



# The Grapevine

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

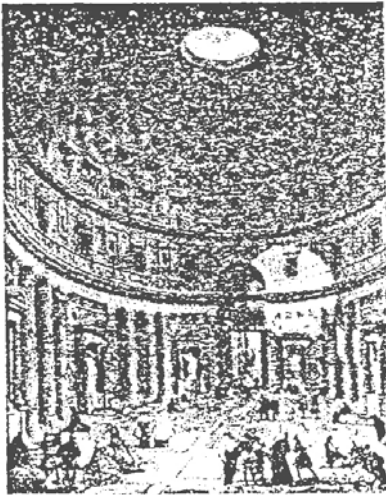
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Reformation Issue

## THE HIJACKING OF ALL HALLOWS' EVE...

Dear Members and Friends of Faith's Family,

We know that Christmas is the holiday which brings the most income to business, but do you know which holiday is second most profitable? Valentine's Day? No. Easter? No. Thanksgiving? No again. **The answer is Halloween.** It is very popular and very profitable in the U.S., but from where did Halloween come?

"Hallow" in Old English means "Holy" or "Sacred," as in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name." "Hallows' Eve" or "Halloween" simply means the "Evening of Holy Persons" and refers to the evening before All Saints' Day, which is November 1<sup>ST</sup> on the Christian calendar.



In the early years when Rome persecuted Christians, so many martyrs died for the faith that the church set aside special days to honor them. In 607, Emperor Phocas presented to the Pope the beautiful Pantheon Temple in Rome.

Originally it was built in 27 B.C. by Agrippa in honor of Augustus' victory at Actium and dedicated to the god Jupiter. The Pantheon was one of the few remaining old heathen temples. Pope Boniface IV quickly removed the statues of Jupiter and the other pagan gods and consecrated the Pantheon to "All Saints" who had died from Roman persecutions in the first 300 years after Christ.

During the dedication of the Pantheon as a new Christian church on May 13<sup>th</sup> in the year 609 or 610, a procession of twenty-eight carriages brought the bones of martyrs from various cemeteries to the church. In following years, a festival of All Hallows or All Saints' Day honoring the martyrs (who gave up their lives rather than deny the Lord Jesus Christ) spread throughout the western part of the Roman Empire.

In the Eighth Century, Pope Gregory II moved the church festival of All Saints to November 1<sup>st</sup> partly to substitute for the popular pagan celebration of the Celtic New Year which honored the sun god and Samhain, Lord of the Dead.

## **LUTHER'S HALLOWEEN BOMBSHELL**

Martin Luther's nailing of his 95 Theses on the church door of the Castle Church (the parish church of the University of Wittenberg) is often noted as the pivotal point in the Reformation. The timing and place of Luther's posting was significant – Halloween, October 31, 1517. Like the Pantheon centuries earlier, the Castle Church held a large collection of supposed relics (the largest outside of Rome). Pieces of bones from saints, locks of hair from martyrs, a piece of the true cross, a twig from Moses' burning bush, bread from the Last Supper, a veil sprinkled with the blood of Christ – all were venerated and held in holy awe.



The relics were kept in special reliquaries, ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones. All were exhibited on All Saints' Day. By 1518, 17,443 pieces were on display in twelve aisles! The church taught that paying a special fee and viewing the relics would shorten a soul's stay in purgatory by 1,902,202 years and 270 days!

This was one of many teachings Martin Luther challenged in his 95 Theses. On Halloween, the day before All Saints' Day, when the relics would be specially exhibited, Luther nailed his Theses on the church door challenging scholars to debate the virtue of indulgences—the church's teaching that by certain works a person could hasten his entrance into heaven. Luther publicly professed the free and gracious forgiveness of all sins, not by relics, Papal pardons, or indulgences, but only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

## **- - - AND IN THE NEW WORLD**

During the first 200 years in America, Halloween was not observed. Many of the Protestant settlers of North America rejected the holiday along with other feasts on the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church.

With the large Irish immigration into the new world in the 1840's, however, the holiday became more popular. Many of the old Celtic beliefs and practices were renewed in its celebration. Now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Halloween is more than an innocent observance for children dressing up in costumes and receiving sugary treats. Halloween has become something else. Halloween has become an important holiday to the growing number of believers in Satanism and practitioners of the occult.

### **So what are we, as Christians, to make of Halloween?**

First of all, we must confess that we have allowed our children and grandchildren to participate in the usual custom of dressing up, going door to door for candy. We have also enjoyed, as most of us do, having the neighborhood children come to our front door, trying to guess who is behind the mask, and giving them some seasonal treats.



There is another point of view, however. We include this sober warning from a publication of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition, contained in their magazine, **Orthodox Life**. The following words are drawn from Volume 43, #5, Sept.-Oct. 1993:

“We will be strengthened by an understanding of the spiritual danger and history of this anti-Christian feast...from an Orthodox Christian point of view, participation in these practices at any level is impossible and idolatrous, a genuine betrayal of our God, and of our holy faith. For if we participate in the ritual activity of imitating the dead by dressing up in their attire, or by wandering about in the dark, or by begging with them, then we have willfully sought fellowship with the dead whose lord is not Samhain, as the Celts believed, but Satan, the evil one who stands against God. Further, if we submit to the dialog of “trick or treat,” we make our offering not to innocent children, but to Samhain, the Lord of Death, whom they have come to serve as imitators of the dead, wandering in the dark of night.”

**While many of our readers will no doubt consider the Orthodox tradition’s point of view a bit extreme**, as Lutheran Christians we should rejoice in the fact that All Saints’ Day was retained on the calendar of the Lutheran Reformers. It is a good and Godly thing to give thanks to the Lord for all faithful Christians, living and dead, who have given their faithful witness to Christ as Lord of life, death, and resurrection. Here at Faith, we follow the laudable practice of reserving the Sunday closest to November 1<sup>st</sup> (which actually occurs on a Sunday this year) as **All Saints’ Sunday**. It is a “homecoming celebration” of all faithful believers who remember with thanksgiving those “saints,” those “believers in Jesus” who have fought the good fight of faith and received Christian burial at Faith during the past year.

**For all the saints who from their labors rest, all who by faith before the world confessed,  
Your name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Oh, may your soldiers, faithful, true, and bold, fight as the saints who nobly fought of  
old and win with them the victor’s crown of gold. Alleluia! Alleluia!**



Pastor Tom

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**Sunday School** Our children’s Sunday School program is up and running again after our summer vacation. Teachers **Anna Dohse, Paulette Miller, Mary Piller, and Susie Ryan** have prepared an exciting Bible study curriculum to take us through the fall and into Advent and Christmas. Each Sunday, children come into the church with their families for the beginning of the worship service. After the first reading, children come to the front of the church for a special children’s lesson with Pastor Tom. At the end of the lesson, one of the teachers escorts the children to the classroom in the Family Life Center for Sunday School, which lasts until the end of the worship service.

As of September 27th, **Faith now offers babysitting for toddlers during the worship service**. Toddlers may start the worship service with their parents, come forward with the other children for the children’s message, and go to the Sunday School classroom with the larger group, accompanied by a babysitter from our Youth Group.

## PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS – SUNDAY MORNING ETIQUETTE

We are so blessed to have such a friendly, caring congregation. Sunday morning is a time to gather as a church family in response to our faith and in thankfulness to God for all our blessings. It's also an opportunity to connect with each other, catch up on our activities and news of family.

The worship experience is different for each of us, although we say the same prayers, sing the same hymns and hear the same readings. Some people are very vocal about their enthusiasm and joy for being at church and seeing friends. Others need quiet, reflective moments. As a result of comments from various parishioners, I offer the following guidelines.

### Arrival

As we enter the sanctuary before worship begins, Mark Rasmussen sets the tone with beautiful music. This is our cue to take our seats and begin reflection and readiness to worship. We'll have time to visit during coffee hour.

### Communion

As we make public confession, we also need time to reflect on ourselves and privately commune with God. Some people find it disruptive when individuals greet each other as they proceed to and return from receiving the body and blood of Christ. Please avoid using this time as a recess for socializing.

### Church Office Hours

We are so fortunate to benefit from the skills provided by Valerie Kemp, our church secretary. She works in the office Tuesday – Friday. Sunday is her day of rest. We all need to remember to conduct business with her during her work hours, not on Sunday morning.

### Dismissal

Sometimes it seems like a long wait to be dismissed by the ushers. Remember, they are keeping a watchful eye on Pastor Tom greeting parishioners and are trying to prevent a long back up of eager people ready to give Pastor a hug or shake his hand. This is a great opportunity to get a jump start on greeting one another. Some of the best conversations have taken place while waiting in line to say hello to Pastor, especially with visitors.

May we all find the joy and peace we need as we worship and commune together.

In love and service,  
Cheryl Casciani

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**Rally Day** Our **Rally Day church picnic**, sponsored by Faith's Education Committee, traditionally kicks off the beginning of the Sunday School, Bible Study, and Youth Group school year. This year, Rally Day takes place on **Sunday, October 4th**, right after church, on the church patio. The Education Committee is barbecuing hot dogs, Polish sausages, and hamburgers, and is providing condiments, relishes, chips, and beverages. Several members of our church family are bringing salads and side dishes, and **Kathy & Mike AhSan are providing dessert to celebrate Dick & Bev McComb's October 4th wedding anniversary.**

In addition to food, our Rally Day festivities include games and activities for all ages. Children and grown-ups may enjoy crafts, face-painting, bubbles, water balloons, and even a soccer game. Everyone should enjoy plenty of food, fellowship, and fun at Faith's Rally Day picnic!

**KEEPING OUR HIGHWAYS CLEAN** On a Saturday morning every couple of months, when it's not raining or too foggy, a group of six to twelve people from our church walk up and down a 1.2 mile stretch of Highway 121/12 picking up litter. This is part of a voluntary program, called Adopt-A-Highway, initiated by the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans for short) to help beautify our state highways.



Our Faith litter crew meets at the church at 8:00 am (8:30 in the winter) on a given Saturday, and we carpool to the old Stornetta Dairy (now Laura Chenel's goat cheese) parking lot, where Napa Road runs into Hwy. 121. We split up into groups of 2-4, each group taking a portion along the shoulder of the highway. Caltrans provides fluorescent yellow safety vests, gloves, white litter bags, and litter grabbers. We also are provided with hard hats (although some participants are too hard-headed to wear them).

Our church took on the project in 1999. No record has been kept of how many bags of litter have been picked up since then, but each time we pick up eight to twenty bags of litter in the white Adopt-A-Highway bags. The litter ranges from fast food wrappers and cups to all sorts of plastic, glass and aluminum containers for water, beer, wine and soft drinks. (It is rather scary to think of how many beer cans and bottles are tossed out of moving vehicles along the highway!) As the group picks up litter, recyclable items are put in separate bags for recycling. An unexpected treat in the spring months is to get a close-up view of the beautiful wildflowers along the roadside.

What's the value and purpose of this project? Two thoughts stand out: One is that we are helping to take care of a small part of God's creation by removing some of the blight caused by careless and thoughtless humans. A second value is that it gives Faith Lutheran Church some publicity and name recognition with the signs at each end of our section of highway. It lets all who pass by know that we are concerned not only with eternal values, but also with community service, and with making our place in this temporal world a better place for everyone. This has been a very satisfying and gratifying experience!

The next opportunity to pick up litter is scheduled for **Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am**. You are welcome to join us. Call **John Marozik** at **938-1191** for more information.

**8:30AM—IT'S NOT TOO LATE** Sunday is the day for Word and Sacrament, lively Christian fellowship, and Bible study. The Bible study part of our Sunday experience begins at 8:30am in Goehring Hall with Pastor Tom. We are on an extensive study of the basics of the Catechism with lots of scriptural support and life-related history and observations. We invite you to reconsider where you happen to be at 8:30am on Sundays and come and be with your fellow "saints" as we involve ourselves in the best preparation for worship possible...the systematic study of the Scriptures and the Catechism.

**ORGAN DEDICATION** While the piano has accompanied the worship of God at Faith for many years and will continue its special task, our worshipers on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, discovered that our beautiful new Ahlborn-Galanti organ supports and encourages congregational singing in ways a piano simply cannot. The dedication of the new instrument will happen on **Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, during the 10:00am celebration.** A special coffee fellowship in thanksgiving for the new organ will happen immediately following the liturgy. A **dedicatory recital** is to be scheduled some time in the beginning of **2010** with a special guest artist supplied by the Ahlborn-Galanti Organ Company. We will invite the greater Sonoma community, as well as our parish congregation and friends to be in attendance. It will likely occur late on a Sunday afternoon, to be followed by a special reception in Goehring Hall. As plans solidify, your Grapevine Newsletter will contain all the details well in advance.

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN** Our vibrant, enthusiastic early Thursday evening Bible class community (which numbers weekly between 40-60 people) has begun a major new study of the Gospel of John. We invite all of our readers to seriously consider becoming part of this excellent experience in Christian fellowship and learning. You can enter this study at any time. Orientation study guides will be given to you for your own private reading and your participation in the weekly chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse study will prove enriching indeed.

**A SPECIAL SUPPORT GROUP** is in the planning for all folks in the congregation who grieve the death of spouses and children. Pastor Tom and Anna Dohse are formulating plans for such a group and it is anticipated that participants will be using a lovely, new study guide, "Don't Sing Songs To A Heavy Heart"...a resource to those who are suffering, by Kenneth C. Haugk, Ph.D. a Lutheran Pastor and psychologist. Those of you in our parish family who live with grief over a loved one no longer in your family circle will find solace and mutual support and care from such a group. Please stay tuned as the details unfold in coming weeks.

## **THE TRAVEL CHANNEL COMES TO FAITH . . .**



Upon Pastor Tom's return from a three-week foray into Southeast Asia (with time spent in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and an Island of Laos), many of our members have expressed interest in this interesting educational experience.

Pastor Tom is inviting all of our readers to "An Afternoon In Thailand" on Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm. We'll have refreshments, pictures, and lots of humorous, informative commentary.

## HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL AGENCIES OUR READERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

**EQUIPPING TO SHARE** From time to time we hear from members of our congregation that a workshop experience on how to naturally share one's faith with others would be very helpful. As it happens, Lutheran Hour Ministries of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod provides just such an equipping workshop experience. One is planned to be held at St. John's Lutheran Church in Napa on **Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00am – 2:00pm**. St. John's will provide the workshop materials and lunch, free of charge to all participants. The focus of this workshop is equipping people to share their faith in everyday circumstances. The presenter from Lutheran Hour will be Linda Stewart. She is Director of Communications and Training at Urban Strategies, Inc. in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sharon Forrest chairs our Board of Mission Outreach and will be promoting this helpful experience and encouraging as many of us from Faith as possible to join with our sisters and brothers in the faith at St. John's in Napa on November 7<sup>th</sup>.

**FREE CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP** Being the caregiver for someone with a serious illness can be stressful and exhausting. It helps to have a safe place to discuss thoughts and feelings with others who understand and may be going through the same things. You may be in an ideal position to identify those who may be in need of this support.

As a service to the Sonoma community, Hospice of Petaluma is facilitating an on-going drop-in support group for those who are providing care and emotional sustenance to a family member or friend with a serious illness or disability. The group meets every **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 11:00am at Vintage Sonoma (across from Friedman's)** at 91 Napa Road. If you have any questions, please call Hospice of Petaluma at 778-6242.

**TAKING GOD'S WORD TO THE WORLD** Many of our readers will be familiar with **The Gideons**. The Gideons distribute scriptures in more than 180 countries in the world and in more than 80 languages. They focus their efforts on certain traffic lanes of life where large numbers of people can be reached who may be searching for answers or for hope. Students, hospital patients, travelers, prisoners, the military, and police-fire-medical personnel all receive free copies of the life-changing Word of God provided through the generosity of churches like ours. **We will have a chance to learn more about the ministry of The Gideons at our next General Assembly meeting.** When that meeting is scheduled, we will have a representative from Gideons give a very brief presentation to our gathered assembly. Folks will have an opportunity, if they choose, to offer financial support to The Gideons as well.

**FINANCIAL HOPE FOR AMERICA** This is a non-profit organization that provides free service to the millions of Americans that are currently going through the gut-wrenching experience of foreclosure. If any of our readers know of anyone in foreclosure, the non-profit will **HALT** the sale of the property for free and work with the homeowner and lender to **KEEP THE FAMILY IN THEIR HOME**. Margaret Currie is the contact person for families in our Sonoma area. For more information on this organization, please call Valerie in our church office and she will direct you to this organization.

