

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

February 2009

Our mission is to share the life, love and joy of Jesus Christ with others

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PASTOR'S CORNER

February is a month of "Change". Super Bowl Sunday begins the month, when the Title of National Champions change from last year's team to this year's - which unfortunately is not going to be the Eagles. We also have Valentine's Day on the 14th when we change from taking out loved ones for granted and do special things to express our love for them. Presidents' Day may have a special emphasis this year since we have recently changed presidents. And we are hoping that this new President will make some good changes for our country and the world.

On the 22nd we observe the Transfiguration of Our Lord. In Mark's Gospel we will read: "Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by them-selves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them." Jesus' image was changed as he stood with Elijah and Moses in front of his disciples. They then knew, for sure, that Jesus was the Son of God. This change was good.

February 25th brings us to Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. It is a time when we are called to repent. Repent means to change direction. Change direction from living a sinful life to leading a more godly life. No matter how saintly we may think we are, there is still room for change. You know, better than anyone who knows you, that there is room for self-improvement. God knows it too.

Are we working to our fullest potential? Do we forgive others as easily as we would like to be forgiven? Have we been taking care of the resources God has given us by recycling and using things efficiently? Do we care for our bodies in the way God would want? Do we get enough sleep, exercise regularly, and eat properly? I doubt that any of us can honestly say that we do not need to change.

Change! That's an obvious theme in the month of February. God came to earth to bring about change. God changed humanity from being a hopeless group of people, to giving us hope through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of this gift - WE have changed. We are now people who live in the midst of God's grace and have the promise of Eternal Life. Thanks to God, change is good! Let's allow God to use us to help bring about change in others.

Yours in Christ,
The Rev. R. Bruce Todd

From the Vicar...

Experience, one has to live to discover the meaning of life. There was no way to explain the Boar's Head Festival, "Just wait Jim until you experience it!" Those words rang true beyond my imagination. Thanks be to God for a wonderful experience! For me Boar's Head weekend was filled with many memories; the stories past and present, singing with the choir, watching each person just know what to do next, the camaraderie among the generations, seeing hundreds of smiling faces, hearing the music, being a beefeater...the first year!

Like the Boar's Head, you have to experience the presence of God to understand; even then it is still a mystery. God loves and cares for all people regardless of life situations. Lent is a time of searching for God's presence in the gifts given each day. It is a time of repentance and reflection of taking stock of all that we have.

In the early church, Lent was a preparatory time for Easter when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, Christians imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. In the wilderness of life, we find a loving and merciful God who calls us to strip ourselves bare of all pretenses to righteousness, to come before God in dust and ashes, to empty ourselves of our false pride, of our rationalizations that prevent us from seeing ourselves as needy creatures, of our "perfectionist" tendencies that blind us.

Through prayer that gives up self, we seek to open ourselves up before God, and to hear anew the call "Come unto me!" We seek to recognize and respond afresh to God's presence in our lives and in our world. We seek to place our needs, our fears, our failures, our hopes, our very lives in God's hands, again. And we seek by abandoning ourselves in Jesus' death to experience who God is, to allow His transforming grace to work in us once more, and to come to worship Him on Easter Sunday with a fresh victory and hope.

Perhaps during this Lenten Season we should take off our righteous robes during these 40 days to put ashes on our own heads, to come before God with a new humility willing to confess, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Maybe we should be willing to prostrate ourselves before God and plead, "Lord, in my hand no price I bring; simply to the cross I cling." That might put us in a position to experience God in ways that we have not had in a long time. And it may be the beginning of a healing for which we have so longed.

O Lord, begin with me. Here. Now.

PLEASE HELP OUR PASTORAL VISITS

A reminder -- HIPPA regulations do not permit the church office to receive or request hospital admissions of their members. We rely on you to notify the church office as soon as possible. The answering machine is checked regularly after office hours and on weekends. Help us to help you.

BOOK REVIEW AND DISCUSSION



Vicar Jim will lead a book review and discussion of *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young.

This fictional novel is about a Christian father explaining the relationship he holds with God to his loving children. The author claims the story is not fictional and is about real conversations with God. The plot summary of the *The Shack* goes like this - A protagonist named Mackenzie Phillips gets a chance to meet God at a shack deep in the forest. Mackenzie takes his time to decide whether he should accept the invitation and take this chance. Finally, one day he decides to go to the shack and meet God. About four years before, Mackenzie's

daughter was kidnapped and murdered. All the evidence of her murder pointed to the same shack he was visiting. Mackenzie and his family underwent a serious bad time after they lost their daughter.

When Mackenzie arrived near the shack - he could feel the difference in the environment of the shack with God's presence. He meets God in the shack and stays for few days. Mackenzie returns home after this meeting a completely changed person. The conversation he had with God made him understand the love of God and his feelings for humanity.

The power of forgiveness, a basic theme of the novel, is the greatest power humanity possesses. The book emphasizes God's love and claims human freedom to be the root of evil. The book also focuses on forgiveness which could be a solution to evil. *The Shack* gives the feel of God and his love to human beings in a more meaningful manner.

Discover where the shake of your life is located and how God is calling you to meet him there. Our time together will help us shape our own spirituality. How do we handle times of grief? How do we handle forgiveness? How do we receive God's grace in our lives? Where is God when we need Him most? There are only a few of the questions that will lead our discussions. Be prepared to be like Mackenzie, a changed person as we discover God in our life.

Join our discussions on Wednesdays beginning February 4 and continuing through April 1 (except February 25) at noon and 7:30 pm. Bring your lunch or a snack to share. Beverage provided.



YOUTH VISIONING – Thank You to all who participated in the Youth Ministry Visioning Process. Your input was helpful to further develop this ministry of St. Peter's. The Youth of our congregation are the next generation to share the life, love and joy of Jesus Christ with others. They need our love and support along the journey of faith. Together as the body of Christ we are called to let our light so shine before others so they can see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.



Every three years, the youth of the ELCA assembles in a National Youth Gathering to share their common love of God through Christ Jesus. It is a life changing experience for young persons aged 14-18 to come together from all walks of life joining together to serve the Lord. Young adults come home filled with God's love in ways yet to be discovered, empowered to share with others and openness to seek God in daily living.

So... what does this *Jesus Justice Jazz* logo say?

What does it mean?

This logo art emerged as we thought about the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering being in New Orleans, the devastation and recovery from Hurricanes

Katrina and Rita, what we hope to learn about serving others in the manner of Jesus, and the promises of God's presence in the world.

The chaotic, dark, swirling on the left of the graphic reminds us of the darkness and confusion that we sometimes experience in the world. You can almost feel the powerful wind and destruction of a hurricane.

And in the midst of the chaos, confusion, and mess is the cross, drawing our vision to the light and hope of Jesus. It is Jesus who draws us into a life of compassionate justice wherever we are and whomever we're with. It is Jesus who sets us free into the world jazzed for justice, for kindness, and for humble walking with God.

Jesus Justice Jazz stands bold and connected to what seems confusing and disconnected. Our faith and our baptismal call to be bold, compassionate witnesses in the world are always connected and relevant to whatever is swirling around us.

Jesus Justice Jazz, the theme for the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering, draws from the rich faith history, diverse cultures, and arts of New Orleans. It will stretch our understanding of what it means to live in relationship and service with each other in the manner of Christ... for life... wherever we are! Planning teams work with local congregations and organizations, young people, and the city to pay attention to what makes the city of New Orleans unique, as well as better understand the changes it is going through as the entire Gulf Coast region continues to recover after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The focus for this gathering will be on service and justice as we live our shared reality as Christians: *Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world.*

Youth and adults are immersed in worship, music, Bible study, service, learning, play, prayer, the witness of faithful leaders from around the world, reflection, caring for others, and new friendships. The Gathering is a time of change and growth because we gather in the presence of God's Spirit with others who journey with Jesus.

The Gathering holds promise ELCA Youth will enter into God's presence in New Orleans to receive the witness of others and practice their faith through worship, prayer, play, service, and learning. The Gathering holds promise in responding to several questions related to the social mission of the church. How can young people, through their experiences in New Orleans, step into their baptismal vocation as Christians and see themselves within God's narrative of love and justice? What will empower them to leave New Orleans more committed to shaping their congregations into compassionate communities of faith? How will youth discover the joy of holistic living where heart and head are joined together with life-giving Christian practices? How will they discover anew that God in Christ loves all humankind and all of creation unconditionally and shows that love each day through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit? The Gathering's theme -- *Jesus Justice Jazz* -- is the catalyst for answers to these and other questions.

St. Peter's and the National Youth Gathering...

Four youth (Lauren Daneke, Kyle McGarry, Corey O'Brien, Samantha 'Sam' Terry), and two adults (Ellen Daneke, John O'Brien) are registered to participate in this life changing experience. These young persons are working to raise the funds for this trip. The cost is \$1500 per person including airfare, housing, registration, and meals. They thank you for your support to date. Please keep these persons in prayer as they continue to make this life experience a reality. Over the coming months we will hear presentation by these persons reflecting on what they anticipate during their time in New Orleans.

If you would like to 'sponsor' contribute financially, please submit your contribution to the church office. Mark it "National Youth Gathering". Our next fundraiser is in cooperation with the Social Ministry Committee on February 1 with the "Souper Bowl/Hoagie Sale".

For additional information visit the National Youth Gathering web site <http://archive.elca.org/youth/gathering.html>





YOUNG FAMILY GROUP NEWS.

February 8th after 10AM Worship: Have fun & fellowship while making Valentine's Day cards and "Kiss Mix" for Laurel House moms and their children. Everyone is invited to the Fellowship Hall to help!

We would very happily accept donations of mugs, hot chocolate packets, red cinnamon hearts, and Hershey kisses. Please place donations in the box in the Chapel.

The Easter Season is fast approaching which means the Young Family Group will once again be hosting St. Peter's Annual Easter Egg Scramble on April 5th!

On March 29th we will be stuffing hundreds of plastic Easter eggs. Everyone is invited to share a few laughs while helping to fill the eggs and compete over who has the best egg opening technique and who can fill eggs the fastest. _ We will meet in the Fellowship Hall after the 10AM service.

We are in need of plastic eggs, small trinkets (stickers, balls, etc), candy and larger items for "Golden Ticket" winners. Please place donations in the box in the Chapel. Thank you!!

If you would like to be included on the YFG mailing list please send an email to sarahlcohen@comcast.net Thank you.

COMMUNITY ELDERS

Youth - Youth - Youth! Everyone always talks about the Youth! Maybe you never realized that St. Peter's host "Community Elders." The President is Joe Spare (yes - we have to listen to his jokes) and we meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 11:45 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall at St. Peter's. We bring our own lunch, but yummy desserts are always provided. Following lunch we have various programs of interest. Every now and then we plan bus trips and other activities. Come out and join us. After all - youth is only an age!

Stewardship Notes

Focus on New Members Continues

Our focus this month is on Sue Rataj who lives in the Roxborough section of Philadelphia. Originally from Grace Lutheran, she moved on to Redeemer after Grace closed. While there she painted the church for her daughter's wedding in 2006! Her daughter and son-in-law joined St. Peter's with her; they are Nick and Jennifer Dean.

Sue enjoys reading and computer games, and would like to be a part of the Boar's Head Festival next year—we are sure we will have a job for her!

Finally (interesting tidbit), our own Claire Riggs was Sue's Sunday School teacher when both were at Grace—small world, indeed!

Sue works as a medical assistant at Children's Hospital. We are happy to welcome her to the St. Peter's family!

St. Peter's Monitors

Everyone has now noticed the colorful monitors in the narthex and the stairway. Be sure to stop for a moment and find out what is going on. Learn about how you can participate and support our mission. There is lots happening, and this is a way to learn about how you can be a part of the action. We need your help!

Finally,

Remember the Legacy Seminar? Even in challenging times, you can plan ahead to make a legacy gift to our church. When meeting with your financial planner, take a moment to work out a way to include St. Peter's in your plans. If in doubt, see the Pastor or contact any member of the Stewardship Committee to learn how you can make this happen. We can answer your questions!

CHANGES IN ST. PETER'S CONGREGATION

Death:

Mary Barthelemy

Transfer:

Lee Ann Rostron

January 16, 2009

COLLEGE STUDENT ADDRESS

College students LOVE to receive mail - even mail from their church. We would like to send our Newsletter to our College Student Members. We need their addresses! Would you either call, mail or e-mail them to the church office. You can even write it down and place it in the offering plate some Sunday. Help us stay connected with this group of members.

Holy Cow

The Sunday School is hoping to open the gate to God's barnyard by purchasing a cow through the ELCA Good Gifts Program. The "Good Gifts Program" helps provide animals to third world villages so families can become self-sufficient. Our goal is to raise \$500.00 (the cost of one cow) through Sunday School offerings. If you are interested in helping the Sunday School reach its goal, please use an offering envelope in the pew and mark it "Holy Cow".

Did you know? A good dairy cow can produce four gallons of milk a day - enough for a family to drink and share with neighbors. Milk protein transforms sick, malnourished children into healthy boys and girls. The sale of surplus milk earns money for school fees, medicine, clothing and home improvements. And because a healthy cow can produce a calf every year, every gift will be passed on and eventually help an entire community move from poverty to self reliance. Now that's a gift worth giving!

WITH SINCERE THANKS...

Dear Rev. Todd,

I wanted to let you and the cast of the Boar's Head Festival know that everyone on the bus said, "YES! it was absolutely worth the trip and overwhelmingly recommended we offer it again next year. We appreciated the friendliness and helpfulness of the greeters with coats and seating - as we planned to arrive earlier, but were delayed due to an accident. There were many specific comments about "the neat experience, the superb job of the participants, the neat end to the Season, the nice beginning for a new year", etc, etc. Please share with participants and especially directors; I know a production like this takes a lot of time and hard work.

Blessings to all, Norma Grace Strawbridge

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

The family of Dr. Frank Zindel acknowledges with grateful appreciation your kind expression of sympathy to St. Peter's Prayer Circle, Thank you for your kind expressions of sympathy. My sister, Diane, Bob and I greatly appreciate your thoughts and prayers. Sincerely, Susan Zindel Bisbing
May the quiet beauty of this lovely season...Bring you deep joy and warm memories to cherish throughout the coming year. "My daughter and I wanted to express our thanks of appreciation for the holiday presents that we received from different members of your church. My daughter loved everything she received as did I. It helped our family so much." Sincerely, Family Mom-M (Jennifer and Amber) (Recipients of gifts from Social Ministry's Giving Tree)
With sincere thanks, "I wish to thank everyone for their thoughts and prayers following my accident and brief hospital stay. It is heart warming to be remembered by such a caring congregation. Also my thanks to Pastor Todd and Vicar Jim for their prayers and visits. Theresa Weber

ST. PETER'S YOUTH



Dates to remember for February

Ski trip to Jack Frost

Skiing, tubing & snowboarding.

Saturday February 7th, 8 am With Mrs. O'Brien & Pastor Todd

SPY Time

We're planning Youth Sunday. We welcome any adults who would like to help.

Sunday February 15th, 11 am With Mrs. O'Brien & Vicar Jim

Kid-Sitting Fundraiser

This is a fun night of crafts, games, snacks & a movie for all ages, \$5 per child/per hour.

Friday February 20th, 5-10 pm With Mrs. Graham & Mrs. O'Brien

Youth Sunday Rehearsal & Sleep Over

We'll practice; have dinner play games & then shhh go to sleep!

Saturday February 28th, 5 pm With Mrs. O'Brien, Vicar Jim & Mrs. Mellor

Dates to remember for March...

Youth Sunday

Sunday March 1st

8:30 & 10:00 a.m. Services

Silver Springs Party for the Children

The children love seeing SPY arrive with crafts, games, music & snacks.

Donations welcomed.

Sunday March 15th, 1 pm With Mrs. O'Brien & Vicar Jim

Kid-Sitting Fundraiser

This is a fun night of crafts, games, snacks & a movie for all ages, \$5 per child/per hour.

Friday March 20th 5- 9 pm With Mrs. Graham & Mrs. O'Brien

Conkerr Cancer- A Case for Smiles

We are designing & sewing pillowcases for kids in the hospital. Sewers needed.

Sunday March 29th 11 am With Mrs. O'Brien & Mrs. Kirschenman

"Questions, comments and ideas welcomed. Email DanielleOrganizes@msn.com"