

Dear Friends in Christ,

Drive through any town and you'll see signs that say, "NOW HIRING! APPLY WITHIN!" My first response typically is, "Already got a job, thanks!" The truth is that in addition to the ministry work I do within the Church, I also have another job that is of longer duration and much wider scope. It's the job of stewardship and it comes with being whose I am. And it's a job I share with each one of you.

I say it's a job of long duration because being a "steward" or "manager" was a task first given at the time of creation. Genesis 1:26 states that God created humankind in God's own image and with their creation, gave them the role of oversight of all that God had already created: earth and sky, land and sea, plants and animals. Some versions of the Bible translate the idea of management with the word "dominion." Martin Luther, who taught these verses way back in 1535, points out that this is a dominion without "weapons or walls" as neither yet existed! It was more that all creation was intertwined or on the same page and the role of human stewardship was/is to maintain God's order of things. That's where the wide scope of this work comes into play; God gifted creation with abundance so that *none* would lack. From that perspective, stewardship is a simple matter of careful maintenance and just distribution. It seems like that might have been a doable task within the borders of that first garden. But by the time we get to the third chapter of Genesis and fall prey to sin, care and justice starts to go awry. Dressing themselves in fig leaves, our first parents symbolize that they had learned to keep things to themselves and put their own needs and desires foremost.

Yet, God continues to gift creation and continues to ask us to do the task of stewarding those gifts. It's like God has a vision for how this world can yet be what was intended in the beginning. Starting this month, Calvary and Christ congregations will take a closer look at the various gifts of God; we'll be including the spiritual gifts of Baptism, Holy Communion, worship, and community, as well as treasures of a material nature. And, we'll ask ourselves a question framed in very Lutheran terms: *What does this mean to me?* I think we'll find that our answers are all part of God's plan for his creation...and each of us.

Serving with you in God's grace,  
SAM Jeannine