



## October 8, 2006

Laiety Sunday

Preaching: Rick Carlson

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, Laity Sunday, as your Lay Leader. You'll hear from Ben Adams again in a few minutes. Ben is our Chairman of the Missions and Outreach Ministry Team. Shall we pray. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts and minds be acceptable to you, Oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Today's scripture is all about the business of salvation, or the resurrection business. Of course, it's our merciful God that gives the gift of salvation...but who is in charge of leading people to God? Angels? No. The apostle Paul reminds us that "God didn't put angels in charge of this business of salvation here." Instead, he refers back to the Psalm of David, which states that men and women are in charge of the entire world, and therefore God's agents to do his work.

This is a powerful lesson for anyone who considers him or herself as a follower of Christ. We all have a job contract during our time on earth. The job title is disciple. The job description is to love and help our neighbor in such a way that others will also be drawn to our loving God. Where do we work? The answer to that is both simple and complex. The simple part is everywhere we go is our mission field. Yet, the complex part is that we're also charged with the responsibility of reaching out...to identify human needs near and far, and do something to meet those needs. What about the qualifications for the job? Well, the boss is pretty lenient here. God is glad to use us just as we are...we just need a willing heart. Job opportunities? This is where the power and the potential of the church comes in. Our Church, Baker Memorial, is not only a wonderful place of worship and fellowship, it's also a rallying place, providing structure for God's workers to organize and get to work! We're led by a wonderful team of pastors and other staff members, but the full team consists of everyone...young and old. An active church is one where the efforts of the staff are multiplied significantly by the efforts of the laity...doing the good God wants us to do.

Ben and I would like to talk about some of the Baker ministries that you may or not be aware of. By no means is this a complete list. We felt that Laity Sunday is a good time to make you aware of some of the things that are going on that reflect the power and potential of our church. We'll focus on examples of active involvement in Christian service. If time permitted, we could also talk about some extraordinary

examples monetary giving for missions and outreach, but that will have to come another day. Let's hear now from Ben.

Those of us that are members of the church made some promises when we joined...mainly to uphold the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service. The church surely needs these things from our members. However, we members need to remain committed in our praying, attending, giving and serving to stay on the right path through life. Just like a car needs to have the right alignment to go properly down the road, our lives need to have the right alignment with God as we travel our journey of faith. Serving is part of that. But how do we get started? During my years as an elementary school principal, I always enjoyed going into classrooms to ask for help, because I was able to witness the positive exuberance of young people. Let's say that we had to set up 200 chairs in the gym. I could go into any class and say, "I need some volunteers." Immediately, nearly every hand would go up. I'd then say something like, "Are you sure you want to volunteer before you know what I'm going to ask you to do?" The truth is they didn't care...they just knew that it was good to volunteer and wanted to get out of the ordinary and do something to help. Of course, we adults are much more inclined to hesitate when it comes to volunteering, but stepping forward to volunteer is important. Hopefully, everyone who is willing can find at least a few hours to devote to serving others, particularly those in need. Here are a few more examples of service opportunities that are part of the life of the Baker congregation.

Ongoing support of our refugee family. When we sponsored the Pacichana family, we provided transportation, drivers training, language lessons, etc. I'm sure that opportunities like these will come up soon, as we wrap our arms around our newcomers, Punday Bay and Paw Kree and children.

Stephen Ministry: Stephen ministers provide 1-to-1 support to individuals who are in need. They go through extensive training and then give care in a very loving and confidential way.

Providing guidance in the management of our facilities and fiscal resources. Groups like the trustees, endowment board and finance committee work hard to enable us to be good stewards. The dream team has been meeting twice a month to consider our vision for the future as a church. Committee work and long term planning may seem like drudgery, but those that do it are passionate about it, and the church runs more efficiently because of their efforts.

Intergenerational Service....Appalachian Service project (since 1994)....Ring the bell for the Salvation Army. Last year, our ringing team devoted over 250 hours of ringing. Our team ranged in age from pre-school to 90, and we retained the traveling trophy as the most successful religious organization in the Salvation Army's annual kettle drive. By the way, that traveling trophy hasn't traveled much lately...it's been here for over 20 years. This isn't a recruiting pitch for ringers...yet. Give me a few weeks, and I'll be back.

Bringing the word of God to children and adults by teaching Sunday School, adult studies, as well

working with VBS and the nursery. Baker has been proactive in making and adhering to rules that are consistent with “safe sanctuaries.” Thus, our programs for children always have two or more adults present, which makes teacher recruitment more important than ever. For our youth, a new youth council has been formed, helping to provide new service and fellowship events for the year.

Our choirs, bell choirs and instrumental groups serve by sharing their inspiring music during worship and on special occasions. Jeff has put out a call for more to join...previous experience is not necessary.

Sharing our beautiful facility with the community. We allow groups such as AA, various musical groups, and ASP Staff to meet here....we’re also involved in an extensive “wedding ministry.” We all know that this is a wonderful place for a wedding, and many non-members travel from near and far to have their weddings here. But did you know that, before the wedding, we provide both pre-marital counseling and a short course in Biblical Financial Principals?

Brighton Gardens Services. You know about the 9:00 and 10:30 services, but did you know that at 2:30 every Sunday laity and staff work together to provide a worship service with music for our senior friends at Brighton Gardens of St. Charles.

Other outreach programs...church mouse, women who provide monthly birthday parties at a nearby home for boys, operation of the church’s website.

These are some of the opportunities for service that are part of the life of Baker. The lay members that have been involved in these ministries...and those that were not mentioned...aren’t doing so for recognition. The motive is to do God’s work as an expression of our promises and commitment to him. We invite everyone to consider carefully and prayerfully what opportunities may be right for you. Shall we pray.

Preaching: Ben Adams

There is a small town in western Illinois called Prophetstown that has a Methodist church that will soon be celebrating its 170th anniversary! 170 years. In 1836, the area was still home to many native peoples like the Sauk and Pottawattamie. Churches were the center of a prairie town’s identity. There was a pioneering spirit. Pastors served multiple congregations and the frontier spirit literally meant living a life on the edge.

Things are different now of course. Our church is bedrock in our wonderful community. We find many ways to serve others from our solid foundations at 3rd and Cedar. Our bell tower overlooks a grand city with grand traditions and great plans for transition.

But are things really so different? Our church supports missionaries in far flung places like Mongolia and Senegal – where outposts are set up in a new frontier and the love and awareness of Christ are offered to those on the fringes of their society – the lost, the homeless, the orphan, the dying, the forgotten, the children. Distribute an

insecticide-treated mosquito net to a family and they will wonder “Who are these folks that are doing this and why do they do it?” Offer hospice care to an elderly woman and the village wonders “why do they do this?” The answer is Christ. Yesterday’s Prophetstown is today’s Ulaan Baator or Dakar.

And our church of such a strong foundation has been shown to have springs on it. We’ve recently made several leaps of faith. The church is becoming a jumping off point as well as a center of worship. The most recent involve the Burmese family from Myanmar, new occupants of 217 Cedar Ave.

Several things have come together of the last few months that have allowed us to reach out to this family.

- Our Trustees have been open to the use of the rental property for mission outreach
- Volunteers have stepped forward
- World Relief has found us a family in need.

Our volunteers have included:

- Busy moms finding 2 or 3 hours to come in and help organize a new household
- Retired but busy grandparents finding time to help collect and assemble furniture
- An anonymous donor to allow us to cover the property mortgage for several months.
- Overworked engineer who retooled his week’s work schedule to allow time to help on 217 repair projects.
- Retired men with time, talent and tools – lots of tools.
- Our kids were collecting clothes

John Wesley kept it simple – the Gospel of Christ is at the center of life – and the church allows us to share and care for one another as children of God.

All there is left to say:

***Ka Sa Yua Gayi***

***Tah Bo***

***God is good***

***All the time.***