



Pinewood Lutheran Church

24 Wilmington Rd.
Burlington, Massachusetts 01803

Office Phone: (781) 273-1610
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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Once-upon-a-time there was a young girl who we will call "J". She lived with her mother, little sister, and grandparents. She loved all of them. Why? Not just because they were her closest relatives, but also because they were Christians. You see, she really loved her Lord. She could never remember a day when she didn't have Jesus' love in her heart.—That's because they had brought her to church to be baptized as an infant. Jesus and His church made her feel safe. It made her happy to go and be there. For all those reasons and more, she almost always attended Sunday School and the service afterwards. She had fun with her church friends, too. Everyone was very kind to her. Her classmates enjoyed play time with her after getting some goodies in the hall, as well. Usually, her family was one of the last ones to leave church on Sunday morning.

"J" had a couple of girlfriends that lived about a block down the street from her house. We'll call the older one "A" and the younger one "B". "J" got to know them well and after a couple of years she decided she just had to do something! You see, neither of these girlfriends went to church and neither one knew anything about Jesus. "J" wanted them to have the same happy feelings in their hearts that Jesus had placed into hers. She wanted them to know that heaven was their real home, just as she did. So, "J" decided to act. She invited them to come to church and Sunday School with her.

Of course, "J" knew about the 4th commandment. She knew she shouldn't go behind the back of her girlfriends' parents. So, all on her own, she wrote them a letter. She told them in that letter all about her church and asked if it would be o.k. if she invited them to go with her. They didn't have any objections, so it was all set. One Sunday the entire group filled up the van and off they went to church—with "A" and "B" being first-time attenders. "J" was over the moon.

When they arrived, the two girls didn't know what to expect, even though "J" had told them. They first met the Pastor in the hall. Introductions were made and he even asked them about what grade they were in in school and seemed genuinely interested. Most adults treated them like little kids, but the Pastor treated them with respect. They liked that. Then others arrived and Sunday School began. Their teacher was a nice lady who really spent time explaining stuff about God, Jesus, and how much He loves us. After all, Jesus proved His love for all of us by dying in our place on a cross to win us a one-way ticket to heaven! Then it was time for the Sunday service. They had never been to a church service before. The Pastor talked about "temples" and how each of us is God's temple. "B" asked a kind lady sitting by her: "What's a temple?" The kind lady explained and "B" began to understand. After a little while it was over. Then they were ushered out into the hall, got some food, played with "J", her little sister, and other new church friends, and finally they piled into the van and went

home. Later that day the younger of the girls "B" said to "J": "Today was the best day ever!"—All this with a big smile plastered on her little face.

Lent begins this month. Lent is a 40 day long period when Christians remember Christ's passion and sacrifice on the cross to save their souls. It's a time of introspection and total honesty with yourself and with God. He sees and hears all so we dare not play games with Him. But, Lent isn't just about us. It's about all those souls "out there" who don't know Jesus, don't know the cancerous effect of sin in our lives, don't know how God saved us, and don't know (yet) that heaven is supposed to be our real home. In short, there are a lot of little and big "A's" and "B's" who also need someone to invite, encourage, bring, shepherd, and mentor them when it comes to a fledgling faith. That means you! If you read this, know well that YOU are someone else's "J." Christian faith comes with responsibility. That little ten year old girl called "J" knew it and acted. Lent is your time to act, too.

In the upcoming weeks we will have 6 Wednesday night services and 6 Sunday services. Then we will celebrate Holy Week with a service on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday culminating in Easter. That's a lot of time. So, who do you know, care about, and love enough to share Jesus with?

The story I've outlined above actually happened. It happened here at Pinewood in February. All of it is true—including that comment: "It was the best day, ever!" I saw those smiling faces behind eyes of wonderment. I saw a little girl grow in her faith as she "adopted" her two girlfriends. I saw God's grace personified in all of them.

Once, long ago, Christ read a 700 year old prophecy about Himself in His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. After finishing the reading, He said: "Today, this prophecy is fulfilled in your hearing." Well, this past month the prophecy spoken by Jesus: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" was fulfilled, too, right here at Pinewood! Let's see this Lent if we can repeat that fulfillment multiple times?!