

Congregations Joyfully Celebrate Ordinations

It is an unassuming A-frame just outside of town. I had the address and I still drove past it. The congregation has been there about 20 years, but growth has been slow. About 25 people worship there on Sunday morning. They are served by a UCC pastor who lives in another place; the pianist also came from another church.

They have plans for new ministry. This year they will host their first Vacation Bible School. A new subdivision of housing is opening nearby. And they pointed out the new sign they had just purchased...a sign that I had missed. They have hope...but still wonder about their future.

Yet on this day, the church was packed. It was the hottest day of the year...heat and humidity won the battle against a few small fans. But no one moved. Every pew was filled. A son of their congregation was being ordained and it was time to celebrate. As the pastors gathered to lay hands upon a new brother, the congregation lifted its hands. And when I asked them to speak for the whole church in receiving their son into ministry, they fairly shouted, "we will!"

Downstairs, the three-cornered sandwiches and fancy desserts would have been welcome at any fine banquet. And the people stayed...they simply didn't want to leave. As important as this day was for one of our synod's new pastors, it was an even more important day for this young church. They had raised up a pastor. They had offered the church a gift it so badly needs. They were sending one of their own out into the mission field. And it felt good. One member told me, "this is the greatest thing we have ever done."

Ordinations can mean as much to a congregation as to the new pastor. Do you remember the last one in your congregation? How soon before the next one?

Shalom,



Harold Usgaard
Bishop



Bishop Harold Usgaard

Look Up First to Find What You Seek

Greetings!

Recently I spent some time with my mother. Wherever we went, we took my car. When Mom goes with someone else, she always puts her garage door opener in her purse.

One night we went out to eat and shut the garage door as we left as usual. When we returned, Mom reached in her purse – no opener! She emptied and searched her purse. No opener. I searched my purse. No opener. We got out of the car and searched it. No opener. We searched the car again – with flashlights! No opener. Mom called the restaurant to see if anyone had turned in an opener. They hadn't. I even went back to the restaurant and searched the parking lot and walked the path we had walked into the restaurant. No luck. It was gone.

When I got up the next morning, the opener sat conspicuously in the middle of the kitchen counter. Where had Mom found it? She smiled and said that in the middle of the night, she realized she had never looked up on the visor, and when she checked the visor first thing in the morning, there it was!

This episode reminded me of how we humans often approach our problems. So often we muddle along, keeping our head down and struggling to find our own solutions when, if we would only look up first, we would find exactly what we are looking for. The good news is that even when we have exhausted all of our human possibilities, we still can look up and find God's solution for our problems – right there, just waiting for us to see.

Let us draw
near to God with
a sincere heart in
full assurance
of faith...



Hebrews 10:22

God works!

Blessings in Christ,

Shirley



Shirley Gangstad
Synod Vice President