



Loaves, Fishes, and... Simple Quilts?

Lift, It Is!

Loaves, Fishes, and ... Simple Quilts?

Theology on Tap Berks – An Insider's Perspective

Make Every Step Count

The Power of a Simple Act

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Women Attend Seventh Triennial Gathering



Photographs by Anthony Lauro.

By Marjorie Paul, member, Arndt's Lutheran Church, Forks Township

Most of us know the familiar story of the loaves and fish:

Jesus and his disciples were weary. They tried to go off by themselves, but the crowds followed them. Night was coming and the disciples wanted to send these hungry followers away. But Jesus wouldn't have it. These people were in need of his holy words and healing touch.

The miracle happens. From five loaves of barley and three fish, everyone is fed. There was enough to feed all five thousand men, plus women, plus children. There were even leftovers!

Where did that bread and those fish come from? It was a miracle!

I never needed a logical explanation to believe this miracle. I accepted it on faith. And that was just fine.

And then my pastor at Arndt's Lutheran Church in Forks Township, Pastor Jean Huber, gave me a whole new interpretation of the story in her sermon one week...

"Let's back up the story a bit," she said in the sermon. "Where did the original loaves and fish come from? The story of the loaves and fish appears in all four gospels, but only the book of John mentions a 'boy.'"

Consider this, she said. A young boy and his family have joined the crowd that has been following Jesus. They're all excited and eager to hear and see Jesus. He's carrying food for the journey provided by his wise and loving parents. They catch up with Jesus and this young boy wiggles his way to the front of the crowd so he can see Jesus.

Then he hears the discussion among the disciples about the food issue. "There's no way I'm going home without hearing Jesus speak," he thinks. Then, without hesitation, without a thought for himself, without asking Mom or Dad permission, he offers up all



that he has.

"Here... you can have *my* food...just please, *please* don't make us go away!"

He had, of course, only five barley loaves and three fishes. Upon seeing the unselfishness of this one child, those around him offered up the food *they* had packed for the journey to the strangers that surrounded them.

"Here..... here's my food, too!" "And mine." "And mine."

Slowly, surely, a miraculous wave of generosity spread through the multitude. People shared what they already had until *all* were fed. They even had enough to fill baskets with leftovers.

Like the generosity inspired in others in the story Pastor Jean told us, there is a miraculous wave of generosity spreading through the Lehigh Valley. People are giving sheets, blankets, bedspreads, and fabrics they don't need anymore. Men, women, teens, and families are giving time to help turn those materials into warm and sturdy "simple quilts" to cover those less fortunate.

It started at one church, Arndt's Lutheran Church, in October 2007. It spread to another church, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Wilson, this past October. It now includes un-churched community members who read about it in the Easton Express and members of the Lehigh County Council of Churches. This month, Palmer Moravian will hold a "simple quilts" event.

So far, 377 simple quilts have been created and distributed. Yet my home and the home of another volunteer are full of "leftovers." And the donations keep pouring in. New volunteers continue to call to offer their help.

I'm living the Loaves and Fishes story. I see God at work through it all. I meet extraordinary people and have made lifelong friends. My trust in God has deepened. I believe this has "God's call" written all over it, and as such I believe it's meant to grow.

How can you be part of this? Perhaps your church could host a Saturday event. We bring almost everything with us, including experienced volunteers! You simply provide the space, volunteers, and some food, and collect materials for us to use. Pray about it! Then give me a call at 610-252-7964.