

# The CrossRoads Connection



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

## Thanksgiving Musings

chipping in

Like most of you, I just celebrated the holiday we simply refer to as Thanksgiving Day, and I put a lot of thought into it. Thanksgiving is a secular holiday, though originally based upon a grateful and faithful response to God's bounty that has been around since the Pilgrim settlers arrived on America's fair shores. The same settlers that promptly set about (nearly) starving to death.

I find it just a bit ironic that a holiday that has come to feature extravagant excess in food has its roots firmly planted in hardship and near-starvation. And, frankly, if it hadn't been for a friendly tribe of Native Americans, well, there might well have not been any settlers still alive a year later to have the big blowout.

The Pilgrims, it turns out, were long on faith and short on supplies. They were also woefully unprepared for life in the American wilderness. They were

city-dwellers, craftspeople and farmers who had lived in civilized, well-ordered societies and found the going just a bit tougher in the "colonies." Fact is, they were surrounded by plenty but just didn't know how to survive on what they found. Surrounded by game and edible plants galore, and they nearly starved. Amazing, isn't it?

So, do you think you could have done much better than the Pilgrims? I know I couldn't. Why? Well, success often requires a new mindset and many of us struggle to get out of our comfy boxes, boundaries and habits. I have my way of doing things, and that's the way I want to do them and if I stick to rigidly too my way of doing things, it often causes me to fail, or at least add a lot of extra work to get done what I am trying to do.

The Pilgrims nearly starved to death trying to hack a European-style existence from the coast

of America. Their building materials had to be made, not bought. The foods they brought to plant didn't thrive in the new land and by the farming means they had always used. In short, the trials they faced now were new and different and they were trying to solve them using the old comfortable methods, to a disappointing end.

So, how did they survive? By radically changing practically everything they did. Thanks to the Native Americans who showed them how to farm in the new land and what crops would grow well and what animals to hunt and what indigenous plants were good to eat and use for medicines, they made it. In short, they survived because they were able to adapt and change – they listened to the natives.

The Pilgrims arrived as missionaries – foreigners who intended to bring their old lives with them - and nearly died. It was



Pat Sleeth is pastor to the CrossRoads community.

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Our VISION: The CrossRoads Youth Ministry of St. Andrew United Methodist Church embraces and supports the youth and young adults of our community and their families, seeks to inspire and guide their spiritual growth as Disciples of Jesus Christ, and then, empowers/challenges them to serve each other, the church and the whole world.

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only when they became (new) natives themselves that they lived to celebrate the harvest. The old, “We’ve never done it this way before” nearly killed them all – yet they were surrounded by everything they needed to thrive. It was only after they were forced to accept new methods that they were able to succeed.

I find this analogous to the modern church.

I know God’s heart is breaking as He has watched the flow of women and men OUT of our churches over the past 50 years – you have to know that St. Andrew is an exception to the rule of declining main-line churches. The modern church comes face-to-face with the new indigenous peoples and says to them, “Here. Become just like us.” And they say, “Why? We’re not the ones starving!” And, the only answer we have is: “Well, don’t you want to be like us?”

No, they don’t, and they won’t. Just a couple of weeks back, in my message on November 22, I suggested that “...we need a new generation of Pilgrims.” I’m talking about new Pilgrims who know that we have to change or watch the modern church wither and die. I’m talking about faithful women and men who realize that we have much to learn; that we had better learn, from the new indigenous peoples that surround us. We’re still trying to be missionaries – and we’re starving – surrounded by plenty.

We are not who we were 100 years ago. In fact, I doubt we’re

culturally where we were even 10 years ago. The times, they are a’ changin’. Fast!

I’m afraid these new Pilgrims, should they arise, will need to look past the obvious preferences of music and worship styles and robes vs. shirt and tie vs. t-shirt and jeans. The new indigenous tribes, when asked about music or style or preferences would, instead, ask: “What’s your story?” Or, in other words, “What is it that you believe and why?” And, if we can’t tell them, in a straightforward, no-sales approach; we’ve lost them.

See, I don’t believe the modern church is losing membership because the world doesn’t still need Jesus. I believe the main-line church in America has had 50 years of loss because we’ve lost our story. We have forgotten that being Christian means acting like Christ and not acting like each other. Somehow, in our rules and regulations, in our habits and traditions, in our memberships and denominational structures, we have lost touch with the indigenous peoples – or have allowed them to lose touch with us— and we (the modern church) are starving to death.

I think the successful church of the future would do well to remember that church isn’t where we go; it’s who we are. We need to remember our story. We need to remember to live and tell that story in the world, which is the natural habitat for the people we claim to be looking for. Has the modern

church forgotten that we were never called to be an institution? We were called to be a blessing: a grassroots movement of people sharing Jesus in our actions and in our words.

It seems to me that the quickest way to turn off the faith seekers of the modern world is to tell them where your church building is located and introducing them to the pastors. They want to hear your story first; how Christ is real to you and how your faith has changed you for the better. Then, perhaps, they’ll come with you to church.

It also seems to me that we need to remember that WE are the indigenous people, too. We live here. We are the ones in the offices, the classrooms, the lines at PayLess and Wal-Mart. Real evangelism isn’t us telling them about Jesus; it’s us living Jesus in the world.

Please understand; this was not a rant. This was thoughtful, prayerful reflection and maybe a bit of prophetic Word all rolled into one, based on time spent pondering what I have to be thankful for as I prepared for Thanksgiving.

One of those things I am most thankful for is the faithful modern church trying to survive in the post-modern age, but I fear for her future. So, fellow Pilgrims, what are we going to do about this? Perhaps it’s time to see what the first Pilgrims have to teach us about who the experts really are and learning some new ways, so we can thrive again. You know, I think we can do it!

*Pastor Pat*

SEE YOU AT THE CROSSROADS

# Junior High Update



Just last week, we were hosting 53 students in our annual Thanksgiving meal honoring the kids. Now, it's time to think about Christmas and all the joy that comes with this season. In hopes of keeping with the idea of using Christmas as a time to think of others with our time and energy, Junior High is once again taking an active role in spreading Jesus' love. We will be making and sending Christmas Cards for our local veteran's home and others in the community. Additionally, a few junior high students bought gifts for five 13 year olds for Jubilee Christmas this year.

Our hope is that the kids will think of ways to offer their family gifts that will have great meaning this year. We are suggesting giving their time to help the family in ways around the house and in the community. Not only does this give a great sense of pride to the kids, it allows for some wonderful one on one time with the students.

As for the rest of the year, some important events are coming our way. We have a lock-in on **Friday, January 8**. We will be arriving at the church at 7 p.m. and while we will be visiting various "entertainment" places outside of church... we'll be back at church by 1am and "locked in" until 8am the next morning! More details will be coming in the mail!

Additionally, it's hard to believe, but we are already planning for our Mission Trip on **April 10, 2010**. We will be taking the kids down to Indianapolis for a week-end event with Mission Indy. This is an amazing experience for the adults and the children involved. In the past, we've been able to offer this experience free to each child. The cost is \$55 per child but with grants and fundraising, we've been able to defray the cost to the families. We are hoping to do this again. So, if you have a need where you would like to "rent" our youth group.... Please let any of the leaders know!



## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

**December 6** – Regular Youth Group @ St. Andrew 6:00 – 7:30

**December 13 (6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> graders)** – Regular Youth Group @ St. Andrew 6:00 – 7:30

**December 13 (8<sup>th</sup> graders and Parents!)** – **Senior High Mission Trip Informational Meeting @ 6pm**

\*\*This is an amazing opportunity for your kids, please come and learn more about the trip and see if this is something you are interested in attending.

**December 20**– Regular Youth Group @ St. Andrew 6:00 – 7:30

**December 27** - NO YOUTH GROUP!

**Friday, January 8** – Church Lock-in @ 7pm

**Saturday, April 10** – Mission Trip

# YOUNG ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS!

Check it out!

*All adults welcome!!*

About the only age criterion for the Young Adult class is that you

are beyond high school. The format is a group discussion, and the lesson may center on a Bible chapter or a video. Whether you are a Doubting Thomas or Touting Cephas, feel free to join us. We start at 10-ish in the Intersection

--Dave McMillin, co-leader

## CrossRoads in Action...



## DECEMBER Junior High Events

A calendar of future events to clip and place on your refrigerator

December 6

10a Sunday School

6p T.O.M., The Intersection

December 13

10a Sunday School

6p T.O.M., The Intersection

6th & 7th Graders only

(8th Graders—Senior High Mission Trip Information Meeting)

December 20

10a Sunday School

6p T.O.M., The Intersection

December 27

10a Sunday School

*NO YOUTH GROUP!*

## Junior High Sunday School December's Lessons

Dec. 6

The Angels Message

Luke 1:26-38

Dec. 13

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-45

Dec. 20

Journey to Bethlehem

Luke 2:1-5

Dec. 27

The Birth and the Shepherds

Luke 2:6-20