

*Smoky Mountain Reflections*  
*October 2008*

Who do we help & why? Barna research group called me last month to ask me questions about what priority we here at Saint Paul Lutheran Church put on serving those in poverty, both at home and abroad.

I was quiet happy to share with this pollster just how generous and loving our congregation is and who we help because we are free to do so as blessed children of God seeking to serve others for Him. We are very fortunate, and in response to God's great blessings we have committed over 12% of our budget to help others outside our congregation. This does not account for all the personal acts of kindness and generosity this small congregation of 154 souls does in response to needs around them and the benefit to our community through congregational activities. Our motivation to do these things is not for recognition or even just because it makes us feel good. Those are just pleasant side affects of being generous stewards of what God has blessed us with the opportunity to manage. Our motivation is to do what God calls us to do, care for and love those in need around us and be Christ instrument in our community and the world.

I would like to take a moment to brag if I may about the love and generosity of the people God has called me to be the shepherd of. What follows is a brief summary of all the great things God has blessed us with the opportunity to do; locally, regionally, nationally, and throughout the world. It is truly exciting to see God work in the lives of His people, sharing the love of Christ as they care for the needs of others. Our LWML is also a very active part of much of what is listed below and in other areas as well.

**Locally:** We help serve the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those in need in our community and those who pass through our community with emergent needs, by praying for and providing substantial physical and financial support to; Mountain Hope Good Shephard Clinic, Sevier County Food Ministries, Smoky Mountain Ares Rescue Ministry, Woman's Care Center, & Sevier County Right To Life. And there are many among us who also give of ourselves as volunteers in these organizations.

**Regionally:** Through Lutheran Campus Ministry We help provide sound confessional ministry and pastoral presence on the University of Tennessee Campus. We help those who provide services for those in need through Lutheran Services of Tennessee. We help support the cooperative mission efforts of the Knoxville circuit through Rocky Top Mission Council.

**Nationally:** We help provide for the needs of those who are mentally and physically challenged, through Bethesda Lutheran Homes. We also provide assistance to those training to become pastors through the joint seminary fund, which supports both our synod seminaries. We help support the devotional lives of our deployed Tennessee military by purchasing and helping to ship over 1000 devotional booklets to get into the hands of our National Guard troops, through a cooperative effort with Tennessee's Helping Hearts.

**Internationally:** We support a Lutheran church and school in Bethlehem just blocks away from where Christ was born. We help feed hungry children in Lutheran schools in Haiti. We help those who do not yet have God's word in their language through Lutheran bible translators. We assist our church body with world outreach efforts by supporting Lutheran World Mission and we have been a small part of every disaster relief effort and regular human care through LCMS, Human Care & World Relief.

As you can see we have been blessed with the opportunity to love and care for the needs of many people in our community and far beyond. I am convinced that much of our continued health and growth both spiritually and with some of the newest additions to our church family, especially in light of the many struggles in our society and economy, is due to our faithful stewardship of His gifts and the out ward focus of our efforts. At the center of all this is Christ, and we joyfully stand together on the revealed truths in God's word, without compromise, speaking the truth in love and spreading the sweet Gospel in its purity and truth for all to receive the gift of saving faith, as God intended, through proclamation of His word and administration of His sacraments.

Your fellow worker in Christ,  
Pastor Portier