

The CrossRoads Connection



A Youth and Young Adult Ministry of
St. Andrew United Methodist Church

You're Kidding Me, Right?

chipping in

I've been thinking about the human condition lately. I know, I know, but someone has to think about these things, and it might as well be me! The human condition being what it is, we humans are capable of some pretty, well, let's be kind and say, "not very intelligent" moves. Have you noticed that?

Not to be self-righteous; I'm betting God, in His infinite wisdom and with His great heart filled with love, has looked down upon me from time to time and wondered if ANY of my brain synapses are firing! I've wondered the same thing from time to time.

Anyway, last week, a friend sent me a copy of this year's "**Stella Awards.**" Have you heard of them? I hadn't, but I don't get out much anymore. Apparently, these awards are annual (Internet-based) awards inspired by then 79-year old Stella Liebeck; remember her? She was the lady who sued McDonald's in 1992 for \$2.9 million in damages for spilling hot coffee on herself – which a New

Mexico jury awarded to her. What a joke, right?

Since then, any wild, ridiculous sounding lawsuits are labeled as "Stella's" and reported on a number of websites and, of course, make their way into newspapers and into the "In Box" on our computers. The justification used on most of these sites is a desperate need (they feel) to modify tort law and get rid of frivolous suits that bog down the system. The general claim by these sites is that common sense and personal responsibility would take care of the majority of these issues without litigation.

Here's an example — the winner of the 2007 "True Stella Award." This is one most of us have read about in the newspaper and heard reported on the news (I'm quoting here from the True Stella Award Website at www.stellaawards.com):

"Roy L. Pearson Jr. The 57-year-old Administrative Law Judge from Washington DC claims that a dry cleaner lost

a pair of his pants, so he sued the mom-and-pop business for \$65,462,500. That's right: more than \$65 million for one pair of pants. Representing himself, Judge Pearson cried in court over the loss of his pants, whining that there certainly isn't a more compelling case in the District archives. But the Superior Court judge wasn't moved: he called the case "vexatious litigation", scolded Judge Pearson for his "bad faith", and awarded damages to the dry cleaners. But Pearson didn't take no for an answer: he's appealing the decision. And he has plenty of time on his hands, since he was dismissed from his job. Last we heard, Pearson's appeal is still pending."

And, this was a judge?
Hmmm...

As I was reading through the story that was forwarded to me with the nominees for the year, I have to admit that I laughed OUT LOUD at some of the stories of out-landish lawsuits that the



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Our MISSION: We seek to encourage youth and young adults to develop a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, encourage them to grow as lifelong disciples, and to equip them to minister to others for the sake of the world.

Pastor Pat's Chipping In

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plaintiffs had supposedly won. But as I laughed, I decided, to be fair, I should dig a bit deeper and do some research on the original case (Stella Liebeck's) and make sure it was legit.

Sure enough, it was – as far as it went. Ms. Liebeck did, in fact, sue McDonald's over coffee she spilled on herself. And, she did win an original settlement against McDonald's for \$2.9 million. How silly is that? Isn't coffee SUPPOSED to be hot?

Well, as you might suspect, there is more to the story that we rarely hear about. Here, as Paul Harvey used to say, is the "rest of the story."

Most accounts reported that Ms. Liebeck was driving her car while trying to open her coffee and spilled it over herself. In fact, her grandson was driving the car, and he had pulled over to stop so she could add cream and sugar to the cup – the lid was stuck, and she apparently pulled on it too hard.

And, Stella was badly burned, not some little burned place on her skin as we mostly understood; sources say between 6 and 16% of her skin surface was burned. She needed some two years of treatment/rehabilitation – including skin grafts. And, McDonald's had a chance to settle out of court for \$20,000.00 in medical costs but they chose to fight it.

According to McDonald's own quality control standards (at that time), its coffee should be served at 180-190 degrees Fahrenheit. Liquids at that temperature can cause third-degree burns in 2 to 7 seconds! Such burns, which can require skin grafting, debridement and whirlpool treatments to heal, are very painful and quite expensive, and the resulting scarring is typically permanent,

at least without extensive additional cosmetic surgery.

Also, I had never bothered to find out that from 1982 to 1992, McDonald's coffee burned more than 700 people, usually slightly but sometimes seriously, resulting in a number of other claims and lawsuits – I thought a careless, money-focused Stella was the first. Wrong!

McDonald's own witnesses admitted in court that the average consumer was unaware of the frequency and extent of the potential risk for serious burns from spilled coffee served at McDonald's required temperature. Additionally, they admitted that they had not warned customers of this risk, could offer no explanation as to why they did not, and testified that they did not intend to turn down the heat even though they admitted that their coffee is "not fit for consumption" when sold at that temperature because it is too hot.

While Stella was originally awarded \$200,000 in compensatory damages, this amount was reduced by 20 percent (to \$160,000) because the jury found her 20 percent at fault. Where did the rest of the \$2.9 million come in? She was awarded \$2.7 million in punitive damages — but the judge later reduced that amount to \$480,000, or three times the "actual" damages that were awarded.

So, there you go. Was Stella negligent because of the way she held the coffee between her knees as she attempted to put cream/sugar into it? Should McDonald's be held liable because they knew their coffee caused some 700 burning accidents *that they knew about*. Their defense team argued that they had an average of 70 burns per year for 10 years, BUT this number represented substantially under 1% of orders of coffee sold.

You decide if justice was done.

My point is, the tendency is to jump to conclusions (I did) before we get the facts, but is this fair? Though it is

human nature to make snap JUDGEMENTS, it is certainly not fair. I have to admit that before I dug into the facts a bit, I thought the McDonald's settlement was patently unfair – just another ne'er do well beating the system.

Snap judgments are rarely based on much more than surface facts; rarely do we dig deep enough to get all the facts. And, should we be judging others, anyway? Careful here!

Matthew 7:1-2 says: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In other words, you will be judged by the same standards you use to judge others.

A quick answer might be: "That would be fair." Sorry, it wouldn't. You have your own biases and your own prejudices that color almost every decision you make. And, how likely is it that we would offer others the same breaks we offer ourselves?

So, insofar as we're able, we're called not to judge anyone. Why? Well, suppose I would have met Ms. Liebeck before I had bothered to do a little digging for the rest of the story? Do you suppose I would have been predisposed to treat her like a gold-digger? Someone who had cheated the system? I don't know, maybe – and it's that maybe that Jesus is speaking about. We usually can't know all the details about a person's life or about their heart – only God can know all that.

I should just be careful with hot things, use my common sense like it was given to me to use, and leave the judging to others more qualified to do it – like God.

It's something to think about.

Pastor Pat

Junior High Update

What is T.O.M.?

Teens On A Mission (T.O.M.) is St. Andrew United Methodist's Junior High Youth Group. We meet on Sunday evenings from 6:00pm – 7:30pm at St. Andrew. The group is open to any 6th grade – 8th grade student!

In addition to our weekly meetings, we have fun activities and different service activities throughout the year. This past year, T.O.M. participated in Light The Night Walk, Revolve Tour, Camping, Lock-In, Super Bowl Party, Fourth of July fireworks, and a weekend Mission Trip. We collected items for flood victims, food pantry, and many other worthy organizations.

What do the kids learn there?

Being a leader, you'd think I could pop off a really quick answer, but I can't. The truth is that we talk a lot about God, our community, and ourselves. Our goal is to provide the kids with a safe place to go to ask questions, to feel loved, and have fun! We play games, we giggle, we watch movies, and much more. You will have to ask the kids what they learn each week. However, I can tell you that I learn each week how incredibly blessed St. Andrew is to have such amazing young people attending our church. They are compassionate, charismatic, and full of energy! I have no doubt of St. Andrew's future success! I see the future in these kids every Sunday!

If you know a 6th, 7th, or 8th grade student, please encourage them to come hang out with us on Sunday evening! They will be glad they did!
~Dana Kirkwood, T.O.M. Leader

Young Youth Sunday School

July's BIG idea—We believe that we can live and act with love and courage because God is always with us.

July's Bible verse—"I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the lord, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 12:1-2

July's lesson topics:

July 6—Story of Jonah (Jonah 1-4)

July 13—Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)

July 20—Down the Wall (Acts 9:20-25)

July 27—Shipwrecked (Acts 27)

Other news: "Thank you" to the parents who helped with Sunday School lessons in May. "Thank you" to Lisa Tally who will be helping with the class on August 3. We still need a parent who can help with the teaching on August 10. The task is simple, and the reward is great. They are a great group of young people.

We hope to add a third person to our teaching team. Brent Clemenz gave us three great years of service, and we would now like to find someone to take his place. Please give this some thought. The two current teachers are Pat Babbs and Dorothy Taylor.

Folks, this is why the Jr. High call them the Wacky Olympics (photos courtesy of Debbie Honsowetz, at the games on June 22).

July Jr. & Sr. High Events

A calendar of future events to clip and place on your frig.

July 13

10a Sunday School

5p Sr. High meeting for all going on mission trip

6p No T.O.M.

6p Sr. High — Working on Faith & Trust; wear clothes that you can get messy

July 20

10a Sunday School

6p T.O.M., The Intersection

6p Sr. High — Faith & Trust, cont.

July 27

10a Sunday School

6p T.O.M., The Intersection

Sr. High leave for mission trip; no regular youth group

Upcoming Dates for Jr. High:

Aug. 24 — Swim Party

Sept. 6 — Camp Out



News from the Young Adult Ministries



Young Adult Sunday Café

The Young Adult Sunday Café continues to be held on Sunday mornings at 10 am. This class is for anyone who considers him or herself a young adult, whether single, engaged, married or parenting. We usually start with some community time and breakfast munchies, then dig into our lesson of the week. Our lesson topics are usually decided on a weekly basis, which allows for some spontaneity and creativity.

Over the past six weeks, however, the YA Sunday Café did a video study based on the book *The Organic God* by Margaret Feinberg. The video was shot on location in Alaska, so the scenery was nothing short of spectacular. Through personal stories and scriptural insights, Margaret Feinberg shared glimpses of God's character—big-hearted, kind, beautiful, mysterious—that pointed us to an authentic and naturally spiritual relationship with Him.

Our study for the next few weeks will be a Favorite Scriptures series, taking the favorite scripture verses of our Young Adults and breaking them down — studying their meaning in context, in relation to what God is telling us through them, what they say about the nature of God and how they can apply to the 21st century young adult. As a sneak preview, the first scripture verse we will be studying is Jeremiah 29:11.

We are having a great time at the Café and love spending the time with God and with each other. We welcome anyone to join us for discussion and fellowship!

More Young Adult Events

Weekly Events:

Every Wednesday — 6:00 hang out before Fusion, 7:00 Fusion

Every Sunday — Sunday school and church.
Lunch out together after 11:00 service.

Upcoming Events:

July 19 — Dancing in the Streets — It would be great to get a group to go together. Let Monica Hoover know if you're interested.

August — Canoe Trip

This Fall — Camping



Who's that guy sitting beside Collin Delker? It's Lego Man, at the Chicago Lego Store, where the young adults paid a visit on a recent trip to Chicago.