

*Smoky Mountain Reflections*  
*September 2012*

A couple of weeks ago, the Scoutmaster of Troop 119 which meets here at St. Paul Lutheran Church sent me an e-mail. He was requesting the use of our Fellowship Hall for a scouting potluck on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August. This short notice request was unlike him. He knows I need time to ask the Council about such things. That should have been my first clue that something was afoot. I decided that since we had nothing planned for the 12<sup>th</sup>, I would just let the troop have their potluck and let the Council know at the meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

On a separate occasion, Pastor Dettmer offered to do the liturgy if I was ever feeling tired. He said later that I had a puzzled look on my face as I thanked him for the offer. I was puzzled....did I look tired? ...I did not feel tired. This was another clue that something was afoot.

On August the 12<sup>th</sup>, things got even stranger. As we were finishing up the Bible study between services, someone arrived with a pot of hot beans. As I started to put things together, I thought I may have to apologize after the service as we may have *two* potlucks scheduled for the same time in the same place!!! I was sure to come out of this with egg on my face and better break out my "I am sorry...it is all my fault speech" which I am embarrassed to say, I am very experienced at making.

As I was puzzling over this and making the pre-service announcements, all of my worries were about to come to an end. Our head elder, Dave Roberts, came forward and started making a speech that was making my head very big as he said all kinds of nice things about me. Then Pastor Dettmer entered all robed up and was ready to do the service liturgy, Then Pastor Derek Roberts from Praise Lutheran Church in Maryville entered, all robed up ready to preach. Then our head elder told me that in appreciation for my service and in recognition of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination, I was welcome to have a seat in the pew next to my beautiful wife and enjoy the service as a parishioner.

Not only was I very surprised, because they pulled this off very well and I was clueless, but now I was relieved that there was no potluck conflict following the service! All of these things had been coordinated; there was no Boy Scout potluck. The people I am blessed to serve decided to have a fellowship meal in gratitude for our time of service together. All involved did a very good job of fooling me! Thanks for the surprise.

It has been a great pleasure to serve as your Pastor these past five years, and if it be God's will, I look forward to many more years of service in this place. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to God for the opportunity to serve as your Pastor, and to you all for your kind cards and gifts in honor of this occasion.

In Christ,  
Pastor Portier