
COUNTRYSIDE NEWS

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Calvary, Barnum; Faith, Harcourt; Fulton, Roelyn; Trinity, Boxholm; UCC/Congregational, Moorland; Zion, Gowrie

WE ARE ON THE WEB

A few months ago, I asked my son Tyler to help me with a project for the churches and the two of us have finally decided it was time to let everyone in on it.

Zion Lutheran Church had a website that Chris Knudson started a few years back, but it was in dire need of an update. Tyler, being the computer wiz in the family,



was recruited to help me design a website for the

Countryside Cooperative with a link and website for each of the six churches.

After months of E-mails back and forth, calls to various members of each of the churches for information, and input from Pastor Jim and Rod, we finally have a site with enough information to launch its address to our members.

If you take a look at the site (www.wccta.net/gallery/coop/) you will find a link to each of the six churches on the right side and links to various parts of the

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Countryside Cooperative Ministry Council

Byron Chalstrom, UCC/Cong.
Loretta Daisy, Fulton
Scott Engquist, Faith
Larry Fatka, Trinity
Marc Greenfield, Faith
Steve Julius, Calvary
Larry Krakau, Trinity
Steve Lane, Zion
Shannon Miller, Zion
Ned Palmer, Zion
Richard Silvey, UCC/Cong.
Everett Underwood, Fulton
Ron Walrod, Calvary

Countryside Cooperative Ministry Executive Committee

Byron Chalstrom, President
Larry Fatka, Vice-president
Loretta Daisy, Secretary
Steve Lane, Treasurer
Rev. Jim Davis, Administrative Pastor

HAPPY NEW YEAR

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? – Isaiah 43:19

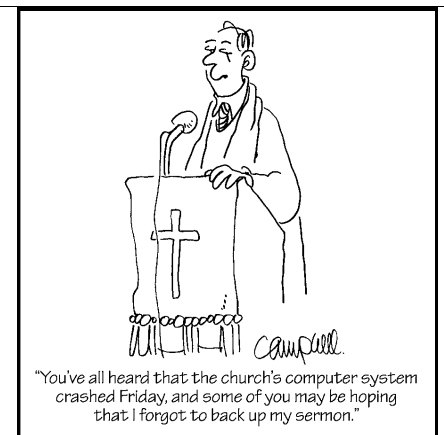
The people to whom Isaiah proclaimed God's word were living in a time of darkness and despair. Their nation had been destroyed. Those fortunate to survive lived under an oppressive Babylonian regime. Families had been torn apart. There was little hope for an end to their suffering.

Yet, in spite of their suffering and despair, Isaiah had faith that

God was with them and was doing a new thing. Isaiah believed that changes were occurring that would lead to a future filled with hope for his people. In the midst of their darkness and despair, Isaiah spoke a word of hope and invited God's people to open their eyes to a new thing that God was doing. Isaiah offered people the excitement and hope that comes from knowing that God is doing something new in our lives.

The passing of another year

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Website

Countryside Cooperative on the left. On the church sites you will find a brief history as well as a picture of the church on the main page. There are links to the Cooperative churches on the right side and links to the various attributes of each church on the left.

The four Lutheran churches have links to the ELCA and Thrivent under "Resources." Calvary has a link to the PCUSA and United Congregational has a link to the UCC.

One area to look at is the **Pastoral Web Log** link. This is where staff members may post information that may be of interest to church members and/or anyone looking for a new church to attend.

Please remember that this is an ongoing project and there are still many things to be added.

For example, we would like to add pictures from each of the churches so if you have some you would like to include, please stop by the Cooperative Office and I will scan them into the computer.

Tyler's goal is to have me trained to take over the input and building of the site very soon. Until then I will rely on his expertise in this area.

—Cheryl Rasmussen
Cooperative Secretary

(Any feedback for the site or additional information to be included should be directed to the Cooperative Office.)



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Happy New Year

affords us the opportunity to say good-bye to the year that lies behind and to dream about the new things that God will do in our lives in the coming year.

I have a sense that God has many new things in store for us this coming year. Even now, I can see new things that God is doing in our lives and the lives of our congregations – take a look at *God Sightings* in this newsletter for just a few examples. Can you sense the excitement and hope that comes from knowing that God is doing something new in our lives? Can you perceive the new things God is doing?

—Pastor Jim

*Any time is the right time
to let someone know
how much you care.*

STEPHEN MINISTRY



From the Cooperative Stephen Ministry

Anniversaries are usually times of great happiness, times when we celebrate with family and friends such joyous occasions as weddings, birthdays, or other significant personal or professional milestones. But then there are other kinds of anniversaries as well, ones that commemorate days or events that we may not be as eager to remember, such as: marking the anniversary of the loss of a loved one. As you can

imagine, anniversary dates celebrated by you and your loved one, which had been just another date on the calendar, will now have a painful significance.

What can be even more difficult, however, are those days that have always marked for you the special occasions in your life such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas. We all just experienced the Christmas season; to some the date may have been one of the worst. Learning to find the joy in these times and celebrate them despite the physical absence of our loved one is one of the most difficult things we may ever have to do. Some of us may be fortunate to have been blessed

with family and friends who will understand our mixed emotions on these days and who will help us find ways to live with the tension between our need to grieve and remember, and the knowledge that we all must move on in faith and hope.

Some of your care receivers will undoubtedly experience similar anniversaries--and similar emotions--in the coming months. Whether those anniversaries mark the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, the ending of a marriage, the day of a dreadful medical diagnosis, or some other life-altering event, there are a number of things you can do to help. Here are a few suggestions:

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Apprenticed early into leadership in their church

ap-pren-tice 1 b: one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers; a trade, art, or calling. – *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*

One of the first people in the church to whom I was an apprentice was Sharon Vought. Sharon is Gary Vought's mother and Ryan, Ashley and Nicole's grandma. I don't know if Sharon ever realized that I was her apprentice; nevertheless, I was.

My apprenticeship with Sharon began when she taught my

friends and me in Sunday School and Bible School. While I don't remember exactly what she taught us in terms of Bible stories or catechism – which probably has more to do with my failure to pay attention than with the quality of her teaching – I do remember learning a great deal from her.

I learned about the value of a warm, caring smile. Sharon had a smile that flashed freely and still does. That doesn't mean she smiled all the time. There were those times when her glare served as a warning of impending doom if an inappropriate behavior did not stop; however, it was always followed by a smile that let you know, in spite of mo-

It was always followed by a smile that let you know, in spite of momentarily incurring her wrath, you were still loved and cherished.

mentarily incurring her wrath, you were still loved and cherished.

I learned about the importance of allowing kids the freedom to be who they are. Sharon had boundaries, but it seemed she tried to draw them wide enough to allow us the freedom to be who we were. I remember Sharon letting us – boys – be loud, run, climb and all those other activities boys are wont

to do. There were also times when we needed to sit – much to our disdain –

but it seemed she understood us and allowed us to be who we were.

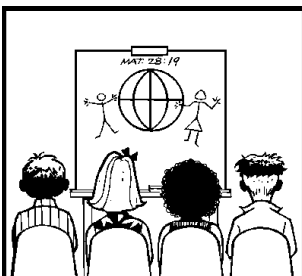
I learned that rare balance between being firm, yet caring. We all knew that you didn't mess around with Sharon. Although she

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RURAL MINISTRY LEARNING LAB

In January we will be hosting several students from seminary who will be looking into our Rural Cooperative Ministry. The title of the course is "Cooperative Congregations: A Directed Reading and Research Lab." The seminarians will receive three credit hours for this work. The objectives of this course are:

1. To become familiar with the process by which cooperative parishes are established.



2. To think about the

procedures which enable cooperative parishes to do mission in community.

3. To think about the mission of the church, and how the mission of the church can sometimes be most effectively carried out through structures that are non-traditional.

I will be setting up interviews for them with various business leaders, law enforcement officials, health care providers, farmers, and just ordinary people. I may be asking members of our various churches to pick one of them up on Sunday and take them to their church service and after-

wards provide dinner for them.

We hope this will open the door for more pastors to consider serving rural churches, thus enabling more of our rural churches to continue doing ministry.

—Gene Thoma
Coordinator

NEED A VISIT?

If you or anyone you know could use a pastoral visit, please contact the Cooperative office at 352-3645 so a visit can be scheduled.



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The Pastor's Pen

allowed us a great deal of freedom, when she spoke in that certain tone of voice, you knew you had better listen. When she said work, you worked. When it was time to play, you played.

My apprenticeship with Sharon continued as she invited others and me to help with Bible School as we grew older. We started as helpers and eventually, after a number of years as helpers, became teachers. Sharon provided us with guidance, but also allowed us the freedom to find our own way. She was patient and forgiving when we made mistakes. She was there to listen and offer encouragement when we struggled with a challenging student. In spite of our youth and immaturity, she invited us to participate as leaders in our congrega-

tion.

I was fortunate to be invited to participate in many areas of congregational leadership in my home congregation. These opportunities not only helped me to discern my gifts and how God was calling me to use them, but they also gave me a greater sense of ownership in the ministry of all God's people.

I am thankful for Sharon and others like her who helped me learn what God was calling me to do by allowing me to gain practical experience under their care. They have made me the person I am today.

Bringing It Home

- ◆ Who has helped you learn what God was calling you to do by allowing you to gain practical experience under their care?

Offer a prayer of thanks for them.

- ◆ Who is God calling you to invite into positions of leadership in order that they might gain practical experience under your care?

Pray that you might be faithful in inviting and caring for them.

Oh, by the way, Sharon probably doesn't realize it, but I am still learning from her what it means to be a parent and a child of God.

—Pastor Jim

Apprenticed early into leadership in their church is the fourth of eight "Faith Factors" that will be the focus of this column for the next several months.

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Stephen Ministry

- ◆ **Be there** for your care receiver. There may be no more helpful thing you can do than to offer your comforting presence to someone who is hurting. You may not be able to ease the pain that is felt, but the fact that someone cared enough to *be* there when they are hurting will mean a great deal.
- ◆ **Be aware** of how truly painful such times can be, but don't ignore an occasion or avoid speaking about it. Be sensitive to the needs of your care receiver--if he or she needs more attention during

these times, be prepared to offer it. Let him or her talk as much or as little as necessary.

- ◆ **Pray with your care receiver** if he or she is open to your doing so, but certainly **pray for him or her** as part of your daily ministry of caring.

As we begin this New Year, I pray that you will be aware of the anniversaries in your own life and in the lives of those around you. Celebrate them with joy and with thanksgiving when appropriate. And on those other occasions--the difficult, less happy ones--remember that you have been called to share the hope of Christ, who has promised to be with us always.

May his love enrich and empower you in your caregiving.

Cindy Youngquist,
Countryside Cooperative's
Stephen Ministry Leader

"Bear one another's burdens...and so fulfill the law of Christ."

GALATIANS 6:2



IMMERSION SERVICE

Ringling bells, cold noses and toes, and hundreds of "Merry Christmases" were all part of the recent **IMMERSION** experience.

Fourteen youth and four adults donated approximately 80 hours of time to the Salvation Army in Fort Dodge. The experience was intended to help the youth better understand what Salvation Army is and does, to support their ministry, and to reach out and serve others.

The morning was spent learning about Salvation Army and working at their site. Activities included organizing the food pantry, bagging food, preparing and sorting gifts for needy children for Christmas, vacuuming, and other assorted jobs.

The afternoon was spent

ringling bells. The youth were located at WalMart, Fareway, Drug Town, and Walgreens. The youth at Drug Town had the best site because they were able to enjoy free hot chocolate and popcorn all afternoon, compliments of Earl May. The kids did an excellent job!

Thank you to the adults who accompanied our youth: Tammy Baade, Jaime Loredó and Charlene Peterson. They made this experience possible by providing leadership and support.

IMMERSION is one component of our confirmation program. It is a monthly experience intended to broaden the participant's understanding of the church. Other current components include: **FUSION** and **HEAD TO HEART**.

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

Sunday, February 1, 2004 is Souper Bowl Sunday. You may ask what is Souper Bowl Sunday? Well, more than a decade ago a Super Bowl Sunday prayer inspired the young people of a single church to do something more than celebrate a football game. They created a legacy that would help others—The Souper Bowl of Caring.

Today this youth-led grassroots movement has become an international event. Since going nationwide in 1993, more than \$20 million has been raised for people in need.

But just as important as the money raised is the realization among youth that they can make a difference. Tens of thousands of young people in churches, schools, and organizations of all sorts have learned the true meaning of giving instead of receiving. Being part of something that is reaching around the world makes their spirits soar.

Catch the spirit of caring and share your caring spirit with thousands of others across the world. Every dollar dropped in a soup pot on February 1st helps people in need feel the power of God's love. That's something to cheer about!!!!

To find out more about Souper Bowl Sunday visit their website at www.souperbowl.org.



COOPERATIVE YOUTH NEWS

We are so proud of these kids! Brandi Carlson, Shanda Carlson, Emma Davis, Brie McGuire, Rex Miller, Karlie Warehime, and Taylor Warehime all gave of their time and spent the Friday after Thanksgiving baking cookies and making posters to raise money to buy Christmas gifts for some of the less fortunate kids in our area. We ended up making over 40 dozen cookies! The following Sunday we went to all six Cooperative churches to sell our goodies. We were able to raise \$431.00 to buy presents for 22 kids. These gifts were sent along with the Christmas Baskets to the families in our area from Combat Hunger of Webster Co.

Special thanks to Thomas Engquist for selling the goodies at Faith and to Heidi, Ashley, and Michelle Blair for giving us a great start by making over 100 cookies for us to sell. Also, thanks to Christi Carlson and Rod and Shelly Warehime for helping out with the baking, the mess, and selling the goodies at all six churches.

Combat Hunger of Webster Co. also deserves a thank you for their donation to our project.

These kids were great and worked very hard on this project. Thanks for everyone's support!

—Shannon & Beth Miller
Countryside Cooperative
Youth Coordinators



OUT- SIDE, LOOK- ING IN

Every morning, we have a convention on our bed. The coffee pot goes off automatically at six. Channel Eight news comes on about ninety seconds later. It takes about fifteen minutes for Cheryl and me to open our eyes. And then, the animals start to converge.

Cinder, the Border Collie, is first. After a long night of not licking anyone, she is well into her withdrawal phase, and she comes wagging and drooling. This usually precedes the end of our fifteen minute wake-up process, so it must be pretty frustrating for her. I can move away from Cinder's tongue while still getting REM sleep – instinctively anticipating her next move, and using pillows and the comforter as bunkers

and trenches to avoid, if only for awhile, the Dripping Tongue of Fate. But eventually, Cinder will get you. She will get her morning fix, and then will lie there quietly, if you will just scratch her ears. I can do this, too, instinctively, while still sleeping. (Ask me another time about my theory about dog drool causing male pattern baldness...)

Ashes, the Dalmatian, is next. There is NOTHING subtle about Ashes.

The world is her runway, and she refuses to walk around ANYTHING. I have paw-shaped bruises all over me, all the time. Ashes needs ten minutes of intensive personal attention first thing in the morning, after which she is content to curl up under Cheryl's supplemental afghan and catch another little nap. This nap evidently gives her the energy to pursue a full day of activity, moving

from room to room, catching other naps.

Flicker the cat comes around next. Flicker has some intense issues about being a cat, in-so-much as he would rather be a dog. He competes with the dogs for food, attention, toys, control, and morning bed space. And he does pretty well. Flicker arranges himself in the center of the bed – if

“It is not good for man to be alone.”

everyone else will just rearrange themselves around him, life will be good. If they don't

choose to, well, Flicker ain't moving anyway, so we all might just as well rearrange ourselves... Our morning gathering is complete, with two exceptions.

The first is, of course, Tony. You don't see Tony in the mornings. He has evidently arranged to be beamed directly from his bed into his car, and he is gone. It's just as well that he doesn't try to join the Master Bedroom Morning Convention. There's not a lot of extra space, so Flicker would just have to maul him & carry him off to some corner to die. Besides, Tony is to morning what fish are to bicycles.

The other exception is another cat – Smuj – who lives on the fringe of our household's existence. Smuj really doesn't participate in any of our daily realities. Smuj is independent with a capital INDEPE! As long as there is food in her dish, she has no real need for the rest of us. It's like having another teenager in the house, except Smuj doesn't suffer from the delusion that Cheryl & I are ATMs. Smuj spends her days being ALOOF – she has turned ALOOF into an art form.

Except sometimes, you will see her in the hallway in the morning, watching, all aloof-like, while all the other animals are draped across the bed – and you think, “*Maybe she'd like to join us.*” Some part of her must call out for companionship – for

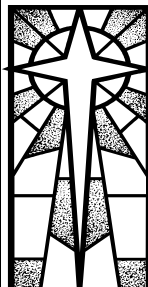
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GOD SIGHTINGS

God Sightings is a collection of people, places and experiences that have provided people with an experience of the power of God at work in their lives. We invite members of the Cooperative to submit their *God Sightings* in order to help all of us be aware of the wonderful things God is doing in our lives.

- “I love you so much you can't believe it.” written by ten a year old boy on the wall of the shower stall.
- Fourteen 7th and 8th grade youth ringing bells for the Salvation Army.
- A young couple donating tremendous amounts of time and energy to touch the lives of youth and young adults through *FUSION*.

- People packing boxes of food and delivering them to people in our communities.
- A pile of coats and food at the *FUSION* site.
- 5th and 6th grade students baking and selling baked goods to buy gifts for local children.
- Youth and adults bringing joy to others by caroling on a cold winter night.
- Circles of children and adults eager to receive the gifts of bread and wine.



**HAVE YOU
SEEN GOD
LATELY?
TELL ME
ABOUT IT!**

LEGACY



Remember and rekindle our legacy from God, our holy calling.

Tears and Joy

Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

(2 Timothy 1:4)

It may sound strange at first, but remembering Timothy's fears and struggles, Paul can only imagine being filled with joy at seeing his partner in ministry again.

Paul was in prison. Seeing

any friend would be wonderful. Paul needed to receive the gift of Christian friendship and support. He knew that to strategize about mission and encourage another in faithful service is joyful work.

Paul knew what so many other Christians have learned. Even through tears, God can be present for healing and transformation. Christian service and ministry can come with both the greatest costs and the greatest rewards. Life and faith are not things to run away from but to embrace, share, and preserve as a legacy of joy for others.

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Associate Pastor

the camaraderie that the Master Bedroom Morning Convention offers. So I will call her, but she never succumbs. She never gives in. If she is not content, she is at least resolved to play out her role, all alone.

I see people who play that same role. They stand outside, looking in. But looking in is as close to in as they are ever going to get. They are resolute about being apart, even in a crowd. And it is tragic that often these people are resolved to be alone, even as they are being called to be a parent, or child, or sibling, or friend. Or a disciple. Or a servant. They hide in offices or in a blinding flurry of activity. They hide behind newspapers or computer screens or a secretary. They hide among the scribbles on a calendar. Sometimes they hide in a glass or bottle.

One of the greatest divine

truths is one that is revealed early on in the story of humanity. "It is not good for man to be alone." That solitude is never more stark or sad than during the holidays.

Edwin Markham once wrote a little poem, called *OUTWITTED*. It says,

"He drew a circle that shut me out
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But
love and I had the wit to win
We drew a circle that took him in."

Love – the Love encased in a tiny baby born some 20 centuries ago – and you and I still have the wit to win. The Gift of Christ is still the circle that takes in the outcast and the lonely – already they live in the tender arch of God's grace and care. And you and I – we get to tell them. We get to call them.

It's the only Christmas gift that

ever mated.
Share it.



—Rod

BURNING OF THE GREENS

We will be having a Burning of the Greens service on January 4th at 5:00 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Gowrie.

We invite members of the Cooperative Ministry to bring Christmas trees and greenery to the parking lot for a bonfire and service that commemorates the end of Christmas and the beginning of Epiphany.

The service is short (15 minutes) and we will be having a potluck following the service in the church basement.



Potluck
Dinner

Join us for an interesting worship opportunity, good food, and fellowship.

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

Want a great way to spend New Year's Eve?

Join us for *FUSION* at 7:30 p.m. and then plan on staying for a New Year's Eve party to be held at Zion. The party will be a fun way to welcome in the new year.

Come as you are and stay as long as you like. We ask that everyone bring some type of snack to share. Cider, coffee, hot chocolate and kool-aid will be provided. If you would like something else, you are welcome to bring your own. Cards and games are also welcome. There will be a t.v. and vcr set up in a room for kids who want to watch videos.

Everyone is welcome! Join us for a fun time.

Countryside Cooperative Ministry
Box 63
Gowrie, IA 50543

Cooperative Phone Numbers:

Cooperative Office		352-3645
Rev. Jim Davis	Office	352-3932
	Home	352-5261
Rod Meyer	Office	846-6277
	Home	354-5224
Rev. Wahlgren	Office	352-3645
	Home	352-5245
Stephen Ministry	Office	352-3612
	Home	352-3798

Cooperative E-mail Addresses:

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Rev. Jim Davis:	elca506@wccta.net
Rod Meyer:	rodmeyer@lvcta.com
Stephen Ministry:	stephencoop@hotmail.com

Cooperative Worship Times

Calvary, Barnum	10:30 a.m.
Faith, Harcourt	9:00 a.m.
Fulton, Roelyn	9:15 a.m.
Trinity, Boxholm	10:30 a.m.
UCC/Cong., Moorland	8:00 a.m.
Zion, Gowrie	10:30 a.m.
1st and 3rd Saturdays	5:00 p.m.
FUSION Wednesday Evenings	7:30 p.m.

(at 1107 Market Street)



If you have an article or pictures that you would like to submit for the Cooperative newsletter, please send them to the Cooperative office and we will try to put them in as time and space permit.

Website Address: www.wccta.net/gallery/coop/