



The Spirit

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Making Our Children A Priority by The Rev. Jan Nesse, Acting Bishop



Last December we moved from a condo to a house...a house with enough land to dig in the dirt and make a garden. The unfortunate thing is that the spring was so cold a lot of the vegetables germinated but are having a hard time growing. Except the potatoes, the potatoes seem to be doing just fine.

We planted three kinds and I'm anxious for the harvest.

Potatoes are seldom planted from seed but rather from the sprouts of whole potatoes. Many years ago some farmers decided that they could plant small potatoes with just one eye and those potatoes would grow and they could keep the larger potatoes to eat. Over the years, they began to learn the laws of genetics as the potatoes they harvested became smaller and smaller.

Though it doesn't talk about potatoes directly, the Draft Social Statement on Genetics may be downloaded from our synod's website on the homepage, under Spotlight.

The Statement is still in the draft form and you can make comments until October. It would be interesting to read and discuss the ethics of genetics in an adult class on Sunday morning.

But my point in this article is not so much about potatoes and the genetic laws that were learned by those earlier farmers. Rather, I go back to the verse in Galatians which the potato story illustrates. *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man [person] sows, that he will also reap.* (Galatians 6:7) And I have been thinking about how this verse applies to our culture, how we raise children and young people,

and what that means for the church... for our congregations.

I hear and read a lot of negative thoughts about "the kids of today." These kids don't respect their elders, they act as if the world "owes" them, they are self centered, they do drugs, they get in fights, they party late into the night, they are promiscuous, they hang out in gangs, and they are moody, sullen and non-communicative.

Most of that is true for some kids, but how did they get that way and what can we do about it? In 1996, Hillary Clinton made a speech at the Democratic National Convention that has had more lasting value than any of the political speeches made that night. She spoke about raising children and said, "...parents first and foremost, are responsible for their children. But we are all responsible for ensuring that children are raised in a nation that doesn't just talk about family values, but acts in ways that values families..."

I believe that church must lead the nation in making kids a priority. The church, by design, is the place where a nurturing, family friendly environment can be formed and sustained. Yes, parents are responsible for their children, but no one can raise children in a vacuum. While some parents come home each night and drive their children to various activities, others come home to nap a couple of hours and go to a second or third job. Some parents are worrying about how to pay for college and other parents are worrying about how to feed their family. Some parents

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are hoping their children make nice friends and have a good time at gatherings, other parents hope their children come home sober, unharmed, and even alive.

There are no single answers and there are no easy answers. But there are answers, answers that are manifest in action. What can your congregation do to become a nurturing environment for all families? How many kids in the community can you send to summer camp who might not otherwise be able to go? What

would a parenting support group look like at your church? What kinds of activities would keep kids engaged during the week?

The world isn't what it used to be and it isn't what it's going to be. But we can have a hand in shaping what it's going to be if we answer God's call to "feed his lambs and tend his sheep." Likewise, we will also be responsible for the shape of the future if we don't answer the call. In sowing and harvesting, we are no different than potatoes.

Here 'n There

Duwamish River Ecojustice Tour

For decades Seattle's only waterway, the Duwamish River, has suffered a slow oil spill from polluted run-off and toxic chemical dumping. In 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency listed the Lower Duwamish River as a federal Superfund site, naming it as one of the most contaminated sites in the U.S. People who live near the Duwamish, predominately communities of color, are at risk from a toxic stew of chemicals which also endangers salmon, shellfish, eagles, seals and orcas.

Earth Ministry, St. James Cathedral, St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle First Baptist Church and Plymouth UCC have joined together to organize a boat tour of the lower Duwamish River narrated by staff of the Duwamish River Cleanup coalition.

On this short trip, our faith communities will join in prayer, learn about the contaminated ecosystems of the waterway, and be updated about advocacy opportunities to protect the only river in the City of Seattle.

Please join Earth Ministry and our downtown religious partners from noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 14. Check-in is at 11:30 a.m.

Reservations are required. Cost is \$15 per person/60 people maximum. For reservations contact Rachael Ross at St. James Cathedral at ross@stjames-cathedral.org or 206-903-4629.

Ministry and Money

This year's stewardship training event will be held on Saturday, Sept. 25, at St. Luke's Lutheran, 3030 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue. This year the Synod's Stewardship Committee

is excited to welcome a husband and wife team: Philip and Janet Jamieson, who are co-authors of the 2009 book **Ministry and Money**. In addition to stewardship, topics will also include budgeting as an expression of God's mission, financial transparency in the church, understanding financial reports, and developing a theology of money.

Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and the training will end by 2:30 p.m. The cost is \$20 per person and includes lunch. To register in advance or for more information, please contact Pastor Laurie Jones at 206-784-1306 or pastorlaurie@bflcs.org.

The Spirit, a publication of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is intended for members, leaders, and clergy of synod congregations and organizations.

Congregations are encouraged to copy **The Spirit** and include it in their own newsletters. **The Spirit** can be downloaded from the Synod website.

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