

THE MESSENGER OF HOPE



The Newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church

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Fifth Sunday in Lent to
Third Sunday of Easter

April 2006



WORDS OF HOPE

by *Pastor Curtis Aguirre*

A few weeks ago, Peggy McManus and I went to a retreat and training event called "Leadership in Contemplative Prayer." It was a four day event which the organizers (the Contemplative Society and Cynthia Bourgeault) admitted was something of an experiment. Church leaders (mostly Anglicans, but also United, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and even a Baptist) were brought together to strategize about bringing contemplative prayer into the life of congregations, and to receive, in the form of an extensive manual, some practical guidelines for doing so. Just as important, however, we also spent a lot of time in contemplative prayer and contemplative worship.

As a result of this retreat/training event, Peggy and I are working on bringing some seasoned teachers of Centering Prayer up from Victoria this fall. Hope Lutheran will serve as the venue for a teaching event which will be promoted in all of the Anglican churches in this area, as well as many other churches and related institutions (mark October 14 on your calendars).

Why is this important to me? What are the benefits to the congregation? Certainly, I do not expect everyone to be drawn to contemplative practice. It definitely appeals more to the introspective crowd than to those who are more outwardly oriented. And yet, you will find both extroverts and introverts practicing contemplative prayer. In fact, many high energy extroverts find contemplative practice an important part of creating balance in their lives.

Neither do I see contemplative prayer as a replacement for ordinary public worship or ordinary types of prayer. And yet, those who do practice contemplative prayer come at these more common forms with a new appreciation and a new understanding of them.

This isn't about making everyone into a contemplative. Rather, it is about helping those who in their seeking and their spiritual journey are looking for something more, something a bit deeper, something that constitutes a spiritual path, to tap into this part of themselves, and to guide them accordingly.

The particular contemplative practice that I am hoping to have taught here is called Centering Prayer. Many books have been written about it, and if you want to know more you can read any of Thomas Keating's books, or read local author Cynthia Bourgeault's "Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening." Here again, I am not saying this is the only form or even the best form, but it is the form I have come to know and which I practice. Therefore I am most at ease with introducing this practice in an intentional way in the congregation. It is something I don't just know about, but something I actually know.

The benefit of nurturing the (potentially) contemplative members of a congregation in a contemplative practice is that these people become a kind of calming and centering leaven in the loaf of the congregation. The intentional practice of contemplative prayer deepens in a person the profound sense of the all encompassing and ever abiding presence of God. Centering Prayer in particular trains a person in letting go and surrendering oneself into God's presence. All those little nitpicky things that often become the source of fights and battles in the life of a congregation become utterly unimportant. Only God matters, and embodying the will and love of God.

This is not an overnight change. It is slow. It is incremental. It moves along as those who practice deepen their own practice. It is not a program for church growth (although many who left the Church years ago seeking out Eastern religions are finding their way back to their roots through contemplative practice in

churches) or for keeping people entertained. It is a path of transformation that moves from within to influence the entire congregation, as a little bit of yeast will cause a large loaf to rise./*

YOUTH SPAGHETTI DINNER

The Youth Group are raising funds to go to the Canadian Lutheran Youth Gathering (CLYG) this summer in Winnipeg. On Saturday, April 8, starting at 5:00 p.m., the youth will put on a spaghetti dinner as one of their fundraisers. Be watching for the sign-up sheet.

YOUTH BOTTLE DRIVE

The Youth Group are raising funds to go to the Canadian Lutheran Youth Gathering (CLYG) this summer in Winnipeg. Please bring your empty deposit bottles and cans to the church and place them in the marked container. Your donation is much appreciated!

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY BLESSINGS

Beginning on April 8, we will be marking the week's birthdays and anniversaries in the Sunday morning services by offering a blessing to all those who are on our birthday and anniversary lists for that week. An office volunteer will be calling you the week before to alert you to this and invite you to be there to receive the blessing.

TUESDAY GARDENERS STARTING UP IN APRIL

The Tuesday Morning Gardeners are starting up again on April 4. They meet at 9:00 a.m. and break by noon. There's also always plenty of time for a coffee break and great conversation. This is a wonderful way to help keep the church grounds looking tidy, to get some fresh air and physical exercise, to have fellowship with fellow Christians, and to practice good stewardship. How can you go wrong? See you there!

HOPE LUTHERAN LOOKING FOR PART TIME YOUTH WORKER

Below is the job description for the Youth worker position which has been created by approval of our last Annual General Meeting, and as worked out by

the Church Council. Interested parties are asked to contact Pastor Curtis or Dick McManus or write a letter of interest to the church. Applications will be taken until Easter Sunday (April 16, 2006).

JOB DESCRIPTION

Supervision: The Youth Worker reports to the Council, and works in cooperation with the Pastor and Ministry Through Learning.

Youth Ministry Mission Statement: Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which youth can learn to make the connections between the Christian faith and everyday life.

Qualifications: Espousal of the Christian faith, grounded in the Lutheran tradition of teaching and worship, emotional maturity, personal integrity, ability to organize and lead group programs and events, ability to communicate with youth and adults, ability to cooperate with others.

General Responsibilities:

- to establish a relational ministry with young people in grades 7 - 12 within the congregation and the community which includes both fun activities, learning opportunities, and service opportunities;
- to develop leadership skills among the young people with the goal of having them assume greater responsibilities in both the youth ministry and the life of the congregation in general;
- to include in the regular weekly schedule of the youth program a Sunday morning component.
- to provide monthly reports to Council, and a report for the Annual General Meeting

Working Conditions: The position is a part time position that requires flexibility in hours available for work. This is considered a 10 hour/week position, but we recognize that the amount of time each week may vary. The Youth Worker will bill the congregation for hours worked at the rate of \$10/hr. to a maximum of 40 hours per month. The Youth Worker will also be able to be reimbursed for supplies. For maximum amount refer to Youth Supplies line item in the Congregational Budget.

CHARITY OF THE MONTH - APRIL 2006

The BC Synod Student Aid Fund is a “diminishing fund” from which the Synod Committee for Theological Education and Leadership (CTEL) draws \$5000 each year to provide financial assistance to seminary students. To qualify for aid, students must be:

- a) currently endorsed by CTEL,
- b) attending a seminary or educational institution approved by CTEL,
- c) full-time students in good standing,
- d) not on internship, and
- e) demonstrate need.

The annual \$5000 amount is shared by all candidates according to need. If you would like to support the ongoing training of future pastors and diaconal ministers through this fund, please indicate so on your envelopes under Charity of the Month.

CHANGES TO THE MEDITATION GROUP

Starting April 4, the Meditation Group will move to Tuesdays at 8:00 a.m.

The format will also change. The new format for the group will be shaped more like a “contemplative worship service” than simply a meditation group. Singing of Taizé style chants, reading of short scripture passages, silent reflection and meditation time will be followed by a simple form of Communion called “Contemplative Eucharist”.

If you have any interest in finding a time of stillness and refreshment during the week, come and try this out.

The “Midweek Reflective Communion”, as it is to be called, will be no more than 45 minutes long.

FROM THE CHAIR Jan Nilsson

Congregational building

At our annual Council planning meeting, last Saturday March 18th, the idea to be deliberate in Congregational building came up for discussion for possible inclusion as a goal and objective for 2006. In the discussion that followed someone suggested it might refer to the physical building itself, the church; while others believed that it really meant the people of the church. I suppose both views are

equally right as it depends much on ones own reference point.

Calling the physical church building, the congregational building, might sound a bit awkward but it is not wrong, and calling the church “the people” is correct too except we more often call it the congregation. So it’s rather easy to be misunderstood if we aren’t clear in our intent in our communication with one another.

So, this is what Congregational building means to me, it is the building of a common purpose, with common goals and a desire to do what is best for the church universal and for our own church. The standard is Jesus Christ and his teachings the challenge for us is to understand that standard. It also means that when we have our differences and we will we know how to deal positively and constructively with our differences.

But more often than we think we do we paint the goals of the church in the colours of our own desires and leanings. So our common purpose and goals might not be as common as we think they are. So we trudge happily along quite ignorant of the potential for conflict until it comes to a head and now it surprises us. We get hurt feelings, we get angry, and unhappy and we mutter under our breath “who does he think he is?”. So now we gossip behind the person’s back and make things worse.

My hope is that the concept of Congregational building will help us understand that it is ok ay to disagree but not okay to not deal with it in caring and constructive ways.

It irks me to no end when I watch some of the people programs on TV these days where there is a disagreement between characters, arguments ensues, accusations fly and the accuser runs out the door in mid sentence before anything can be resolved , and now the rest of the program is there to try to resolve what didn't need to happen in the first place. Not a good model to follow.

One of our mid-term goals is Congregational building with one of the short-term goals this year being "Gather resources/material with regards to congregational building. Hope you agree this is a good common goal.

God's blessing- Jan

Review of the 2005 plans to achieve our short-term goals.

1. An outreach program was developed. The next step is to implement the program, which is one of this year's short-term goals.
2. We encouraged all members to be actively involved in stewardship i.e. talks, sermons, specific directed projects, emergencies.
3. Social Justice focus champions, Verna and Charlie, have started the process re social justice through the coffee houses. Projects such as Ride into Light, Lisa Rokeby's Paraguay project, and the Oiko Credit program also contributed to increasing the congregational awareness of Social Justice.
4. We have redefined the secretarial and youth program coordinator positions.
5. While we have not become fiscally sound, we re working towards that goal. This year's emergency paving and roof repairs caused some additional stress on our finances.

Short Term Goals for 2006 (Objectives 1 year)

Encourage all members to be involved in ongoing stewardship and identify specific stewardship opportunities.

1. Implement Outreach program from 2005
2. Develop specific opportunities for fellowship throughout the year
3. Hire a youth worker and professional secretarial support.
4. Gather resources/material with regards to congregational building. Possibly provide opportunities to groups/congregation for congregational building, specifically dealing with conflict.
5. Membership

Our 2006 plan to carry out our short-term goals.

Note: The numbers 1, 2, 3 etc in each table below refer to the short-term goals we have decided on as listed above.

Strategic Responsibility Table

Objective#1: Implement Outreach program from 2005

Champion: Jan, Vibeke

Involved: Verna, Gillian

Objective#2: Develop Fellowship program with specific opportunities through the year

Champion: Janet

Involved: Norm, Carolyn

Objective#3: Hire Youth Worker/Professional Sec.

Champion: Church Executive

Objective#4: Seek Resources for Congregational Building in particular conflict resolution

Champion: Carolyn

Involved: Curtis, Dick

Objective#5: Membership

Champion: Janet

Involved: David

RESOLVING CHURCH CONFLICTS - A COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Taken from the website of the Center for Conflict Resolution, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, USA

Jesus told us there would be conflict: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33, NIV.

And churches are not exempt. In fact, a wise man has suggested that if Jesus had made his statement in specific reference to churches he might have said, "Wherever two or more are gathered in my name there will be conflict!"

However, we obviously all want peace within our churches and most of us understand how difficult that can be to achieve.

If you are looking for ways to bring peace to your church, you must seek a commitment to peace -- for you personally, for your church leaders, and eventually for your entire church membership.

A commitment to peace can be made by committing to three vital concepts -- the 3 Cs.

First, you must make a commitment to **COMMUNICATION.**

Communication is simply a sharing of information. Communication is a practical function that helps identify opportunities, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses. Scholars in communication tell us that there are numerous subsets of the category of communication: good, bad, effective, ineffective, complete, incomplete, etc. Almost all agree that communication from any subset is preferable to the absence of communication (which is actually another subset of communication!).

For some reasons, in church settings, we often believe that not communicating at all is preferable to addressing a disagreement or conflict. Christians must be committed to active communication -- the constant sharing of informa-

tion with others. The path to make this communication effective and helpful is promoted by the second commitment.

Second, you must make a commitment to **CONVERSATION.**

Conversation is enhanced communication. It can be best described as a place or environment where communications can be explored, massaged, and experimented with. Conversation is where people seek to understand others -- and where we try to help others understand us.

When we describe conversation in everyday life, we think of personal interchanges -- usually congenial and always cordial. Respect for the other person is essential. In fact, we most often associate "conversation" with talk between friends.

Several things happen in a friendly conversation. Friends usually give each other the benefit of the doubt. They accept what's presented at face value. In other words, until they learn differently, they don't pick at the other person's perspective regarding what has happened or what needs to be done.

That being said, friends feel comfortable in asking questions and pointing out other perspectives. They can ask about feelings and express their emotions. In conversation, friends can most often arrive at agreement. But, at the very least, friends can come to an understanding of the other's perspective and determine how that will affect their relationship.

The importance of relationship is reflected in the third commitment.

Finally, you must make a commitment to **COMMUNITY.**

Regardless of the outcomes of communication and conversation, church leaders and members must remain firmly committed to community. We must demonstrate our willingness to follow Christ's teachings on unity. Our witness to the world depends on it.

In praying for the people who would be brought to God's kingdom through the work of his disciples (in other words, a prayer for us!), Jesus said, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23, NIV.

We have been given a ministry of reconciliation -- the job of continually bring people back to God through Jesus Christ. If we lose sight of this calling, if we have no commitment to community, we will never see peace in our churches.

FROM THE TREASURER

Nothing major to report this month, so I'll tease your imagination with a few tidbits instead.

- Average Sunday attendance so far this year (91 over twelve Sundays) is up 7 over the same period last year.
- Total general offerings (to the end of February – nine Sundays) are up over \$1,600 over the same period last year.
- More than \$5,250 has been donated towards specially designated causes so far this year.
- Financial support for the Ride Into Light so far is \$832.50, with much more to come.
- Over \$2,248 has so far been donated towards an industrial dishwasher for the church.
- The Building Fund – Phase II has over \$10,100 in it to date, and this amount is in addition to the dishwasher funds.
- Rental income (other groups using the church building) is higher than I thought – over \$1,200 the first two months alone. This is the first year that we will tracking this amount closely, the results of which will allow Council to create better financial plans in upcoming years. Keep a look out for updates in the months to come!

Have a Happy and Blessed Easter!
Arnold Gill

TO LET GO



To "let go" does not mean to stop caring, it means I can't do it for someone else.

To "let go" is not to cut myself off, it is the realization I can't control another.

To "let go" is not to enable but to allow learning from natural consequences.

To "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To "let go" is not to try to change or blame another, it is to make the most of myself.

To "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.

To "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.

To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to affect their own destinies.

To "let go" is not to be protective, it is to permit another to face reality.

To "let go" is not to deny but to accept.

To "let go" is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and to correct them.

To "let go" is not to adjust everything to my desires but to take each day as it comes, and to cherish myself in it.

To "let go" is not to criticize and regulate anybody but to try to become what I dream I can be.

To "let go" is not to regret the past, but to grow and to live for the future.

To "let go" is to fear less and to love more.

**The deadline for the May
Messenger is Friday, April 28.
Please send your submissions to the
office at hoveluth@nanaimo.ark.com
or (250)758-1232. You can also speak
to Olena directly or email at
mind-body@telus.net.**