

Unconscious pleasures

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [June 7, 2000](#) issue

Judging by the typos in a recent sample of church bulletins, the pleasures of the senses haunt the unconscious minds of many Christians. Food is, of course, high on the list. We wondered what happened to the bread of life in this verse from “Here I Am, Lord,” quoted in a recent bulletin: “I, the Lord of wind and flame,/I will tend the poor and lame./I will set a feast for them,/ my hand will save./Finest breast I will provide.” Of chicken, of course.

Do you wish to become a minister in the presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, Texas? The application for membership first wants you to “sign your name and date” and then promise that you will be “a faithful minister, proclaiming the food news in Word and Sacrament.” No doubt thereby making a clean breast of things.

The United Methodist church in Ransom, Kansas, seems to be going into roasting in a big way. A Sunday worship folder declares that “Kara Berry lighted the acolytes on the altar.”

But food is not our only preoccupation. Another bulletin sent us (unfortunately, without revealing the church’s location) seems to come from the site of orgies. It announces, “Gracious God, we are saturated with Christmas celebrating: . . . the shopping, the merry mating. . . .” God rest ‘em merry.

Similarly provocative was the Kansas City Saint Paul School of Theology’s letter announcing a conference to be held “in the lover level of the Harter Union on the campus of Baker University.”

The UCC Office of Communications sent us a quote from the *Denver Post* proclaiming that “Temple Sinai and First Plymouth Congregational Church are having a joint at 8 a.m.” That’s worth more than being “filled with new wine” early in the morning!

Those tired of all this merry-making can take the advice of a Redmond, Washington, congregation that gave a new twist to “O Come, All Ye Faithful” by asking people to “rest beside the weary toad, and hear the angels sing.”

As we rest, we can contemplate the nature of God. A United Methodist congregation emphasized inclusiveness on Girl Scout Sunday, as its order of service shows: "The Spoken Word: Reverend James H. Swartz, 'Does God Laugh?'" was followed by "Song: 'Yes, She Can.'"

Some Presbyterians in Birmingham, Alabama, pushed their way into death-of-God theology. They sang, "I'm Mortal, Invisible, God Only Wise." A Lutheran Church in California recently recited the "Niacin Creed." And the Pilgrim Lutherans of Chicago are warding off child abuse by recasting Matthew 6: 16-21: Jesus asks people to lay up treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust consumes."

Finally, a missionary in the Dominican Republic supported by members of First Baptist in New York City is an example for us all. Her newsletter to the congregation shows she has great confidence in the God who gives more than manna: "I'm beginning to realize that it will be OK if I forget my toothbrush or don't bring enough undergarments to last ten days. The Lord will, and does, provide."