



The **St. John Eagle**

"Celebrating more than 100 years, 1904 - 2009"

Member Congregation of the ELCA and LCMC



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St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

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From the Pastor's Pen Macintosh

Christmas is a warm and sentimental time for giving. Or, at least, that's what we usually expect it to be. Unfortunately, in our hectic, go-go world, Christmas is often a frantic chasing after family and work obligations and last-minute details. Consequently, I have chosen to use this Pastor's Macintosh to share with you an old story that brings a bit of an old-fashioned flavor to our annual celebration of Christmas giving. You will no doubt surmise from its style of language and the cost of things mentioned that the story was written more than one hundred years ago. Its commentary on the spirit of Christmas, however, remains timeless. You who may know the story will know that a watch fob is a kind of "keychain" for a pocket watch and, I hope, will enjoy reading the story again. You who do not know the story will be introduced, I trust, to a gentler and kinder expression of giving at Christmas. The story is titled, "The Gift of the Magi," by O. Henry.

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always

are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pierglass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice--what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Congratulations

We extend our congratulations to Kristin Phyles, Jason Scouras, Christian Valletti, and Michael Winsor on affirming their own baptism by the Rite of Confirmation on Reformation Sunday. We pray God's blessing for each of them.

Please Recycle

In an effort to do our part to help with the environment, we ask those that do not take home their weekly church bulletins to recycle them in the recycle bin located downstairs. In addition to used bulletins, any clean paper at the church should be recycled. Every little bit helps toward a greener environment.

Serving St. John with our Time and Talents

During December

Ushers

Fred Faust
Chip Bott

Custodial

12/6 Gemma
12/13 Faust
12/20 Dancewicz
12/27 Bott

Coffee Hour

12/6 Shannon & Angie
12/13 Lydia
12/20 Christmas Pageant – All Members
12/27 Mary & Jack Plumb

Lector

12/6 Susan Dancewicz
12/13 Fred Faust
12/20 Fred Faust
12/24 Linda Phyles
12/27 Linda Phyles

Childcare

12/6 Kristin Phyles
12/13 Rick & Cheryl
12/20 Kira Dancewicz
12/24 Chip & Shannon
12/27 Kristin Phyles

Lay Assistant

12/6 Fred Faust
12/13 Sue Reed
12/20 Angie Cornwell
12/24 Steve Gemma
12/27 Linda Phyles

During January

Ushers

Tom Knowlton

Custodial

1/3 Reed
1/10 Phyles
1/17 Berg/Grayson/Othote
1/24 Gemma
1/31 Dancewicz

Coffee Hour

1/3 Linda & Becky
1/10 Judy & Cheryl
1/17 Linda & Susan
1/24 Carole & Raudna
1/31 Annual Church Meeting

Lector

1/3 Phil/Sue Reed
1/10 Phil/Sue Reed
1/17 Tom Knowlton
1/24 Tom Knowlton
1/31 Judy Othote

Childcare

1/3 Rick & Cheryl
1/10 Kira Dancewicz
1/17 Chip & Shannon
1/24 Kristin Phyles
1/31 Rick & Cheryl

Lay Assistant

1/3 Fred Faust
1/10 Sue Reed
1/17 Steve Gemma
1/24 Angie Cornwell
1/31 Linda Phyles

During February

Ushers

Carole Grayson
Raudna Pelletier

Custodial

2/7 Bott
2/14 Reed
2/21 Phyles
2/28 Berg/Grayson/Othote

Coffee Hour

2/7 Shannon & Angie
2/14 Linda & Melissa
2/21 Lydia
2/28 Linda & Becky

Lector

2/7 Judy Othote
2/14 Susan Dancewicz
2/17 Susan Dancewicz
2/21 Linda Phyles
2/28 Linda Phyles

Childcare

2/7 Kira Dancewicz
2/14 Chip & Shannon
2/17 Kristin Phyles
2/21 Rick & Cheryl
2/28 Kira Dancewicz

Lay Assistant

2/7 Sue Reed
2/14 Angie Cornwell
2/17 Steve Gemma
2/21 Linda Phyles
2/28 Sue Reed

Please ask someone to fill in for you if you are unable to make it when you are scheduled. Phone numbers can be found in the church directory.

Budgetary Notes

This is an indication, as a percentage, of how our offering income compares to where we need to be for our budget to balance at the end of the year. Through October 31st, we have income amounts that are 10.9% below our anticipated budgeted amounts. If you have a specific budget question, please feel free to talk to Fred Faust or Steve Gemma.

Haven from Hunger

Ever wonder what the cardboard box in the undercroft marked “Haven from Hunger” is for? Throughout the year the Haven from Hunger is in need of canned goods and non-perishable food items (pasta, baby food, etc.). We deliver the contents of this collection box to Haven when we serve our meal there. If you would like to donate food to the Haven from Hunger, please bring the food items to service with you and place them into the box.

St. John News and Notes

We ask for your prayer and concern for these members and friends of St. John:

Ellen Hepburn
Carol White

Anna Snow

David Fredrickson

Our volunteer lists need more volunteers! Please consider serving your church as lay assistant, lector, or a member of the choir. There are also other opportunities to serve as a cleaner, coffee hour host, usher and nursery volunteer! If you have any questions, suggestions or ideas in this regard, please speak with Pastor, Linda Phyles or Steve Gemma.

We are seeking more young people to serve as acolytes during our worship services. The role they play is important and is a form of service in the chancel. If you or anyone you know is interested, please speak with Lisa Winsor.

Our thanks go to the Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home for their gift once again of our Lutheran liturgical calendars. We appreciate their generosity. The calendars will be available on the long shelf in the undercroft.

The 2010 flower chart will be posted downstairs. Please sign up for the Sunday(s) you wish. The cost remains at \$30.00 per Sunday. If you wish, you may share the cost with another individual or family.

The Poinsettia list for this year will be posted on the bulletin board in the undercroft. We invite you to place a plant or plants in the chancel for our Christmas Eve celebration. You can take them home with you after the service or leave them for distribution to our sick and shut-in. The cost is \$11.00 per plant. Please place your order by December 20th.

Please note that beginning November 29th, and continuing through the Advent season, we will be using Setting III of the liturgy. Setting II will be used beginning on Christmas Eve, and continuing through the Christmas and Epiphany. We will return to Setting III on February 17th, continuing throughout Lent.

Past Happenings

The volunteers who serve as teachers and other staff members of our Sunday Church School were installed into their responsible positions on Sunday, September 20th. We appreciate the dedication and skill it takes to prepare for and meet a class every Sunday morning. Our thanks and support goes to each member of our education ministry.

Our sincere thanks go to all who helped with the Fall Cleanup held on Saturday, September 26th. The appearance of the building, both interior and exterior, is well enhanced by your work.

Our annual Fall Kickoff was also held on Saturday, September 26th. After enjoying a delicious pot-luck supper the Rev. Pat Bade told us stories, sang songs, and showed us Indian artifacts as well as her birds of prey. All who attended enjoyed the evening of good food and fellowship.

The annual Fall Fair sponsored by the WELCA group on Saturday, November 7th, was again a huge success. Of course, this happened with the work, courage, stamina and fun that the volunteers had. Thanks for all who donated white elephants, baked goods, jewelry, and other hidden treasures.

The annual coat drive was a big success; we more than filled the large box provided for them. Also, as in past years we brought gifts for the Penobscot tribe in Maine. This was a success as well and we know that the Rev. Pat Bade is very grateful for our support.

The annual Advent workshop was held on November 29th. This was a wonderful afternoon with lots of activities for all ages. It was a good opportunity during this busy season to just slow down and enjoy the fellowship and ambiance. Thank you to Susan Dancewicz and Shannon Bott for all their hard work.

Upcoming Events

December 20th is the annual Sunday School Pageant beginning at 9:30 a.m. Communion will not be celebrated at this service and there will be no Sunday Church School. We always look forward to this special event. Please plan to attend and be sure to join us downstairs for refreshments following the pageant.

Also on December 20th, in the afternoon, please join the youth group to go Christmas caroling. Please speak with Susan Dancewicz and watch the bulletin for more information.

The Christmas Eve service will be held at 7:30 p.m. Communion will be celebrated. We look forward to special music by the Chancel Choir and our organist, Margaret Knowlton. All members and friends are invited to attend this festive worship service.

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 31st immediately following our worship service. Remember, all confirmed and registered members of the congregation can vote on items raised at the meeting. Please plan on attending. All committee reports should be submitted by January 17th to be sure they will be included in the annual report.

Our annual retreat to Camp Calumet in Ossipee, New Hampshire, will be February 12th through February 15th. Our group has reserved the Staff House again this year so space is limited. It will be on first come first served basis. Please speak with Rick Cormier for more information or if you would like to attend.

Our Annual Pancake Breakfast will be held on Sunday, February 28th immediately following our worship service.

Our Ash Wednesday service will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 17th. The imposition of ashes will be available beginning at 7:15 p.m.

The staff of The St. John Eagle extends everyone our wish for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.