



# The Grapevine

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

—Volume 3, June 2010 Issue—

## LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE SMALL CONGREGATION!

The following is an article I thought you might enjoy reading.

I recently received it from the Rev. Matthew Harrison,  
Executive Director – LCMS World Relief and Human Care

Amid all the hype in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod over the last number of years about “growth,” some important facts about small congregations have been overlooked. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised that—if such a thing were measurable—all the well-meant talk about getting congregations to grow has in many cases impeded the very numerical growth we want.

What do I mean? I’m afraid that much of the material that we “Synod types” have put out in the church in this regard while well-intentioned, and often very good advice has disregarded the great blessings which Jesus brings people in small congregations. When our talk is all about “grow, growth, mega, magnificent,” we run the very strong risk of giving—inadvertently—the small parish the message: You’re bad, you’re sick; you’re backward, you’re abnormal. Any pastor worth his salt, with a decade or two of experience under his belt, will tell you that one significant factor in whether or not a church grows is how its members view their parish. That was certainly my experience in the parish.

I’d like to put before you a few simple thoughts in order to affirm and build up our small churches. Of the some 6,150 LCMS churches around the nation: 73 percent (4,510, more than three-fourths!) have fewer than 500 members on their rolls; 38 percent have fewer than 200 members; 35 percent have between 200 and 500 members. Of those parishes of 200 or fewer members, average attendance is 53. For those between 200 and 500 members, average Sunday attendance is 128. Yet nearly one-third of these small parishes operate schools! That, frankly, is amazing!

Here’s a couple more interesting stats. We know that as a percentage of the congregational budget, small congregations give considerably more to their district and to the Synod. And perhaps as significant as anything, smaller congregations have in many cases significantly better member attendance (48 percent attendance for the 2,363 churches under 200 members).

Over the course of my pastoral service, I served two parishes. (One was well above 500 members; the other somewhat below that number.) I can tell you from experience, the quality of pastoral care in smaller congregations is quite often phenomenal. The LCMS has some of the best-trained clergy in the nation. The vast majority of our pastors and teachers serve parishes with small numbers with “full-scale” commitment. This blessing has marked the existence of our Synod from her earliest days and will continue to mark our existence well into the future. Despite radically changing demographics, many rural parishes live out their lives in Christ with “gusto.”



More important than anything else is that in these small parishes, Christ Himself, through His blessed Word and Sacrament, dwells to give sinners life and salvation. That is the point C.F.W. Walther loved to drive home when he sensed any devaluation of smaller parishes by anyone in the Synod. Very important to me as executive director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care is that so many small parishes so well approximate the ideal Luther held up for the church, as we all are members of the same body, caring for one another.

Christ cares for us, gives Himself for us. We in turn give ourselves for the neighbor. This happens nowhere as well, as naturally, and as constantly as in the small parish. Where mistakes are made, we flee to the forgiving waters of baptism, confess our sins, and resolve in faith to begin anew in love, both “laying down our burdens in the midst of the congregation” (Luther) and also finding the burdens of others there to take up. God knows that as we often know well the sins of our neighbors (and they know ours!) in smaller congregations, the need for forgiveness and grace as we work together is all the greater!

We heartily support, thank God for, and affirm our many larger congregations that have been blessed by circumstances, God-given wisdom, demographics and grace to work hard—all which have allowed them to grow to such an extent. But let us always give thanks for the small congregations, which constantly remind us all that the church on earth is truly, and always, a “little flock.” Come to think of it, the Synod would do best if we had many, many more small congregations.

For the Rev. Matthew Harrison

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Tom" with a stylized flourish underneath.

## FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

Greetings Faith Lutheran!

The end of the school year is right around the corner. Last week I attended “Call Day” here at the Seminary. It was one of the most profound experiences that I have ever encountered. Seminary was filled with an atmosphere of joy and excitement as God-fearing Seminarians learn where they are going for the Lord’s service. This day also allowed me to reflect upon my service to the Lord and the day when I learn where the Lord takes me to do His will. I’m excited to go home and be with my family and my home church! This summer I will be preaching about once a month there and for the surrounding churches. Please pray that I find a job so that I can save for my plane ticket and schooling for my enrichment year at Cambridge University in England.

Please pray for all seminarians (especially for those who have just received their call) and me.

Joseph John Barlau

[To our Grapevine readers: Joseph’s home address is 408 Ortloff Trail in Watertown, MN 55388. He would enjoy hearing from you.]



**CONGRATULATIONS TO ANLEI LEE** Anlei received her Master's Degree in Business Administration from UC Berkeley on May 14. She was one of 250 students enrolled in the Evening and Weekend Program to earn this degree. While working for the City of Novato, Anlei also attended classes, wrote papers, took tests, and participated in projects over the past three years. During the commencement exercise, Anlei was seated on the speaker's platform with the honored guests because she received the Haas Community Fellowship Award, an award granted to two students—one in the Full-time Program and one in the Weekend and Evening Program—who accumulated the greatest number of volunteer hours while participating in their respective MBA programs. Over the past three years, Anlei contributed over 600 hours of community service while working and studying!

Anlei will now continue to work for the City of Novato while she actively seeks new employment that will allow her to utilize her hard-earned degree.

Congratulations Anlei!

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## This Month's Special Thanks

To **Vagn Nielsen** who worked on sprucing up the foliage in the front of the church almost to the day he left for vacation in Denmark!

**Scott Bamford** and **Paul Chapman** put in countless hours grooming the grounds and cleaning the patio for the Ladies' Tea.

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**THANK YOU ONE AND ALL** who volunteered to organize, decorate, and prepare for our Fifth Annual Ladies' Tea. The event was a huge success, attended by over 100 guests. Special thanks to **Martie Norrbom** who most beautifully staged items in the Boutique and to **Ilse Eichler** who performed miracles with her floral arrangements. An added attraction this year was a fashion show with clothing provided by The Total Look. The food was exceptional, and we got rave reviews from guests. As in past years, ladies were served a beverage on the patio prior to the luncheon and were attended to throughout the day by men of our congregation who most graciously volunteered their time. They performed an outstanding job in serving the guests in a most professional manner. Thanks to **John Casciani's** photography/video expertise, we have an array of photos, as well as the fashion show in its entirety, posted on the photo gallery of our web site ([flcsv.org](http://flcsv.org)) for all to view.



Again, thank you one and all; this most memorable day could not happen without your support and help.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Thompson, Lucy Musick,  
Cheryl Casciani, Janice Meneken

**FROM THE MAY 2010 FISH (Friends In Sonoma Helping) NEWSLETTER** The Steering Committee would like to recognize both past and present congregations of Faith Lutheran Church for their exceptional support of FISH's mission to serve the most needy in our community. We are most grateful that Faith Lutheran has provided a home to the monthly food surplus giveaway (first Wednesday).

This is a tremendous gift as many clients are served each month at this site. The people of Faith Lutheran also collect food and clothing donations for FISH throughout the year, and the youth group has given time and talent to the children of client families.

Thank you to Faith Lutheran Church for your many years of sharing and service.

#### **THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS COMMUNITY CONCLUDES ITS CURRENT SEASON**

Two brief studies will round out this season's Bible study activity for our Thursday evening Bible class community that meets in Goehring Hall with Pastor Tom at 6:30pm. A two-week study will be devoted to the Old Testament Book of **HAGGAI**. Haggai is a Book of barely three chapters. In 586 BC, the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Haggai's vision is to rebuild the temple and motivate the people to set about the hard work of restoration. Our study of this Book will lead us into a special "side-bar" study of **Mormon temples and the Jerusalem temple compared and contrasted**.

The final two-week study will be devoted to the New Testament Book of **PHILIPPIANS**. This is a New Testament Book of four chapters. The Apostle Paul was closer to the church of Philippi than to any other church. Our study of Philippians will also include a "**side-bar**" **trip to Acts 16** which sheds even more light on Paul's stay in Philippi.

The Thursday evening Bible class community will then take a summer vacation and regroup after Labor Day to begin a brand new study of the **BOOK OF ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**.

**MEN'S RETREAT** We are happy to announce the successful first (of hopefully many more) Men's Retreat held on Saturday, May 29th. **Pastor Tom** was joined by **Harry Akre, Kenneth Burland, Paul Chapman, Loran Eldred, Fred Krause, Herb Meneken, Don Russell, Roger Westberg and Don Wuebcke**.

On a most beautiful sunny morning, the men gathered outside Fred and Bernice's home among a grove of trees. Pastor Tom opened with prayer, followed by a section-by-section reading of Romans 12 with attendees' corresponding input, especially their personal ideas regarding "success." Lunch was provided by **Bernice Thorstenson**, assisted by **Janice Meneken**. Fred treated the men to a tour of the historical grounds, and the day concluded with dessert in celebration of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thank you Bernice and Fred for hosting this event.

## A Simple Prayer by Mary Schilder:

May all your tears attract rainbows. May all your fears prove baseless.  
May all your dis-ease be healed with love. May all your dreams keep getting bigger.

May all your paths lead you to new adventures. May your gratitude know no limits.  
May your heart hold much love...and always have room for more.  
May your wallet contain only your money...not your security.

May you know how blessed you are.  
May you know that our meetings and partings are just temporary.  
May you know that you are never alone. May you know how unbelievably special you are.

May you know how easy it is to love. May your life be lived the way you chose to live it.  
May you live your life fearlessly and follow your heart.

May you always let your light shine brightly. May you always have compassion.  
And, may you always have peace. Amen



It has pleased Almighty God in His loving wisdom to call unto Himself our beloved **MURIEL SADIE MASZTAL** and **PAUL ROGER CHAPMAN**.

Muriel died on Monday, May 3, 2010 at the age of 96. A memorial service was celebrated here at Faith Lutheran Church on Monday, May 10th, followed by a reception held in Goehring Hall. We express our appreciation to the Tea Committee in serving the reception meal.

Paul Chapman died peacefully on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 also at the age of 96. A memorial service was celebrated on May 17th at Duggan's Mission Chapel, followed by a reception held in Goehring Hall. Thanks go to our Fellowship Board for overseeing the reception festivities.

We express our sincere condolences and our confidence in the resurrection promise of our Lord Jesus to Muriel's son Don Fletcher and his wife Margaret, and to the extended family.

We express our sincere condolences to Paul Chapman, Jr., and to his extended family as well.

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

