



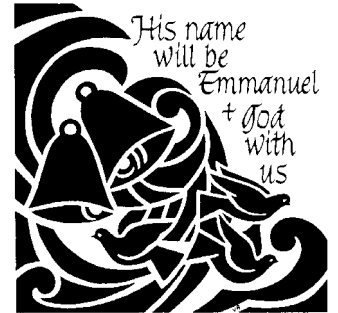
The Grapevine

A Monthly Newsletter For The Family And Friends
Of Faith Lutheran Church Of Sonoma Valley

Volume 2, December 2009
Christmas Issue

Dear Family of Faith:

People continually send me e-mails of materials received on-line. Some are funny; some are corny; some are insightful, even profound. I enjoy reading them all. One, in particular, I felt was worthy of your attention; hence, I am sharing it with you as the lead article of our December Grapevine Christmas Issue. The following was written by Ben Stein, and recited by him on the CBS Sunday Morning Commentary:



My Confession:

I am a Jew and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejeweled trees Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are—Christmas trees.

It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, "Merry Christmas" to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away.

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think that people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution, and I don't like it being shoved down by throat. Or maybe it can be put another way: where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God as we understand Him?

I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities came from and where the America we knew went.

In light of the many jokes we send to one another for a laugh, this is a little different: this is not intended to be a joke; it's not funny. It's intended to get you thinking. Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed on the Early Show and Jane Clayson asked her, "How could God let something like this happen?" (referencing hurricane Katrina). Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said, "I believe God is deeply saddened by this just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone? In light of recent events...terrorist attacks, school shootings, etc., I think it started when Madalyn Murray O'Hair (she was murdered and her body found a few

years ago) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said, "Okay." Then someone said, "You better not read the Bible in school. The Bible says thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself," and we said, "Okay." Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide). We said an expert should know what he's talking about, and we said, "Okay."

Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience; why they don't know right from wrong and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves....

Probably if we think about it long and hard enough we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with, "**WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.**" Funny how simple it is for people who trash God and then wonder why the world's going to Hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send "jokes" through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding The Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and work place.

Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what God thinks.

My Best Regards, Honestly and Respectfully,
Ben Stein

As people of God, let us contemplate these words. Let them encourage us to share our love for God and His people as we grow by His grace, His love and His daily guidance.

A Blessed Christmas,

Pastor Tom
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FAITH CHRISTMAS SERVICE SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE Thursday, December 24th, 7:30 p.m.

Please note the calendar word for Christmas always ends with a single "s." When we refer to the actual services, we add an additional "s" so that the services of the Eve and the Day are spelled **Christmass**. Christmass is a worship word which when taken apart reveals the words "Christ" and "Mass," that is, the annual celebration of Word and Sacrament observing the birth of our Savior.

A Christmass Family Candlelight Eucharist with music for instruments, choir, and God's people.

CHRISTMAS DAY Friday, December 25th 10:00 a.m.

A Christmass festival of lessons, carols and Holy Communion will be celebrated.

Endowment Fund Update

Nearly 18 months ago, the members of our church voted to establish an endowment fund. A committee was formed consisting of Anna Dohse, Jim Engelman, Ann Marozik, Ilse Eichler, Judy Hill, Roger Nikkel, Cheryl Casciani, and Pastor Tom. When elected Vice President, Harry Akre joined the committee as well.

Brian Hyde, the Planned Giving Counselor with the California-Nevada-Hawaii District and the LCMS Foundation, guided the members of the Endowment Fund Committee to define, design, and map a plan to kick-start our endowment fund. Initial meetings were focused on the benefits of an endowment fund. Next came several discussions on how to use the funds, creating by-laws, and defining committee guidelines and duties. It's been a very thoughtful process, at times provoking lively discussions.

The time is nearing for our parishioners to discover the fruits of our labor. With Brian's help, **two seminars are planned to explain what the endowment has to offer Faith Lutheran Church**, how members can participate if they wish, and what the future holds. They say "knowledge is power," and the committee wants every member of Faith Lutheran Church to be informed. So, please plan to attend one of the upcoming seminars (the information will be the same at each seminar). The first one is scheduled for **Sunday, January 10** following worship with a delicious luncheon. The second is on **Thursday evening, January 14 at 6:30**. Both will take place in Goehring Hall.

Copies of the endowment by-laws will be distributed to all members. Parishioners will have the opportunity to approve the by-laws at the first general assembly meeting in 2010. Please watch for more information in the coming months.

In love and service,
Cheryl Casciani

Following is a letter from Rex and Cindy Cole:

Dear People of Faith Lutheran,

Thank you for all your loving kindness and care for our dad, Jack de Graaf. These past years you were all an important part of his life and were truly Jesus to him in many ways. Special thanks to those who drove him to church each week. He misses all of you, but is adjusting fairly well to his new life in Oregon. He now lives about four miles from his oldest daughter, Cindy. It is a much better situation for everyone. His new church home is Zion Lutheran in Corvallis, Oregon. We know he would love to hear from you. His new address is Regent Court, 400 NW Elks Drive, Room 211B, Corvallis, Oregon 97330.

Best wishes from Jack's daughters,
Cindy Cole and Jennifer Wilkerson

THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS COMMUNITY RESUMES The plot thickens. Already resistance, even hatred against Jesus begins to grow. We can see it there before us. The narrative in the Gospel of John begins to point us to the ultimate tragedy of Holy Week and Good Friday, and the ultimate majesty and glory of Easter. If you've not yet been part of our Thursday evening Bible class community, the onset of 2010 is a good time to begin! Our study of the Gospel of John resumes on **Thursday, January 21st at 6:30 PM** in Goehring Hall with Pastor Tom. Mark your calendars, and plan to be with us.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME INTO FAITH'S HOUSEHOLD On the 2nd Sunday of Advent, December 6th, it was a privilege to welcome the following dear people into membership in our congregation:

Located in Merrill Gardens, 800 Oregon Street, Sonoma:
Rose Brumme, Apt. #156—343-1823

Eunice Burcham, Apt. #254—939-9838

Marge Stommel, Apt. #270—933-1376

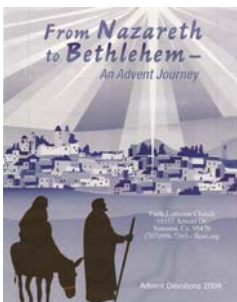
Phyllis & Jim Street
500 Lincoln Lane, Petaluma, 94954—763-6452

Violet Wellander
Vintage Sonoma, 190 W. Napa Rd., Apt. #115, Sonoma—996-7808

Please add these names to your current directory and be sure to welcome them with the love and warmth for which Faith's church is so well known!

ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12TH . . . We will gather to decorate the Sanctuary for the Christ-tide. The "Chrismon trees" will be decorated along with the wreaths and garlands. The decorating begins at 9:00 AM. If you would like to share in the fun and fellowship, by all means come on over to the church and lend a hand. It sounds trite, but true: many hands do indeed make light work.

CHRISTMAS AT THE MISSION 2009 Annually three special holiday services are held for the community at the Mission San Francisco de Solano, off of Sonoma Plaza. The 6:00 PM service this year will be conducted by Faith Lutheran Church. Five readers are needed to assist Pastor Tom in this delightful informal celebration inside the Mission Church. If you would be interested in participating, let Pastor Tom know right away and he will give you your scripture reading assignment (from whatever Bible version you choose) and we'll all gather to lead the service for our community at that time.



AN ADVENT DAILY DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET is prepared for you courtesy of Lutheran Hour Ministries and downloaded locally for our use during the holy season of Advent. Take time, make time, each day to spend a few moments in quiet meditation, focusing your attention on the great events of faith that will unfold throughout the season of Advent and the twelve days of Christmas. Devotional booklets have been placed in your mail file with additional copies on hand in the Narthex.

A NEW PASTOR'S CLASS IS SET FOR THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR An eight week series of informal pastor's classes to prepare folks for membership within Faith's household and also as a fine "refresher" for on-going members as we all seek to grow in faith and knowledge, has been set for **Tuesday, January 26, 2010**. Classes begin at 6:30 and conclude at 7:40 weekly. The class experience is delightful and informative. It's a good way to make new friends and to "grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." A sign-up sheet will be available in the Narthex of the church throughout the month of January.

