

Unplanned programming

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [July 15, 1998](#) issue

I owe you a report on church life as glimpsed in church bulletins and newsletters from around the country. In Indianapolis, a recent East Tenth United Methodist Church bulletin says that “Indianapolis United Methodists have become regulars in the Marion County Jail since 1987.” We hope those recidivists get ministered to by the United Methodist Jail Ministries, a group mentioned in that bulletin.

In Alpena, Michigan, the First Congregational Church fell back on a phrase of Puritan pastor John Robinson and affirmed that there was “more light and truth yet to break froth from God’s Holy Word.” In enthusiastic preaching?

In Cresskill, New Jersey, the Congregationalists sang a new version of Old Hundredth: “All people that on earth do swell . . .” Perhaps after eating some spoiled shrimp at the church supper?

The Madison, Wisconsin, Trinity United Methodists’ newsletter tells us that the administrative council will “seek more information on making the church more accessible to handi-people.” They must have been converting plumbers, electricians and contractors. But don’t expect to greet them: the same bulletin announces that “there will NOT be fellowship following the service.”

According to the Brattleboro, Vermont, *Reformer*, mourners at a memorial service at the Jacksonville Community Church heard a soloist sing the hymn “The Old Rigged Cross.” All part of a divine plan.

In Woodstock, Illinois, the Presbyterians’ newsletter referred to a performance of Mendelssohn’s *Christus* as a narrative of “the passion crucifixion.” As told by Doubting Thomas?

In Baltimore, the Handel Choir performed the *Messiah*. The program printed that in the third part the soprano would sing the air, “I know that my Reindeer liveth.” At last, a role for Rudolph in a Christmas pageant.

In Akron, Ohio, the *Beacon Journal* last Palm Sunday advertised Palm Sunday services on a page headlined with Matthew 21:8-9. The paper rendered an unusual translation: "Praise to David's Sin!" And there's so much to praise!

When David McCurdy was a guest preacher at the Westchester, Illinois, Community Church, the bulletin described him as a parent of Doug, 7, and Margaret, 114. David works in health care, but does not sell elixir recipes.

In Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, the Rosemary United Methodists' final congregational response, as printed, was: "Thanks Be to Go!" And not a minute too soon.

When our magazine reviewed Eric W. Gritsch's *Introduction to Lutheranism*, we failed to notice a non-Lutheran theme, caught by an alert reader: "Most religions try, with dedicated sophistication, to keep God in the realm of timeless immorality."

St. James Lutheran Church in Barrington, Rhode Island, apparently gave worshipers a Jubilee Sunday. The bulletin listed, after "Offering," "Jesus Paid It All."

We are trying to get our bearings as we assess news of a funeral in Gackle, North Dakota, according to the *Tri-County News*. In the item a family thanks the pastor, the organist and "the ballbearers."