

# NOTES & QUOTES

Volume 21, Issue 8

AUGUST 2008

## PASTOR JOHN & "DUTCHESS"

by Pastor John Kuziej

Pioneer Lake Lutheran Church, Conover, Wisconsin



I would like to introduce you to a member of my family. Dutchess is her name. Dutchess is my dog. The year was 1999. In April of that year, Abbie, my Shetland Sheepdog ("Sheltie") died at the age of fourteen. I was not looking for a new dog right away. In July, while helping out with a Habitat for Humanity fund raiser, a fellow worker told me about a stray dog that wandered by the home of a friend. The friend was looking for someone to take the dog off their hands. I consented to take a look at the dog. Dutchess was a stray that must have been left behind by someone; she had to fend for herself and her homelessness took her to a country home 3 miles south of Ontonagon. I knew the folks. They were Roman Catholic but we had worked together on various county wide charity projects. They had advertised the lost dog in the local paper, put up signs with pictures, and even notified the county Sheriff. After two weeks, not a peep. No one claimed Dutchess. At this time, the couple's granddaughter was staying with them. She gave the stray dog the name of Allison. When I came to take a look at the dog, I saw it was Black Lab mix; in the mixture was the Chow breed because of black coloration of the tongue and curved tail. I was wary. Allison/Dutchess looked a bit too big for a house dog. When I sat down my mind was changed. Dutchess immediately jumped into my lap. She chose me to be her human. I gave her the name Dutchess because she seemed to prance about with a royal bearing. So that you may get to know her, I will let Dutchess speak for herself.



You are correct in saying "I chose you." It was an act of generosity on my part. You needed me maybe more than I needed you. I've been good to you over the years. I've taken you for walks and provided comfort and a listening ear when you complained about stubborn parishioners. Man, the things that you have said! No need to worry, dogs hold all conversations from their humans in complete confidentiality. Just think, I jumped into your lap! I still jump to be next to you on the couch. I chose you reminds me of a Bible verse from the Gospel of John where Jesus our creator says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my



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## PASTOR JOHN KUZIEJ (CONTINUED)

name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.” So you see, my choice of you without your deserving is a reminder of God’s gracious choice. Jesus commands you to love and you can learn a lot about love from dogs.



 They say that dogs and their owners begin to resemble one another. Being with me for almost ten years Dutchess has learned a thing or two about theology and the Bible. I used to practice my sermons on her before I got married in 2001. Do you have any more DOGma to share with us (tee hee).

 Very funny; anymore puns like that and I may poop on the floor. By the way, after you practiced your sermons on my sensitive ears, the first place I headed for was the water dish. Your sermons are quite dry. If you think you are so smart as a preacher, can you tell me the patron saint of dogs?

 Let’s see, think, think; could it be Titus? The New Testament said Titus went to Dalmatia, isn’t that where Dalmatians come from?

 Wrong! Where did you get that, you are better at digging things up than I am. If you remember your church history and study of the saints, you would recall St. Roch.

 Saint who?

 St. Roch was born in France in 1295. He was born into a home of power and privilege, but gave it all up to follow a calling from God.

 A calling to groom dogs?

 No, stupid. It was a time when the plague BLACK DEATH spread throughout the land. St. Roch accepted a life of poverty to tend the sick and comfort the dying. His prayers were known to bring deliverance from the disease. St. Roch was revered, but after a time he himself came down with the plague. He didn’t want to burden anyone, so he hid in the woods and prayed. But, during his illness, he was not alone. A dog mysteriously showed up daily with bread so poor St. Roch would not starve. The dog also licked the saint’s sores and, over time, he survived the plague. St. Roch, by the way, had an interesting birthmark; on his chest it looked like someone had branded a red cross.

 A dog feeding a holy man. That is not a farfetched idea. In the book of First

*“By the way, after you practiced your sermons on my sensitive ears, the first place I headed for was the water dish. Your sermons are quite dry.”*

## PASTOR JOHN KUZIEJ (CONTINUED)

Kings, ravens were commanded by God to bring bread and meat to feed the prophet Elijah during a time of famine. In Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus was poor, sick, and abandoned with the exception of dogs who came to lick his sores.



People think they are so smart commanding their dogs to "heel"; but dogs are commanded by God to be healers. There are special schools to train dogs to help the blind, deaf, and other people with physical disabilities to lead happier and freer lives. Some dogs have special abilities to sense the approach of a seizure, warning the person to prepare for it. Dogs are ready and willing to serve.



Oh, oh, I feel a Bible verse coming on.



You are so well-trained! Dogs are examples of discipleship. Dogs are guardian angels. Jesus noticed how you humans like to posture and position for honor and glory, becoming terrible nuisances in the world. Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you. Whoever wants to be great must be least of all, and whoever wants to be first, must be servant of all. For the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."



That is a humbling verse. I struggle with the false pride of jealousy of others and seeking the approval of many. I'm so full of myself my cup is not exactly overflowing with love. But thanks be to God for Jesus, who gave his life for me and the world. Since Jesus is a faithful servant, my many sins are forgiven and I am freed to be a servant, following the Servant of all. Thank you Dutchess for sharing the good news of Jesus.



I am with you to serve. You have talked about a special worship service of "Blessing the Animals", don't just talk about it, but plan it! I'll even help you: you can use this verse from Job as your text (Job 12: 7-10): "*But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all human-kind.*"



Very good, thanks.



Any time. Say, can we go to Paris?



Paris, Ohio? What's there?



The Paris, bonehead, Paris, France. There is the church of St. Roch, honoring the patron saint of dogs. Out front is a statue of the saint with a loyal dog at his side. It would be very educational, an important Continuing Ed. Trip, and the church could pay for it.



Nice try, but not this year. By the way, we are all saints from our baptisms. Like your favorite saint, may we strive by word and prayer to be Jesus' agents of healing, compassion, and blessing for the community and world.

*Pastor John*

## Tanzania Presentations Available

My wife, Luanne, and I are available this fall and winter to bring a presentation to your congregation(s) about the companion work in Tanzania. Based on our November 2007 trip to our Companion Synod in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, this one-hour power point presentation, with dozens of photographs, focuses on the companionship of our Synod and the faith of the people of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese. We think this presentation will work best for families and women's groups and other congregational gatherings. Mileage reimbursement and an offering for the current Malaria Net project would be expected. We are happy to do it! Call the Synod Office for more details and to arrange an event.

## TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Seminarian Lloyd Luedemann** on his call to serve the people of **Bethany Lutheran Church of the Keweenaw in Mohawk**. Pastor-elect Luedemann will be ordained and installed on August 16, 2008 at 11:00 a.m. ET at Bethany. May God bless Lloyd and his wife, **Amy**, as they begin their ministry in our Synod.

+Congratulations to **Seminarian Kevin Kaiser** on his call to serve the people of **Bethany in Amasa and Trinity in Stambaugh**. Pastor-elect Kaiser will be ordained on Sunday, August 24, 2008 at Zion Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove, Minnesota. May God bless his ministry in our midst.

+God bless **Pastor Cori Johnson** upon her resignation as pastor at **Concordia in Palmer and Our Saviour's in Suomi**. Pastor Johnson will be on leave from call this summer and fall as she will be the manager for Rep. Tom Casperson in his U.S. House campaign.

+Congratulations to **Pastor Ted Koehl (Holy Trinity, Chassell)** upon his retirement from full-time ministry. Pastor Koehl and his wife, **Fran**, have served in Chassell since 2001. Thank you, Koehls, for your ministry! God is at work in their lives and will give them an exciting new chapter of ministry.

+God bless the happy couple! **Graduate Seminarian and Licensed Lay Minister Nicholas Hopman (Grace South Range and First, Dollar Bay)** and **Mary Jones-Gundersen** were united in marriage on July 12, 2008. Mary is the daughter of **Pastor Peter Gundersen (Finlandia University)** and **Pastor Jimalee Jones (Gloria Dei, Hancock)**. God give this new couple decades of life together!

+Please pray for **June Krebs**, and her spouse, retired **Pastor George Krebs (Minocqua)**. June has been recently hospitalized and had surgery for a brain tumor. Pastor Krebs broke his hip recently and underwent successful surgery. They are now living in La Crosse, Wisconsin, near family, in an assisted living center.

+Recent surgery for back problems is bringing healing to **Marv Wrege**, husband of **Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege**. Marv underwent back surgery in early July in Appleton. God bless Marv as he returns to his normal busy life.

+Our sympathy to **Pastor Margaret Johnson (Prince of Peace, Eagle River)** and her husband, **James**, on the death of Pastor Johnson's mother. **Intern Pastor Judy Mai (Immanuel, Escanaba)** and her husband **Pastor Paul Mai (Bethany, Escanaba)** also suffered the loss of Judy's mother recently. The mother of **Stephen Rose**, our Synod Office custodian and his sister, **Pastor Peggy Rose (Interim Pastor at Immanuel, Negaunee)** died earlier this summer. Most of us have the honor, sometime in our lives, of walking with our parents to the grave. May Jesus Christ now walk with these families as they remember with thanksgiving the lives of their mothers. "And Christ shall wipe away every tear."

+In June, I served my 35<sup>th</sup> year on the staff of Badger Boys State, the American Legion youth citizenship program that met at Ripon College in Ripon, Wisconsin. For these last years, I have served as Dean of Counselors for this program which each year attracts 850 high school senior boys and 120 staff from across Wisconsin. I had the honor of receiving an award from the U.S. Department of Justice for my 35 years of service in "promoting the paramount interests of justice and encouraging public service among the future leaders of our state and nation."

+Thomas A. Skrenes

Bishop



**Thank You**

## ELCA Disaster Funds

Mission United, Pelkie

Ascension, Minocqua

Grace, South Range  
Salem, Ironwood

### **World Missionary Support**

Mission United, Pelkie  
Pioneer Lake, Conover  
Faith, Rock  
Bethany, Perkins  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Trinity, Stambaugh  
Bethel, Ishpeming

### **Lutheran Campus Ministry**

Grace, Gwinn  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Bethany, Amasa  
Bethel, Ishpeming

### **Lutheran World Relief**

Messiah, Marquette  
Trinity, Rhinelander  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Holy Trinity, Chassell  
Grace, Gwinn

### **Lay School for Mission**

Trinity, Rapid River  
Rev. John West

### **Synod Endowment**

Peter & Trudy Johnson  
Rev. Maxine Gray  
First, Iron Mountain  
Robert Gardner  
Rev. David Hueter  
Rev. Gerald & Susan Anderson  
Ralph & Jean Peterson  
Trinity, Ishpeming  
Rev. Warren & Kathryn Geier  
Barb & Will Maines  
Rev. Francis Strong  
Rev. Philip & Rene Johnson

Rev. Jim & Gisele Duehring  
Rev. Jonathan & Jean Schmidt  
Rosemary Opferkuch  
Howard & Judy Mattson  
Rev. Robert B. Patrick  
Darrel Diers  
Rev. Leonard M. Gilley  
Rev. Barry & Barbara Levine  
Larry Pagel

### **Seminarian Support**

Zion, Ironwood  
All Saints, Wakefield  
Calvary, Minocqua

### **Seminarian Scholarships**

Robert & Jean Sovey  
Bethel, Ishpeming  
Rev. John West  
Rev. Lee & Rev. Lori Liverance

### **Pastor's Debt Retirement**

Rev. Peter Gundersen &  
Rev. Jimalee Jones  
Nicholas Hopman  
Rev. John West

### **Skogman Scholarship Fund**

James & Laura Wendt

### **Bishop's Discretionary Fund**

Grace, Gwinn  
Rev. John West

### **Kisarawe**

Rev. John West  
Bishop Thomas & Luanne Skrenes  
Rev. Jennifer Johnson Wrege & Marv Wrege

### **Mission Outreach**

Larry Pagel

## + From the Assistant to the Bishop +

### Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege

#### BIKING WITH BRANDON

Nine year old grandson, Brandon, learned to ride his bike this summer. Without the training wheels, mind you! His twin brother has been tootling down the sidewalks and around the block for a couple of years already. Brandon is new to the freedoms of two-wheelers and the swiftness with which they will carry its peddler down the street or along the bike path.



We were camping and getting ready for our first bike ride together. We had our helmets, our water bottles, granola bars, and a good amount of energy. Brandon assigned himself the position of lead biker with firm instructions for me that I should follow wherever he goes. We took off! Down the road, around the corner, to the stop sign, and on to the bike path we went traveling at a comfortable pace. So far, so good. Brandon signaled a left hand turn off the bike path and onto a road. Then, just a few hundred feet further, he signaled another left onto a cul-de-sac where I was directed to keep going around and around and around.

About the twentieth time around Brandon looked back at me and asked with a big grin, “Hey Grandma, have you seen that camper before?” and “Hey Grandma, have you seen that tree before?” and “Hey Grandma, have you seen that car before?”

Then he announced while smiling from ear to ear: “Hey Grandma, we’re going in circles!”

At that moment it sure appeared that Brandon was getting a lot of joy and delight in “going in circles.” For me, they were magic moments where “going in circles” meant the wind blowing in my hair, my autistic grandson giggling and smiling, no worries, no immediate concerns, no wii, no cartoons, no game boy, no sibling rivalry, no problem – EXCEPT, that even after about a hundred plus circles, Brandon was no where near wanting to move on and explore some other area of our camping community. He



was content going in circles. In fact, it was fun to keep “going in circles.” It was desirable to continue “going in circles.”

As Brandon and I pedaled in circles around the cul-de-sac my thoughts drifted to some of the other ways I am “going in circles.” Paul described my “going in circles” patterns well in Romans 7:

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do*

*what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it,*

*but it is sin living in me, I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I*

*have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want*

*to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep doing.*

In some areas of life, I just keep going in circles! I help myself to cookies just hours after promising myself I will not. I skip my workout just days after committing to a new resolution. I gloss over my devotions after resolving to be faithful. I calculate what I can get away with and with whom. I spend fifty dollars on quilting fabric that doesn’t have a prayer of being used, at least for the next three years, because I am already working on a stack of projects just after being nudged by the Holy Spirit to send what I would spend on fabric for a year to the hunger appeal. Who will interrupt this circular activity that is - if I am rigorously honest - sinful, unhealthy, and not helpful? Paul asked the same question when he writes, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” And, he provides the answer,

*Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ my Lord!*

I have, it appears, just enough power to interrupt Brandon’s biking in circles and help him get back to camp for a campfire and smores. It’s not all that much! And, clearly not nearly enough power when it comes to my “going in circles.” To interrupt those circles I am in need of a Savior, a Redeemer, a Forgiver of sins, a Giver of grace and mercy, and an Interrupter of my “going in circles.” I’ll bet you do too! Thanks be to God – all this comes to all of us through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Blessings!

## Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

Bethel, Ishpeming - Associate Pastor Vacancy

Trinity, Stambaugh & Bethany, Amasa - Pastor Doug Johnson

Central, Menominee - Pastor Ken Michaelis

Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams

Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor Ted Koehl

Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes

Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt

Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Chad Christensen

First, Ewen & Our Saviour's, Paynesville - Pastor Gerald Anderson

Immanuel, Negaunee - Pastor Peggy Rose

Our Savior's, Marinette - Pastor Nickolas Johannes

Concordia, Palmer & Our Saviour's, Negaunee - Pastor Virginia Eggert

*“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:27, NRSV)*

Our Synod was well blessed in June with congregational mission support gifts totaling \$104,600. Thank you to all who made this happen! Increased giving to World Hunger and Seminarian Support have helped our Designated Gifts to grow by 11.6% over 2007. We give thanks to God for the opportunity we have to serve God through this Synod, and for providing all that we need to accomplish this work. *(Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper)*

As of 6/30/2008	2007	2008	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,045,301	1,032,591	-12,710	-1.2%
Amount Received	426,097	436,252	+10,155	+2.4%
Designated Gifts	84,789	94,644	+9,855	+11.6%



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**ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR AUGUST 2008**

**[www.prayfaithfully.org](http://www.prayfaithfully.org)**

**August 3-9 / Kathy Magnuson, Faith, Ishpeming, FLLC Board Member**

**August 10-16 / Pastor Steve Gauger, Calvary, Rapid River, FLLC Board Member**

**August 17-23 / Gustav Petruske, First, Grand Marais, FLLC Board Member**

**August 24-30 / Ruth Almen, Messiah, Marquette**

**August 31-September 6 / Seminarian Amanda Kossow, First, Gladstone, (Wartburg Seminary)**