

## Are You Tending the Tree?

Rev. Philip Reitz  
Stewardship Specialist

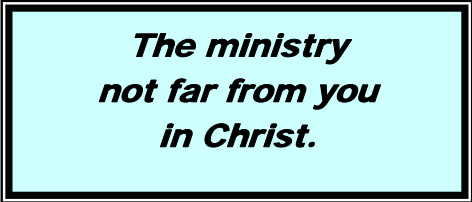
The two stood looking out over the North Dakota field. Sunflowers faced in obedient ranks toward the sun running from the morning horizon. They were talking about church. They were talking about giving.

“You know, we keep buying the ornaments,” the voice paused drawing in the summer morning’s warmth which was not far removed from the past winter’s Christmas, “but the tree is dying.”

A persistent buzzing called their attention to the phalanx of industrious and ingenious workers intently gathering the abundant harvest of the field which lay before the two who stood talking about church and about giving.

Is it true that we who are church-ed have become more enamored of bejeweled projects of charity while neglecting the very tree on which the ornaments find meaning when hung?

When you find yourself talking about the church and about giving - - about your synod and the ministries of the ELCA, distant but yet not far from you in Christ - - about the people of God gathered on Sunday in your congregation and in so many sanctuaries continents away - - remember the tree. Nourish it also.



*The ministry  
not far from you  
in Christ.*

For on and through a tree’s very branches rest not only the ornaments of our design and placing but also the smallest of sparrows winged by another’s whispered breath and creating imagination.

Adapted from a story by Rev. Keith Garness  
Shared Stewardship Staff  
Western North Dakota Synod

---