

PARTNERS IN
the spirit
AUGUST 2004



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

LifeKeys –
You've Got to Try This Yourself!

It's True, It's Real, It's Now!

Blessed to be a Blessing: Discover Your
Spiritual Gifts

Cinda Brucker: Sharing the Gospel story

The Power of Opportunity: Dana
Heckman-Beil

Hola LifeKeys! Discovering Spiritual
Gifts

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A Lutheran from West Berks Mission District tells about personal experience with the LifeKeys program:

Our Lenten journey 2004 was an awakening for me.

As usual, we met on Wednesday nights, beginning with a simple meal of soup and bread. That half hour was a gift in itself, a chance to slow down, to put aside the day's burdens, to laugh a lot, and even to get to know some people in the congregation better. (I can't believe I've known their names for years and never knew we shared a love of history and genealogy!)

I learned to treasure the 90 minutes that followed supper. The first session was spent identifying ways that I find joy—things that are fun to me. We met in small groups, and it was amazing to see how quickly we bonded. Noting the differences in how people work together also explained why our council and committees work (or don't work) the way they do. Detail people were working with big-picture people who didn't sweat the details (or care much about them.) But I still didn't see any gifts God had given me.

The following week we found all 20 spiritual gifts in the Bible and checked off lists of things that we like to do, which eventually helped us identify our own spiritual gifts. We even played a game of BINGO to find our gifts. I didn't want to play because I was sure I didn't have any spiritual gifts like the others did. At the end of the evening I was surprised to find that I had not one but two spiritual gifts. Maybe even three! I wondered if I was doing something wrong to find all those gifts and decided to ask the leader before the next session.

In Week 3, we were still gathering information. This session we worked with the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. I had never heard of it before but others had used it at work for group building or in school for career counseling. It was a little confusing, but I figured out my own "type" in the end. I really wondered, though, how this was all going to come together.

Week 4 and 5 were my favorites. Each person in the group identified the things that they love and the values in life that were most important to them.



Hearing people talk about what they love (their passions) was like “Show and Tell.” People smiled, shared dreams, were proud of their passions.

Our leader pointed out that the joy we experienced in these sessions was our response to God. Our values and passions were simply things we experienced “with God” or *en theos*. That’s the Greek root of the word enthusiasm. We were enthusiastic about our values and passions because we were living out some of what God gave us.

I went home and cried after the fifth session because I was so overcome when I realized that I am created in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27), that God made me unique (Ps 139:13-16) and that God has in mind specific good works for me to accomplish (Eph 2:10).

In the last session, we put the puzzle together: all our God-given gifts, how we use them, which ones we don’t use, where we put our time and money compared to our values and passions. I affirmed that I’m using my gifts well at church and at work. I also found places in my life where I could pursue a dream I had put down years ago and hadn’t picked up since.

This experience has been great for me, but it’s been even more so for our congregation because participants came from the congregation council and Christian education and a variety of groups that don’t do much together.

I think the whole congregation should identify our collective gifts, passions, and values, and see how we’re using them for Christ in the world.

At the end of the study, we concluded with worship and offered our gifts back to God for use in the world. Now I understand what it means to say, “I am blessed to be a blessing.”

You’ve got to try this too!

NOTE: For more information about taking or hosting a spiritual gifts workshop, call Pastor Diane LaFauci (Faith Lutheran Church, Mt. Penn) at 610-779-3343, or contact Pastor Rebecca Knox (Christ Lutheran Church, Grill) at 610-777-5792 or PastorKnox@verizon.net. Or attend the event at Bear Creek Camp on November 12-14, 2004.