



September 2012 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

May grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:2a).

I was making last minute preparations for worship. It was a Sunday morning – 9:02 am. August 23rd, 2009.

I heard the motion detector buzzer ring and I knew someone had arrived for worship. His name was Kyle. He was visiting from Toronto he said and would only be in Edmonton for a few days. He was a Lutheran, born in Norway, moved to Canada when he was a child he said. Ascension was near where he was staying – and it was a Lutheran congregation. We visited for several minutes. He wandered into the sanctuary. I eventually joined him.

He was sitting at the edge of the pews – in the center aisle. And across the aisle another man was sitting – he and Kyle were talking – visiting. I approached, introduced myself – the second man's name was Glen. He was rough looking, dried blood caked his left hand – conversation began – I asked Glen if he had met Kyle. "No," Kyle said, "Glen was just sitting here when I came in." We talked some more – I learned more about Kyle – and about Glen. I excused myself after several minutes – a bit more to do before worship.

The stranger among us.

Just prior to worship Kyle re-entered the sanctuary – he had left the building for a few minutes – and he walked down the aisle to the altar – he looked up at the cross – he put his hand over his heart – he bowed respectfully – and he left.

My eyes filled with tears. The stranger among us.

Glen had made his way over to the choir loft – near to the piano. He visited with that morning's chief musician who was leading our congregational song. He worshipped from the choir loft. The pianist provided him with a bulletin – I found a hymnbook, opened it to the hymn and shared the hymnbook with him.

And during the gathering of the tithes and offerings while I stood facing the altar – I could hear Glen's pocket jingle with coins as he reached in to gather all that he had – I suspect – and he placed his offering in the basket.

My eyes filled with tears. The stranger among us.

God teaching me – humbling me – through Kyle’s respectful presence. God teaching me – humbling me – through Glen’s generous giving.

I worshipped with heartfelt thanks August 23. The stranger indeed – brothers in Christ: Kyle, Glen – and Larry.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,
Larry

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