The community Thanksgiving service

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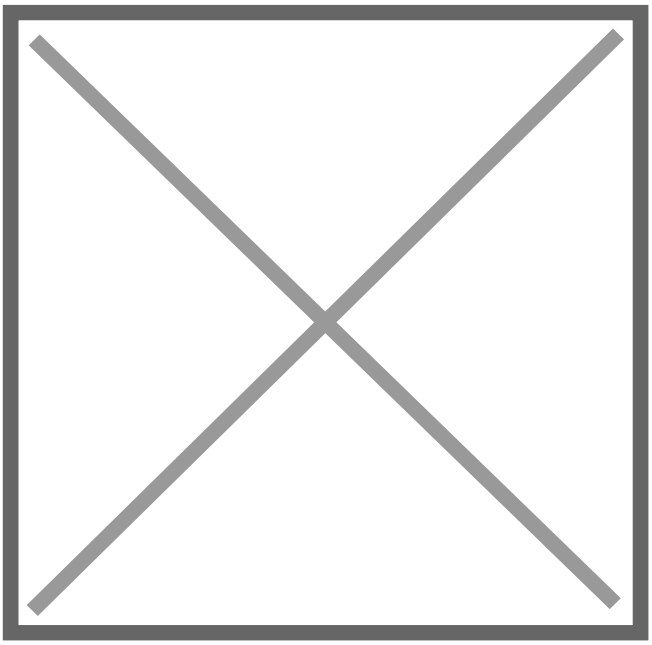
November 16, 2010



Our local ministerial association met recently to flesh out the details of the annual community Thanksgiving service. The meeting is always a riot, but it deals with some tense theological questions too.

Depending on how you count, there are five to ten churches in our town of about 1,000 people. We had one more pastor-type attendee at this year's meeting than last--a congregation has split off from the ELCA parish and intends to join the new North American Lutheran Church (NALC). We welcomed the new congregation with open arms at our meeting--what a great opportunity to share in community ministry--but seeing this new congregation participate will be very painful for some in the ELCA parish.

Questions of liturgy always come up--what to use, what not to. If we use an affirmation of faith that's not creedal but taken straight from scripture, can everyone speak it? The Catholic priest inquired about the best way to lead a call to worship without a printed liturgy. I was surprised to learn that not everyone assumed that the scripture readings read publically would be the same passages from which I preached. (I drew the short straw this year.)

Then there's the question of what to sing-praise songs or hymns, with hymnals or projection. I won't get into how long it took us to choose the date and time for the service.

I realize these issues are nothing compared to what others might deal with elsewhere-all our participants are Christian, and our rural

community is closer to Christendom than post-Christian. So I thought we could start a discussion on community Thanksgiving worship. How do you do it? What are your challenges? Comment away; I'd be thankful.