



A few years ago, a hand-addressed envelope crossed my desk that included not only our full name, “The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word – ELCA”, but also the name of one of our substantial outreach ministries, “Mustard Seed Kitchen”.

It was a Christmas card which simply read, *“I hope your Holidays are joyous. Love always, Frederick”*. As a pastor I tend to over-think many things but I believe that in this simple act of sending a Christmas card, Frederick captured our identity as a congregation.

**First, we are Lutheran Christians.** As such, our confessions speak of God’s commitment to a broken world through the free gift of Jesus Christ.

**We are Incarnate Word.** We are a congregation that not only speaks of God’s commitment to the world, but embody it as well through the “priesthood of all believers” as together our hands of outreach give flesh to God’s hands of love.

**We are the ELCA**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. “Evangelical” comes from the greek word, “euangellion” which translates literally as “bearer of good news”. When I ponder our denomination’s efforts in nearly wiping out Malaria in Africa in 2015, or our ongoing efforts in disaster relief where 100 percent of our gifts actually go to disaster relief, I give thanks to God that my offerings can be added to those of 4 million others to make these things happen.

**Mustard Seed Kitchen.** This is where the Good News of Jesus Christ lived out in this congregation has touched Frederick's life. For him, receiving a hot meal in an atmosphere of biblical hospitality and dignity is church. Here, Frederick has been touched by God. In his own way, by wishing us joyous holidays and love, Frederick is expressing his gratitude for what God has done for him here.

We could learn a lot from Frederick. What has God done for you? How have you been blessed here in this congregation in the past week, month, year, 10 years or more? And what will your response of thanks look like? Frederick has caused me to re-think and discern again my own responses of thanksgiving. On Commitment Sunday, April 7th, I invite you to do the same as together in Christ we live and grow into our name: "The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word – ELCA."

Peace and Love,  
Pastor Doug