



The Branches

Volume 1 ■ Number 2
October 2004 ■ Fall issue

As The Branches, We Are Never Alone!

This issue’s theme is: “Favorite Bible Verses and Characters.” To kick it off, I would like to share one of my own favorite passages. It is 2 Kings 6:15-17. “And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

At times, we may feel that we are alone in the faith or alone in other ways. God reminds us that even when our family of faith seems distant, when we feel we have no help or comfort or strength, He provides His for us. We see that God’s help is not simply adequate, but overwhelming; Elisha’s servant surely thought they were alone and outnumbered! If only our physical eyes could see the help we are given each day. This help comes not only during the times that we know we are in danger, but comes whether we ask or not. The petition, “Deliver us from evil,” pops to mind. How often I have prayed that petition without knowing what exactly I really needed.

As this issue came together, as subscriptions and articles came pouring in, I was reminded yet again that God also provides for us through each other. I hope you enjoy meeting each new “branch” as you read through these pages—I certainly have! I am greatly encouraged to know there are so many like-minded women in this world, that though the fight may become difficult and lonely, God reminds us all as he reminded Elijah, “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal” (1 Kings 19:18a). I simply need to open my eyes to see the support God has provided!

Enough from me – the best is yet to come!

—Abby Matzke, St. Peter’s, Stambaugh, MI

***“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.”***

—Psalm 92:12-13

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News & Notes

What A Picnic!

Ninety-five CLC women from across the country attended the June 23rd Women's Luncheon at Messiah in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The theme this year was "Jesus' Return: A Family Reunion." Marie Meyer presided as emcee. In keeping with the family reunion theme, a picnic-style lunch was served. Fried chicken, potato salad, melon, refreshments, and much more graced the tables and satisfied appetites. Profiles of other CLC ladies' groups, marigolds, and plastic ants marching along the tables only added to the décor.

Kicking off the fellowship festivities was the Ladies' Choir singing "Take My Life and Let it Be." The blend of female voices of all ages and walks created a beautiful and memorable song. Grace Schreyer presented a slide show and history of Immanuel Lutheran school and college titled, "The Old Homestead." From the humble beginnings in Mankato to the school's present-day setting, Grace intrigued all with her presentation. Adelgunde Schaller then read from a 1963 *Lance*, and murmurs of remembrance echoed among the women.

Reverend David Koenig presented a request from our sisters in the Congo (see p. 5). Grace Schreyer, Erma Tiefel, and Gert Stavenau each presented "recipes." Grace took on "Recipes and Games." Erma served the women with a "Recipe for Cooking a Husband." Her advice was to first select him yourself, then to handle with care, love, neatness, and cheerfulness. "One of Life's Recipes for Preserving Children" was Gert's special of the day.

After joining together in the hymn "I'm but a Stranger Here," Grace Schreyer's presentation closed and the luncheon concluded with the prayer: "Abide, O faithful Savior, among us with Thy love; grant steadfastness and help us to reach our home above" (TLH 53:6).

Let us not forget that the business manager of *The Branches*, Tina Eichstadt, was hard at work throughout the luncheon and convention week distributing 1,000 copies of our first issue. Our thanks goes out to Tina for all of her hard work and organizational skills! Also, thank you to all of the pastors, delegates, and ladies who made the first distribution a success!

—Abby Matzke, Reporter

Grace Table Prayer

This was the table grace used at this past Ladies' Luncheon in Eau Claire. It was sung to the tune of Edelweiss.

(Author Unknown.)

**Bless our friends,
bless our food,**

**Come, O Lord,
and sit with us.**

**Make our talk
slow with peace,**

**Come with Your love
and surround us.**

**Friendship and peace,
may they bloom and grow,**

Bloom and grow forever.

**Bless our friends,
bless our food,**

**Bless our homeland forever!
Amen.**

News & Notes

CLC Women's Retreat

April 1-3, 2005 Trego, Wisconsin.

Mark your calendars to attend! Here's what others had to say: "An uplifting experience—I'm happy that I came." "Restoring, relaxing, and stimulating at the same time. Inspirational and filled with wonderful Christian fellowship." "It helped me to focus on the really important things." "This was my fifth year and I will be back next year!" "It was so wonderful to learn so much and meet all of these women—you can bet I won't miss it next year!"

Jael: Treacherous or God Pleasing?

A look at Judges 4-5

Do you remember Deborah, the judge? After Israel settled in the Promised Land, they failed to follow God's command to eliminate the enemy completely from the land. This led to intermarriage and idolatry. Everyone did "what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). God raised up a series of judges who delivered His people, and for a time, there would be peace. Deborah was one of these judges.



However, the main character of this story is not Deborah, but Jael who lived during the time of Deborah. Deborah told Barak that it was time for the men of Israel to fight against Sisera and his troops and God would deliver the troops into their hands.



Barak refused to go into battle unless Deborah went also. She not only prophesied for the Lord, but her faith was such that she agreed to go. Her final prophecy was that the commander, Sisera, would be sold into the hand of a woman. Barak, Deborah, and ten thousand men went to battle, and the enemy was killed, except for Sisera who fled on foot.



Here enters our heroine, Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, who was a political ally of Sisera's king. Sisera, the runaway commander, fled to Jael's tent.

Sisera asked for water. She gave him milk. This should have been his first clue. Then she hid him under a blanket. He felt convinced of his safety for men were never allowed in a woman's tent. Then Sisera asked her to lie for him. "Stand at the door, and if any man comes and inquires of you and says, 'Is there a man here?' you shall say, 'No!'"

Some might say Jael's next actions came as a result of chaffing at being told what to do. Some might say she didn't share the same political convictions as her husband, and she acted on them. Others might say she acted out of fear. The author of "Everyone in the Bible" calls her "brave, but treacherous." Whatever the case, Deborah later praised Jael for following the will of God.

While Sisera was sleeping, Jael took a tent peg and hammer and drove the peg completely through Sisera's head and into the ground. "So he died," the Bible says. Thus she fulfilled Deborah's prophecy—the Lord sold Sisera into the hand of a woman.

No doubt Jael had muscles, as the women were in charge of moving and setting up the tents, but God provided extra strength to help her defeat this enemy of Israel. I would have loved to be a mouse in the corner to hear her explanation when her husband came home!

Deborah composed a song which was sung by Deborah and Barak. It praised God and described the battle. Near the end of the song is where our heroine is mentioned.

"Most blessed among women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents. He asked for water; she gave milk; She brought out cream in a lordly bowl. She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen's hammer; She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, she split and struck through his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead"(Judges 5:24-27).

Perhaps when we feel weak and helpless, we can remember Jael, who trusted God and believed that through God all things are possible. The last verse of Deborah's song rings: "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength" (5:31). Let us use our strengths to serve Him.

—Nancy Hansen, *Prince of Peace, Hecla, SD*

Women of Faith

The Tie Lady

The routine of “being on the road” has spanned almost 39 years. Marriage brought a new job as a traveling tie sales lady. My title, “the tie lady,” has echoed more than my given name in many commercial establishments. Only a week ago in my presentation of the tie arrangement and agreement, the owner said, “Oh! So you’re the tie lady!”

In the first customer contact, I show complete trust. There aren’t any written contracts—only a handshake or a nod of agreement. “He shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth” (Numbers 30:2). A rack of ties is left with each customer. Counting the ties, both coming in and leaving, is the Best Honest Business Practice. Through a six-week span, a customer is given new ties for the display rack. His or her office card is reviewed before each visit. Notes are made on each card, including special requests, the best time to come, the traveling directions, and some personal information.

Each day starts with a wake-up prayer. “This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24). No matter what the day brings, each task is dutifully executed. Each customer is viewed as an opportunity for me to be a caring Christian. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col 3:17).

The ties made their presence in many unusual places. The ties have been purchased by stage wardrobe assistants, politicians, celebrities, undertakers, and choral groups as well as wedding parties, school officials, medical personnel, real estate officers, and security personnel. Our pastors also have been known to wear our ties. Several dozen are placed in the hands of science teachers, friends, relatives, and bazaar buyers. Eventually all the ties are disposed of by fund-raisers, recycling projects, and discounted sales. One interesting recycling project involved making a snake out of the entire tie. Other projects include clothes, toys, household items, and Christmas decorations. I’m looking at unsold ties differently!

—Louise Coutre, Ascension, Batavia, IL

Multi-Tasking

My husband Ray and I have five children: Andrew 13, Katie 9, Kelly Jo 5, Krista 3, and Justin 1. I started writing encouragements about 2 years ago, and I email them to about 25 friends and relatives. I write whenever I feel led to a particular Scripture or topic and about how it has spoken to me. I feel incredibly blessed to have this opportunity to share one with you!

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”
— Acts 20:24

I was multi-tasking this morning. You know, feeding the baby while brushing one of the girl’s hair while cooking breakfast while answering my three year old’s questions! I actually spend a great deal of time racing around doing my “tasks.” I put a lot of stress on myself to get things done—things that I consider to be important. As I was reading this Scripture, I was reminded to spend my time on the things that the Lord has put before me to accomplish. I’m not saying that house work and keeping the home nice is not important. It’s just that I fret about such trivial matters, and yet spend minimal time on the very large responsibility I’ve been given.

There is a plaque that reads, “I was put here on this earth to do a certain number of tasks, and I am so far behind now that I will never die!” It still makes me giggle! Unfortunately, I only have a limited amount of time and I believe that at times I am spending my time on the wrong tasks. I first need to become better at prioritizing what it is that He has for me. I know that raising my children in Him is top priority. I need to train them to be arrows for His army in this world. If I have a clean house, that is fine, but not eternal. If I raise Christian children who know that Christ is their Savior, that is eternal. If I think about how far reaching that can be—my children raise their children as Christians, and they raise their children as Christians, and so on...pretty awesome.

My prayer today is that the Lord will keep me focused on the tasks He has for me to do and not be so burdened with those that only slow my progress as a Christian. God bless you all!

—Julie Schopp, St. Luke’s, Lemmon, SD

Assisting Our Sisters

Needs of Our Sisters in Katanga

Last October, I met with 45 ladies of the Katanga province in the Congo who are members of our sister church. They want to have contact with CLC ladies to learn about you and ask for help. They want to learn what CLC women do in connection with the Lord's work. I eliminated a variety of their requests—some were beyond our ability. The following is a list of the areas in which the CLC ladies could consider assisting.

Nursery Work: This could conceivably be undertaken by the Congo ladies, but requires rented building space, which can be had in Lubumbashi. This is an area in which we have to be careful in not offering funding for salaries, even though that would be kind. Instead, perhaps a lump sum could be given yearly to assist in the care of children in need. There is no question that the needs of the children in Congo are great.

Evangelistic Work: The Congo ladies did stress that they were interested in doing outreach—even by taking literature door-to-door. If only there were such a zeal everywhere among us! Part of this project would mean printing or buying material to distribute.

Visitation of the Elderly: The ladies already visit the aged in a once-a-month effort. In this we could help more. Of course, the words of comfort spoken to the aged are of utmost importance, but there could be physical assistance given also. Remember that in Congo there is no Social Security, no safety net to speak of. The CLC ladies could help with transportation costs for these visits.

Bible Distribution: This is potentially an easy goal to reach. The ladies at the June luncheon gathered an offering of \$326 for Bibles. I will give this to the Congo ladies when I return there this coming November.

Teaching the Women English and Other Subjects: Remember that women in the Congo are often illiterate. It is not just English or other native languages they need to learn, but simple jobs that could provide an income.

Clothing, Shoes, Sheets, etc.: There is no question that the ladies have needs in these material areas. The question is how to best help, whether to send money or materials from the USA. This I can investigate if our women are interested.

This entire endeavor is an outpouring of love. It is a specific call from these ladies to the ladies of the CLC. At the very least, our women can begin by praying for these women. Who knows—there may even be hardy souls among our women who would be willing to travel to the Congo! May God bless your prayer and consideration of this matter. I would be glad to help in any way to supply more information. I will be in Congo, God-willing, around November 16th for about 10 days.

In love of Him,

Pastor Dave Koenig, Foreign Missionary

**For more information, please contact
Lynette Roehl at lynette.roehl@ilc.edu.**



A Look Ahead

Themes for *The Branches* 2004-2005

"A Few of My Favorite Things"

Themes for the next two issues are:

- January 2005: reflect upon your favorite hymns and songs, and explain the reasons or story behind why each one is your favorite. Submissions are due November 19, 2004.
- April 2005: reflect upon your favorite memories and stories of your faith, and explain the reason behind why each is your favorite. Submissions are due February 18, 2005.

Send to:

Abby Matzke

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Monte: A Life of Love

It was 1961 when our fourth child was born, our boy. When Delilah left the hospital, he remained there to clear congestion from his lungs. Two days later, the obstetrician phoned and asked us to come to the hospital. There he said that tests indicated our Monte was a victim of Down's syndrome. He suggested Monte be institutionalized.

We were stunned. We went home in a daze, got our girls ready, and went to church. The worship service had begun. We left during the last hymn, not yet up to facing questions and sympathy. Our oldest, ten-year-old Becky, was in tears that her baby brother had not come home, and might not ever. Monte was baptized that afternoon at the hospital.

We received advice from well-meaning people saying we should give him up soon lest we become attached to him and not be able to give him up later without greater heartache. But the best advice came from the hospital's nursing supervisor who said, simply, "What this child needs is to be taken home and loved." She was so right.

When we moved to Middleton in 1966, some mothers in our new neighborhood believed it best that their children avoid contact with a child like Monte. They didn't know that Down's children are gentle and loving. There were times when "normal" little girls threw sand at him in the park because he was different. He would pick up his sand pile utensils and come home as Delilah had taught him to do when trouble arose.

Delilah was great in teaching and helping him practice his reading and math. She taught him personal hygiene. He was neat to a fault. He always made his bed. His clothes never lay on the floor. Whenever he left the bathroom, the hand towel lying on the counter was folded, even if Delilah or I left it unfolded in the dark of night. He sorted and folded laundry. He unloaded the dishwasher. He performed his jobs well and he welcomed them.

He loved books, especially illustrated histories of the Civil War and World War II. When the weekly TV guide arrived, he would pour over it to memorize what he would watch and when. He loved *Hogan's Heroes* and Colonel Klink. He would draw for hours at a time, mostly military subjects—trucks and trailers, tanks, submarines, and ships. He once drew a picture of his sister, Julie, with a baby in her stomach. It was circulated as an announcement of her pregnancy.

He could not learn to ride a bike. I attached a board on the frame behind the handlebars of my bike for him to sit on and we could go riding. Once, as I turned off the sidewalk to a path along the railroad tracks, some loose sand caught the front wheel. We fell to the ground. I laughed. He was incensed and scolded, "Duane, that wasn't one bit funny!"

Monte loved Sunday School and Bible stories. He went up through all the classes and remained in the one for the older students for years past their age. He had his own catechism instruction class and came to know his Savior with true love.

When he turned twenty-one, it was time for him to "graduate" from the special education program at the local school. There was a ceremony for him. As he walked into the classroom in red cap and gown, Pomp and Circumstance was played on a violin. The superintendent said a few words

(Continued on the next page)

Someone Cares

When folks seem insensitive
To your never-ending pain,
When no one wants to lend an ear
To all that again,
Remember, Someone cares
Who knows just how you feel,
Yes! Someone's always there
Who knows your pain is real!
Jesus can heal the broken heart,
The broken body, too.
Reach out and touch the Lord in prayer
By faith, He'll strengthen you!

—Kathy Kauno, Redemption, Lynnwood, WA

Kathy has recently experienced the death of her husband from early-onset Alzheimers. He was 61 years of age. She keeps this poem by her bedside and reads it often. She found it in her father's house following his death. The author is unknown. Kathy continues to forge through these difficult days by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Please keep her, and all who have suffered loss, in your prayers.

and Monte surprised him by putting his arm around his shoulders and giving him a big smile and a hug. After some training sessions about riding the local buses, Monte did a year of volunteer work at the University hospital. He was an attentive worker and was appreciated and loved. His "vocational competency" report carried comments like, "Watches and listens intently," "Skillfully uses a heat sealer," and "Asks for more work."

He was born with serious heart defects for which corrective surgery was not available for him. Even twenty years later, surgery was "contraindicated." A week before he was seventeen, his cardiologist estimated perhaps two more years of life. It could end "any day, any week, any month."

His first blackout occurred in church, his head nodding to one side. He had perhaps two dozen. In each, he would regain consciousness within 15 or 20 seconds. Monte was hospitalized four times in three years, the last for serious pneumonia with his congestive heart failure. After consultation, his doctors concluded nothing more could be done, that he should be taken home as he wanted, and we should prepare for his end to come soon. He lived two months more, with good weeks and bad. He left the house only once; it was to go to church. Then, one Saturday morning after his shower, he eased to the floor and was gone. It was three days after his 35th birthday.

Monte's last pastor, David Koenig, was a student of history and would give Monte his copies of *Military History* magazine to read. Monte would bug him for the latest copy on many a Sunday morning. Finally, the pastor gave Monte a subscription as a Christmas gift. It first arrived after Monte left the hospital for the last time. Then he was too sick to look at it. The funeral sermon was unique and precious with military history woven in and Monte referred to as a "Christian soldier."

Two years later, while she was working in our flowers, Delilah spoke across the fence to a woman with a small daughter. The woman had been Monte's age when they played in the park and both were small. She told of how she and others had ignored him, not including him in anything they did. She reported regretting her behavior of years before, and asked God to forgive her. Then she was sobbing. She said she had an eleven-year-old son who was retarded, the result of a blood clot at birth. She tries to impress upon others how important it is to include the less fortunate in activities. It was a touching experience for Delilah.

Monte's obituary had advised that undesignated memorials would benefit the CLCI orphanage at Nidubrolu in southern India. Their total reached \$2,300. Pastor Benjamin reported there reported the money was used to finance over half the cost of a second floor addition to one of the buildings at the orphanage. It was dedicated as the Brother Monte Will Riggert Memorial Prayer Hall.

To be continued in the January 2005 issue.

"If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."

Romans 14:8

—Duane Riggert, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI

Fruit of Faith

Concord grapes – is this my fruit that
grows upon my branch?
Rich with flavor, dark, mysterious,
Does it grow by chance?

The many uses of this fruit for drink or foods divine
Will be enhanced in flavor rich
From growth next to the Vine.

The sweetness of the juice within or
firmness of the seed
Depends upon its source of food
To fill its every need.

What is your source of food each day
that sweetens your desire,
And gives new strength to persevere
So others you inspire,

To share their gifts – their fruits of faith?
That food comes from within,
Provided by the 'Vine of Life'
That must be free from sin.

Our Savior is our source of food –
our strength, our rich supply.
When daily we search through His Word
Our fruits will multiply.

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN

Tips & Advice

Robert's Rules Revised...and Revised Again! Running a Ladies Meeting Decently and In Order

Question: *Our ladies' meetings sometimes need a little more guidance. What can we do?*

Most of us have never been taught Parliamentary Procedure or how to run a meeting using "Robert's Rules." Henry Robert put these goals and processes together back in 1876. Old and out of date, you say? Not any more than the phenomenon we call "the meeting." Here is a quick checklist for building an agenda according to the Rules:

- 1) Call to order. Make sure to check for a quorum so you can conduct business.
- 2) Minutes. These can be approved without an actual vote, unless there are edits.
- 3) Officers' Reports. These can be accepted as a group if no action is needed.
- 4) Special Committee Reports. These groups are usually formed for a specific purpose.
- 5) Special Orders. This includes topics specially designated for a particular meeting.
- 6) Unfinished Business. Take care of leftover or tabled topics from the prior meeting.
- 7) New Business. New topics are introduced at this time.
- 8) Announcements. The chairman may express any unofficial business here.
- 9) Adjournment.

A Time to Laugh...

The Source of Our Blessings

While our family was awaiting our pizza at Rocky Rococo's, our children were passing the time by wasting our quarters in the video games. Our son Alex, who was four years old at the time, came back to our booth and sat down.

"Dad, Jesus is with us all the time, isn't He?" Alex asked.

"Of course He is," my husband replied.

"Dad, is Jesus sitting here next to me?"

"Well, He's in heaven and He's here with us right now, so yes, Jesus is sitting with you."

"Dad, do you have any quarters for the video games?" he asked.

"Nope, I'm sorry. I gave them all to you," was the reply.

"Dad, does Jesus have a quarter?" Before we could answer, his sister came back to the booth and was about to sit down in her place. "Leah, don't sit there!" Alex cried. "You might sit on Jesus!"

—Beth Fleischer, Calvary, Marquette, MI

Easy, you say? But what about the details? While the purpose is to have a "fixed agenda," you're basically telling members what the plan is for the meeting and that you're respecting their time through your preparation as president or leader. Official meetings of groups should have an agenda distributed ahead of time.

After you prepare the agenda, you get to the meeting and stand before your members. What do you say? The agenda only gets you so far. How do you get through the meeting? Here are some common and "Robert-friendly" ways to take care of business.

- 1) Call to order. Chair: "The meeting will come to order."
- 2) Minutes. These can be or not be read aloud. Chair: "Are there any corrections? If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as read." If there are corrections, the Secretary makes them accordingly.

(Continued on next page)

Tips & Advice—Continued

3) Any type of business or action must be in the form of a motion. Member: "I move that we...(states the motion)." Chair, if no one responds immediately: "Is there a second?" Member: "Second." Chair: "The motion has been made and seconded to...(restates the motion for all to hear). Is there any discussion?" If there was no second, Chair says: "The motion has not been seconded," and the chair proceeds to the next item on the agenda.

The person who made the motion always has the right to speak first. Then the chair recognizes each member in the order that hands are raised. Usually, each person is given the opportunity to speak once before multiple turns are given. When discussion slows or stops, the chair asks: "Are we ready to call the question?" or "It looks like discussion is done. I believe it is time for the question." Then: "All in favor of... (restate the motion exactly) say 'aye.' All opposed say 'aye.' The motion has passed (or been defeated)."

4) New Business: After each item, Chair: "Is there any other new business?"

5) Adjournment: Chair: "A motion to adjourn would be in order." This motion must be made, seconded, and voted on. There is no discussion on a motion to adjourn.

Friendly amendments can be made only during discussion after a motion has been made and seconded. They must be approved by the member who made the original motion, not the chair. Motions should be positive statements: "We will" versus "We will not." You don't need to make a motion for something you won't do; motions are for action, not inaction. Motions should be written beforehand if in a submitted report, and they can always be revised.

Usually, discussion on any motion should be no more than 20-30 minutes. You may "table" a motion and take it up later, or you may postpone a motion indefinitely if the members choose. If a motion is tabled, you must move it back into discussion by saying, "I move to take from the table..." and then restate the motion, which then requires a second and a vote. You may move the action again and vote on it like a normal motion.

Even in Christian ladies' circles, there are times that we all become impassioned about what we desire or believe should happen. As chairs of the meeting, it is your job to gently but kindly keep order to the meeting. Everyone can be heard, but must play by the rules. You are free as the chair to state, "I'm sorry, but you are out of order," with much love if you need to refocus the group. The members are relying on your leadership...don't let them down!

A great resource that is simple, inexpensive, and nearly a must-have booklet for your officers is *The a-b-c's of Parliamentary Procedure* (2001 edition). It can be obtained from Channing L Bete Company, Inc., at www.channing-bete.com, or by calling (800) 628-7733.

—Tina Eichstadt, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

Delicious Dishes

Two great recipes of garden goodies.

Garden Pickles

5 cucumbers	1 c. green pepper
1 c. onions	1 c. sugar
1 c. vinegar	1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. mustard seed	

Put all ingredients in a jar and refrigerate.
They will be ready to eat in a couple of days.

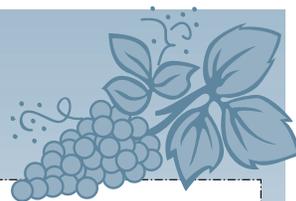
—Irma Leidholt, Redeemer, Bowdle, SD

Pumpkin Seeds

1 Tbsp. butter or margarine
1 1/4 tsp. salt
2 c. pumpkin seeds

Mix together and spread on a cookie sheet. Bake at 350° until crisp and brown. This is one favorite childhood snack that is still a tradition today!

—Michelle Fitzpatrick, St. Peter's,
Stambaugh, MI. From the St. Peter's
Lutheran Church's 2004 cookbook.



Letters to the Editor

Editor's Note: Articles have been requested which deal with management of grief and coping with loss. Please share any verses and hymns that were particularly helpful and comforting to you.

More requests have come in concerning new ideas for and projects of Ladies' groups. How does your ladies' group provide service within the congregation (i.e., banner making, caroling, etc.).

Another topic some are concerned about is manners—that long-lost art of how to conduct oneself! “Where have they gone?” is one question. Also: “What ever happened to writing thank-you notes?” Children should be taught how to behave appropriately, but often enough, parents themselves do not exhibit the best behavior for children. We want answers! Do we have an “etiquette expert” out there, or someone with basic knowledge and a few opinions?

Dear Editor:

Thank you for reviving the CLC women's newsletter. I am anxiously awaiting the first publication! I have a pen-pal request. My nine year old daughter would love to have a Christian pen pal, a girl of her age (8, 9, or 10). Snail mail—not e-mail. I really feel that kids need to write with paper and pencil!

Also, here is an idea others may want to try: Our family is on our second year of using the “Blessing Box” in our family devotions. (This is not my original idea. It came from a Family Fun magazine). Occasionally, during family devotion time, I hand out small pieces of paper with the day's date and give each person a pen. We each write down—or draw, if a child is too young to write—a particular blessing or something we're thankful for at that time. If necessary, label the drawings for your child. We don't read the papers right away. Instead, we fold them up and put them in the “Blessing Box.” On Thanksgiving Day that year, after the relatives have left, we open the “Blessing Box” and read through a year of family blessings! I'm really looking forward to it again this year!

Sincerely,
Vickie Schreyer, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

If anyone is interested in being a Pen-Pal, please contact Abby Matzke, Editor, for more information.

*“But let those who
love Him be like
the sun when it comes
out in full strength.”*

—Judges 5:31



Invitation

Looking for women of the faith to write articles for *The Branches*. Recipes, tips, news, announcements, reflections, stories, humor, prayer requests, opinions, and biographies are all welcome. Send to: Abby Matzke, P.O. Box 238, Stambaugh, MI 49964. Or email: abby_matzke@yahoo.com. Need more ideas or have any questions? Simply ask. *Writer's Guidelines* are available by request. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

Congregation & Location

A “postcard” glimpse of our family from...*St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Stambaugh, Michigan.*

I’ve lived in this area for over twenty years. I’ve seen the sights and met the people; I can even speak the local accent tolerably well. We have very snowy, long winters, and short, relatively cool summers. The autumns are beautiful—there is a color palette on the trees and ground worth driving hours to view. Sightseeing opportunities and outdoor activities abound in every season. From waterfalls, lighthouses, and shipwrecks to swimming, skiing, and hunting, there is always something to see or do. No big cities for us! The nearest large department store is 45 minutes away.

The scenery is great, but even better than the surrounding nature is this congregation. By God’s grace we are celebrating our 115th anniversary this Fall, with guest preachers and pot-lucks on various Sundays in October and November. Anyone may come and enjoy the worship and festivities! Our ladies are known for their culinary skills—just ask the VBS teaching and flier teams that come during the summertime and leave stuffed! I feel so blessed being able to enjoy this wonderful fellowship every week. Friendly, supportive, helpful, and most of all, faithful. These people welcome all visitors as true family—something that struck me from the start. Come visit us anytime, and meet more of your family of faith!

Please send in a “postcard” description of your own congregation—we’d love to hear from you!

The Birth of Jesus—A Cantata



A few years ago I went to a friend in search of music for Vacation Bible School. She gave me a mountain-sized stack and on a whim added a red Christmas book. After I chose music for Bible school I moved on to the red book. It contained three very different Christmas productions. The first claimed my heart the moment I played it. It spoke to my heart and filled me with joy. My husband and I both agreed that it would be a delightful way to present the Christmas Eve message to our congregation in Fond du Lac. Our church family had already given us great support in our children’s choir. We met with the pastor and the other teachers, revised some words in the music, and it became our Christmas Eve service that year.

That was 1998; let me continue from 2003. My sister and I had begun a Junior Choir at *Messiah*, Eau Claire, one school year after my family moved to the Immanuel Lutheran College. The choir members were very willing volunteers and the parents supportive. We rehearsed that first year and sang at services, but since *Messiah* has a Senior Choir and a School choir, we found that finding openings in the services was a challenge. The second year, we chose to practice the red book’s Christmas Cantata to present in early December, before the rush of the season. In the first week of October our practicing began.

My singers swallowed the music measure by measure. The words and melodies became theirs. The Cantata begins with a song that states the sinful world’s need of a Savior, continues with the Old Testament prophecies, and then turns to the Christmas story as laid out in Luke 2. It finishes with the fulfillment of God’s promise, and then assures us of the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus’ death on the cross. The singers learned 13 different melodies and 15 different sets of words. I didn’t require that the choir memorize the words, but I believe they did. The melodies led into many beautiful traditional carols for the congregation to sing. The entire Cantata took 30 to 45 minutes. Laurie Lau wrote complementary music that included her *Messiah* band members. Together with the piano, the instruments began the service and the singers introduced the first melody. All the months of practice finally came together.

But it seemed that there was “no room in the inn” for us! Our first number was supposed to use an “around sound” effect. Some members of the choir would line the side aisles while a row would be behind the last row of the congregation. On that day at *Messiah* there were no last empty pews! We had prepared the Cantata without expecting our church family to fill the church proper. It moved our hearts and it swept emotions through us that I cannot express. Since there was no “last pew,” we improvised. I don’t know exactly

(Continued on page 12)



P.O. Box 238
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*I am the Vine,
you are the branches. He
who abides in Me,
and I in him,
bears much fruit;
for without Me
you can do nothing.*

—John 15:5

The Birth of Jesus—A Cantata—Continued

where we stood, but when I turned to direct the members of the choir, they were very far from me!

While the last note lingered in the air, I turned to thank our family for joining us in our words of praise. I saw faces—many faces—with smiles and expressions that rewarded us for all the efforts we made. It was a moment to cherish. For months afterward, people expressed their thanks and appreciation for the choir's work.

The Birth of Jesus is online at
<http://my.execpc.com/~mlippert/>.
The book is entitled *Three in One*.

—Beth Kranz, Messiah, Eau Claire, WI



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All submissions should be sent to Abby Matzke. All subscription information should be sent to Tina Eichstadt.

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