

*Address to the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Congregation  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint James the Apostle  
South York Conference, Lower Susquehanna Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Grace, mercy and peace be yours, from God Our Father and from Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The following sentence from Article C8.04 of the Constitution of our Church should guide us in the decisions we make today and in the work we are called to do together in the coming year. It reads as follows:

*“It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to:*

- a. make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments;*
- b. live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and*
- c. support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards.”*

A member of this congregation does not have to be nominated or elected at a meeting such as this to do any of the things I just mentioned. Rather, the ‘privilege and duty’ to participate fully in worship and Christian study of God’s Word in the world, the ‘privilege and duty’ to embody God’s merciful love shown us in Jesus Christ and taught by the Church, and the ‘privilege and duty’ to support the life and mission of the Church here and everywhere through our prayers, through acts and lives of faith and through generous giving of our labor, our time and our money are all privileges and duties that come with Confirmed membership in this and in any congregation of our Church. These are privileges which we may readily exercise because of the

precious gift of religious liberty we enjoy through the sacrifice of others, but we would be duty-bound as Christians to exercise them even were we to live under tyranny. And they are our most sacred duty toward God, toward the Church and toward the world. That is to say, in this community of faith it is expected that we will fulfill our duty as sons and daughters of God by grace in Jesus Christ.

These expectations are high, and many fulfill some of them generously. A few embrace our whole duty to God as a way of life, seeking to fill this life with light and meaning in Christ through worship and prayer, through study and service, often going beyond any job description of their service, whether as volunteers or as members of the Church staff. Because this is so, the naked are clothed, the poor fed, children and youth find instruction and encouragement and adults find occasion to enter deeper into God's Word with the passing years, growing in their faith, events of joyful togetherness are planned and carried out, provision is made for the worship of God, for communication and in all aspects of our life together. All these things might be done without a Congregation Council or election to it, for the people of God do take seriously to heart their privileges and duties as Christians in this Congregation. To all of you who do, I say not thank *you*, but rather I offer heartfelt thanks to God for you!

According to the Church order we Lutherans have followed in one form or another since the Reformation, some of you will be asked by the rest of us to take special care of those duties and privileges of all of us, and the rest of us will trust you to do that. Those of you who will continue to serve your terms on Council, and those of you who will be elected to that office today, serve in an office of sacred trust before God and before this Congregation. It will be for you, in a very public way by virtue of your

office, and in co-operation with the office of the Apostolic ministry, to lead this Congregation by planning, by precept and by example in all three of those key areas of Church membership and to assist the office of the ministry in protecting the peace of the Church by maintaining conditions under which this Congregation may grow and move forward.

All worship in Christ's Church is public worship at which this community welcomes not only its own members but the world in which we live to hear and witness the Word of God in Scripture and Sacrament. It shall be the privilege and the duty, the joy and the solemn obligation of each and every member of this Church Council to be present at every scheduled service of worship insofar as health and the circumstances of life permit, to encourage the members of this Congregation toward a more active use of the means of grace and to bring others who do not have a Church home. It shall be the privilege and duty, the joy and the delight of each member of this Congregation Council to either teach a class in our Christian education department or to be a member of such a class, of which there are already two for adults. I also plan to offer two additional adult education courses in the coming year. It shall be the privilege and the duty of each Council member to give sacrificially of time and effort, both in connection with Council and Committee assignments and by being present at all planned activities of the Congregation, joining also with the Stewardship Committee in helping our Congregation and its membership grow in disciplined financial stewardship. And it shall be the special privilege and duty of each Council member to look after the needs of assigned households, not only on 'snow days' but on those 'rainy days' with which all are acquainted who sojourn in this vale of tears.

These thoughts I commend to you as the Holy Spirit's own calling. I pray for you in your vocation as members of Christ's Church and in your particular calling to service in this Congregation, as I hope you will pray for me. Thanks be to God for the privilege we have of serving Him together!

Yours faithfully in Christ Jesus,  
The Rev<sup>d</sup> Guy Christopher Carter,  
Pastor