



The Grapevine

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

Volume 3, February 2010
Lent Issue

GOOD IDEAS or GOD IDEAS?

My Dear Faith Family:

The natural inclination of Christian people is to act on the impulse of good ideas. Not every good idea is from God, however. Sometimes our good ideas get in the way of God ideas.



Our natural impulse is to do something good for God and then suggest it to him. The tendency of well-meaning church folk is to prepare a plan to do some good idea and then pray, "Jesus, this is my plan. It is a good plan. It hurts no one and I want to please you. Lord, please bless my plan." **We tend to plan, then pray.**

Many of our ideas are impetuous. They are not what the Lord wants to do. They do not resemble in any way the things which concern Him. We have good ideas, but they are not always God ideas. His agenda is not our agenda. When you and I abandon our good ideas and first come before the Lord in prayer, He has promised to come and touch us. **When we pursue our own plan, God simply cannot use us.** When we abandon our good idea and then come before Him in prayer, He is able to use us. He reveals to us what He is doing...we call that "A God Idea." **It is pray, then plan.** Through prayer the Holy Spirit gives us His plan, A God Idea.

In this Lent Grapevine, our parish Vice-President, **Harry Akre**, will tell us about a forthcoming goal-setting retreat. One of the things to keep in mind is that when we all get together for this event, we will need to pray and then plan. The Lord God always blesses His people when we get the order of procedure right. We need courage to ask some very important "first questions." As we wait for this goal-setting retreat to happen, it will be helpful for all of us (those able to attend, and those who cannot) to be asking: In what ways am I supporting God's kingdom here at Faith? Am I looking for God's plan and following it, or am I following my own plan and asking God to bless it?

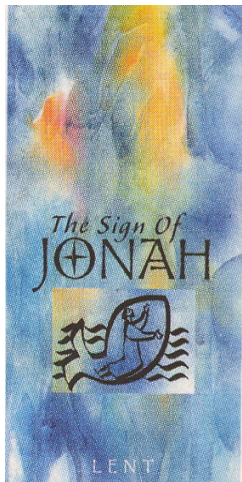
I'm very confident that you will join me in praying that the next year at Faith will come alive with enthusiasm and growth. Let us have the courage to allow God to adjust our dreams to match His plans.

Sincerely,

Pastor Tom
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JOIN A PASTOR'S CLASS FOR LENT In the Lutheran tradition, Lent is not so much a time for giving up something as it is a taking on of something special that will contribute to our on-going faith formation. Beginning Monday, February 1st, a Pastor's Class will commence in Goehring Hall at 6:30PM for a series of eight Monday evenings. The class will be from 6:30-7:40PM. This is a very good opportunity in an enjoyable setting to explore eight major themes of Christianity as they are lived out in our personal lives here in Sonoma Valley. Some in the class will use it as preparation for membership in Faith's household. We encourage you to become part of this series.

THE SIGN OF JONAH WEDNESDAYS IN LENT AT FAITH 2010



Jonah . . . for Lent? Sounds fishy, but it's a natural fit. When the Jews asked Jesus for a sign to explain the fact that he routinely broke highly regarded Sabbath laws and regulations, infuriating the Pharisees, they demanded a reason for this action. They said, "Give us a sign." Jesus said, "**I will give you only the sign of Jonah.**" After three days in the belly of the earth, Jesus rose with the good news of God's amazing grace. This year at Faith, on the Wednesdays in Lent, once again a special series will explore the meaning of "The Sign of Jonah" as we follow Jonah on his journey...and Jesus on His way to the cross.

OUR LENTEN SERIES, AS ALWAYS, FOLLOWS ASH WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 17TH.

Wednesday Lenten services will be held in the church at 7:00 PM, preceded by soup suppers beginning at 6:00 PM in Goehring Hall. This year's Lenten series looks like this:

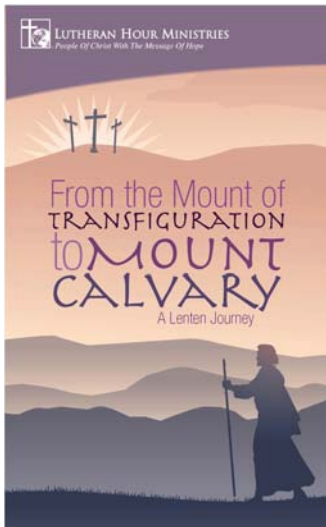
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| Lent Wednesday 1—February 24 th | <i>Saved In The Storm</i> (Jonah 1:4-16) |
| Lent Wednesday 2—March 3 rd | <i>Our Providing God</i> (Jonah 1:17) |
| Lent Wednesday 3—March 10 th | <i>Praying In The Belly Of The Great Big Fish</i> (Jonah 2:1-10) |
| Lent Wednesday 4—March 17 th | <i>The God Of The Second Chance</i> (Jonah 3:1-4) |
| Lent Wednesday 5—March 24 th | <i>About Face</i> (Jonah 3:5-10) |

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO SET GOALS It's been more than a year since our congregation has taken some time to look at the present and the future. We, as a church, have gathered to evaluate, discuss, and dream, regarding these questions:

- What is currently working at Faith, and why?
- What is not working at Faith, and why?
- What goals do we want to set for the future?

To address these issues, a retreat has been scheduled for Saturday, March 6th, from 9:00AM-Noon in Goehring Hall. All members are invited to attend. Light refreshments will be provided. This can be a wholesome way to get a pulse on our church's health and plan ahead. Hope to see you there!

Harry Akre
Congregational Vice-President



SPECIAL LENTEN DEVOTIONS FOR 2010

As they did in Advent, the Lutheran Laymen's League is offering a special book of Lenten devotions which we will provide for everyone beginning Sunday, February 14th. **From The Mount of Transfiguration to Mount Calvary** will take us with Jesus to Jerusalem and to the cross as each day in Lent, lessons are drawn which inspire our own Lenten journey of faith. **Watch for it in your mail file or on the counter in the Narthex.**

WE WELCOME YOU TO FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SONOMA VALLEY . . . That's the title of our newly updated brochure for Faith Lutheran Church. We applaud the beautiful job Valerie Kemp did in preparing this for our use. Folks attending worship on Sunday, January 10th, received a copy in their Sunday Celebrate Booklet. Copies will always be on hand in the Narthex. If you haven't already done so, please pick up a copy. If possible give or send it to someone. It's a subtle form of outreach that is pleasing to the eye.



It has pleased Almighty God in His infinite mercy to summon from ourselves the soul of our beloved sister in Christ, **CLARA DONOVAN**, who departed this life on Wednesday, January 20th. No memorial service is planned, but a brief, private family graveside service will be held in the near future. We express our sincere condolences to Clara's family and reaffirm our confidence in the resurrection promise of our Lord Jesus for all who believe.

Clara's daughter, Alice, has expressed the family's on-going appreciation for Faith's care ministers who have been abidingly faithful in ministry to Clara in her many years as a home-bound member of our congregation.

Rest eternal, grant to her, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon her for Jesus' sake. Alleluia! Amen.

CHURCH SEATING PROJECT



Throughout the years of our ministry together, it has been such a pleasure to join forces in gradually renovating and beautifying our Sanctuary and our overall facilities. **I have always noticed that a church that is loved looks loved.** We have been able to renovate the Chancel furniture and add a beautiful new organ. With this issue of The Grapevine, I would like to take the first step in planting a seed that, if it is God's will, and your will too, shall come to fruition some time in 2010.

While our church pews look fine...they are not fine. They are uncomfortable, but that in itself would not be an urgent reason for replacement. The fact is, they are coming apart. Whenever pews need to be moved, one of them usually breaks, which happened just several weeks ago. We are grateful to **Scott Bamford** and **Tim Hingtgen** who have frequently come to our rescue. The day may come when someone is harmed by an incident involving a pew as it breaks.

Therefore, I presented to the Church Council at their regular monthly meeting on January 17th, what I call "Faith's Seating Project." I have asked that we pursue a project that would ultimately remove all the existing seating areas in the church, the choir area, and the reserved seating area in our church proper. We would then add beautiful, comfortable, ergonomically-designed upholstered chairs which would interlock forming new, very stable rows. Each chair would contain a place for hymnals as well. (Many major companies provide such chairs for churches of all denominations throughout America. They are available in a variety of colors, one of which is shown above.)

The Church Council authorized a formation of an "Information-Gathering Committee." The Committee consists of **Nancy Davies** (Chair of the Board of Worship), **Anna Dohse** (Chair of Social Ministry), and **Paul Chapman** (Chair of Church Property-Interior). Together with myself, we will be in contact with several companies to determine cost and design. We will then present this information to our Church Council for further consideration.

It is our hope to have samples of chairs shipped to Goehring Hall so that we can consider design and comfort. The Church Council will then convene a General Assembly meeting to give all of us in the congregation a further chance to consider this project and how it could possibly be funded. We have probably needed to address this issue for some time...but we are asking the Lord's guidance and blessing as we proceed to plan for the successful completion of a project which will increase our safety, increase our comfort, and increase the overall beauty of God's special place here at Faith Lutheran Church.

Thank you!

Pastor Tom
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MEDITATION

The most fundamental change of heart and mind required of us is that of a constant return to the Great Tradition, the person and story of Jesus Christ, and the song that He sang.

For in everything He did and in everything He said, Jesus Christ sang a song. Sometimes, when He cured a sick person, He sang softly and gently, a song full of love. Sometimes, when He told one of His beautiful stories, He sang a haunting melody, the kind of melody that, once heard, is never forgotten, the sort of melody you hum throughout the day without even knowing that you are doing it. Sometimes, when He defended the rights of the poor, His voice grew strong and powerful, until finally, from the cross, He sang so powerfully that His voice filled the universe.

The disciples who heard Him thought that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard, and they began to sing it to others. They didn't sing as well as Jesus had – they forgot some of the words; their voices sometimes went flat – but they sang to the best of their ability, and the people who heard them thought in their turn that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard.

And so the song of Jesus gradually spread out from Jerusalem to other lands. Parents sang it to their children and it began to be passed down through the generations and through the centuries.

Sometimes, in the lives of great saints, the song was sung with exquisite beauty. At other times and by other people it was sung very badly indeed, for the song was so beautiful that there was power in possessing it, and people used the power of that song to march to war and to oppress and dominate others. Despite this, the song was always greater than the singers, and its ancient beauty could never be destroyed.

And so the song continued through the centuries, sung in many languages and forms, argued about, fought over, treated as a possession, distorted, covered by many layers of human accretions, but always captivating people by its sheer simplicity and aching beauty.

At last the song came down to us and, like so many people before us, we too were captured by the song and wanted to sing it with our whole being. The song must not stop with us, and we in our turn must hand on its beauty to those who come after us. We must always remember that this song has two special characteristics.

The first is that we, too, sing it badly, but if we sing it to the best of our ability, people do not hear only our voices. Behind us and through us they hear a stronger and surer voice, the voice of Jesus.

The second is that we always sing it better when we learn to sing it together -- not one voice here, another there, each singing different words to different melodies, but all singing one song in harmony, for it is still the most beautiful song the world has ever known.

Compared to this song, there is little else of great importance. In the atmosphere created by this song, abuse cannot flourish.

(by Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Australia, 1984-2004)