**

**Eternal Candle:** The Eternal Candle for November is in memory of Phyllis Hofer Richter from the Hoefers' and Jackie Holmbeck

**Altar Guild:** Candy Hofer & Jackie Holmbeck

**Weekly Beloit Daily News ad:** Lydia Group

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### **November 6**

**Flowers:** the Adney's

**Bread of Heaven:** Ray & Jo Capes

**Fellowship:** open

### **November 13**

**Flowers:** Jeanne Cole for her birthday

**Bread of Heaven:** David & Diana Schneider

**Fellowship:** Vi Pankonien

### **November 20**

**Flowers:** Maggie Janke for Michael's birthday

**Bread of Heaven:** Cheryl Ramczyk

**Fellowship:** Cheryl Ramczyk

### **November 27**

**Flowers:** from Vi & Gary Pankonien for their wedding anniversary

**Bread of Heaven:** Judy Gundry

**Fellowship:** no sponsor



### **November Birthdays**

11/7 Ben Griswold	11/20 Michael Janke
11/7 Sue Engebretson	11/20 Freda Leeder
11/9 Morris Hansen	11/23 Barb Anderson
11/10 Jeanne Cole	11/26 Betsy Anderson
11/13 Avery Mitchell	11/27 Lloyd Jero
11/14 Gary Pankonien	11/28 Kim Davies
11/14 David Schneider	11/30 Nancy Clickner

### **November Baptism Anniversaries**

11/4 Erica Reedy	11/27 Cheryl Ramczyk
11/19 Marcy Reedy	

### **The Saints of Atonement**

Evelyn Rounds  
Margaret Peterson  
Beverly Chilson  
Marge Mueller

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**All members of the congregation** have an invitation to attend the Church Council meetings to see and hear how the business of Atonement is conducted. The Council meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM in the Klingberg Chapel. Please join us.

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### **We always need stamps!**

Donate whatever comfortably fits your budget: a roll, a book or two or even just a few stamps. Just think-if 10 people donate 10 stamps, it equals a whole roll!

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The Altar Guild is looking for some additional members. If you're interested, please contact Candy Hoefler at 365-2616.

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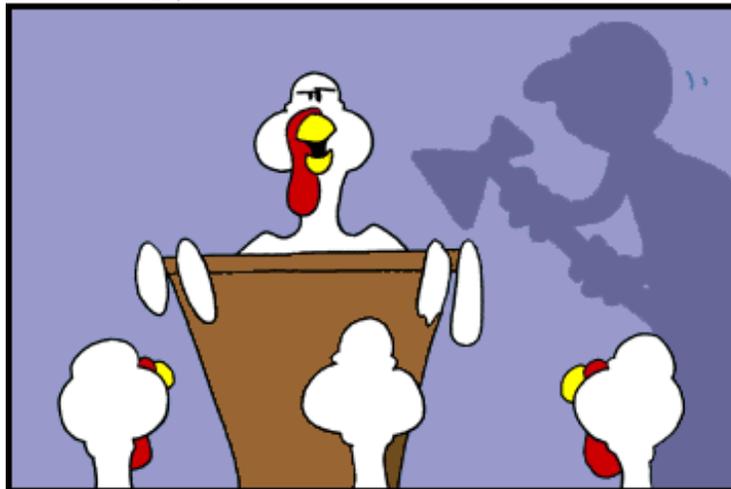
**Lydia will meet Tuesday, November 1 at the home of LaVaughn Kunny, 911 Church Street, at one o'clock.** Pastor Tina will lead devotions. All women are welcome to join us for Christian fellowship.

**Lydia will sponsor a 'pie day' for Fellowship on Sunday, November 27th.** Any pie donations from the congregation would be gladly accepted. We will request a donation of at least \$1 for a slice of pie and coffee. Lydia will provide the coffee, and ice cream and/or whipped topping for the pies. The money given will all be put in Atonement's general fund. This was a big success last year. Perhaps we can make it bigger this year!

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(See 1Thessalonians 5:1-3)

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LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT YOU NEVER KNOW  
WHEN YOUR TIME ON THIS EARTH WILL RUN  
OUT

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