

THE MESSENGER OF HOPE



The Newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church

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All Saints Sunday through
First Sunday in Advent

November 2005



WORDS OF HOPE

by Pastor Curtis Aguirre

Memory is an odd thing. Brain researchers tell us that a memory is a particular series of pathways in our brains. Every time these pathways are activated in a person's brain, that person experiences it as a particular memory. But these pathways are complex, with many connections between and among the "wires" of the brain. Sometimes a connection here or there disconnects, and a new one is made somewhere else. The person experiences this as a change in the memory, though they probably wouldn't be aware of the change unless they had written the memory down somewhere and went back to compare their current version of the memory with the one they had before.

This has all kinds of implication in all kinds of areas: law (witnesses giving testimony), relationships (remembering the good and the bad), family histories, and not least, faith and religion.

How interesting then that there should be four Gospels which give four different versions of the life and ministry of Jesus. Three of them (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are quite similar to each other, and for this reason are called the "synoptic" Gospels (synoptic comes from a Greek word meaning literally "together-seeing"). John, the fourth Gospel, varies significantly from the synoptics. But even the synoptics present slightly different pictures of Jesus.

Each Gospel tradition seems to have a particular memory of the whole picture of who Jesus was, and a particular understanding of who Jesus is. Thus today modern Biblical scholars present rival images of Jesus: the prophet, the wisdom teacher, the revolutionary, the reformer, the pious Jew, the country preacher, the

charismatic healer, the popular story teller, the misunderstood mystic, the nonviolent resister, and on and on.

One of the quirks of memory is that it is selective. We will generally begin to (subconsciously) shape a memory to fit in with our story about ourselves. Generally in family feuds, we will remember ourselves in a better light than those with whom we are having the dispute. We will also tend to remember others through the lens of how they touched us.

If a pastor was there when we needed him, we will remember him or her fondly and with gratitude. If he or she wasn't, we will have a negative memory of them. That person is of course more than our particular memory of them. Everyone is always much more complex than the little bit we may know of them or about them. All the more so with Jesus, I would say.

Matthew seems to have been touched most strongly by Jesus the one who fulfilled the longing of Israel, and who seemed to be bringing a reform of the teaching of the day. Mark seems to have been taken by Jesus the fiery preacher, but was also moved by the way in which no one seemed to understand who or what Jesus really was (did Mark even understand, or is he here laying out his own confession of his lack of perception?). Luke was taken by Jesus reaching out to the marginalized of that society, and also by his ability to heal or to bring healing. John was most strongly taken by the mystical side of what Jesus meant or seemed to be.

When we remember, we literally "re-member", that is, we reconstruct the memory anew each time. The electrical impulses fire through their pathways, and

the memory is recreated afresh each time. Perhaps the work of memory should not be to try to lock in one particular memory, but to try to broaden that memory more and more to get a fuller and truer vision of the person or the event or of oneself./*

CHARITY OF THE MONTH FOR NOVEMBER 2005

The earthquake in Pakistan/Kashmir has brought terrible devastation to hundreds of thousands of people. many tens of thousands are known to have died, and due to the isolation and difficulty of getting help to the affected areas, it is likely that many tens of thousands more will die from exposure, starvation, infection, and other difficulties.

FaithLife Financial (formerly Lutheran Life) has established a matching fund for donations given toward relief for the victims of the Pakistan/Kashmir earthquake.

If you would like to donate toward earthquake relief and have your donations matched by FaithLife, please mark the Charity of the Month line on your envelopes accordingly.

PRIVACY LEGISLATION AND YOUR STAY AT THE HOSPITAL

There was a time when parish pastors had access to the patient list. The new federal privacy legislation means that visiting clergy have access only to the list of people who have identified themselves as belonging to that particular denomination.

What this means for you and for Pastor Curtis visiting you at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) Please help Pastor Curtis know that you are in hospital by:

- specifying at admission that you want to be listed as Lutheran

- if under distress at entry, once you are in, ask a nurse or other attendant to contact chaplain's office; the hospital chaplain, Gaye Burns, will let your Pastor know if you ask her; or call from the phone in your room if there is one

- if you know ahead of time that you are going in, let Pastor Curtis know, or get a friend or relative to do so for you

ELCIC MISSIONARY IN EL SALVADOR PROVIDES UPDATE ON CONDITION AFTER VOLCANO ERUPTION, FLOODING AND LANDSLIDES

Winnipeg, October 7, 2005 (ELCIC)-- As a pastor-missionary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), Rev. Brian Rude serves in El Salvador where he works with the Quetzalcoatl Foundation which conducts workshops on human well-being and mental health with groups of prison inmates throughout the country and with groups of at-risk youth in several neighbourhoods in and around San Salvador, the capital. As the El Salvador region focused on evacuation efforts following the eruption of western El Salvador's Iamatepec Volcano, and search and rescue efforts after repeated flooding and heavy rains in the area caused massive landslides, Rev. Brian Rude provided the following update in e-mails received this week:

Greetings from El Salvador, where a variety of "natural" elements--rain, lava and ash--is dropping from the sky. Persistent rains are causing repeated flooding and hundreds of landslides, including one which covered the house of one Quetzalcoatl colleague last week. I was able to visit the mostly-abandoned community of "San Lorenzo", now a massive swamp of contaminated water near the coast, and the shelter--a local public school--to which those residents have fled.

El Salvador is in a state of emergency, officially declared Monday by President Saca, and a state of "public calamity", declared by the legislative assembly the following day. There are two simultaneous red alerts in effect. One is due to last Saturday's eruption of Iamatepec (Santa Ana) Volcano, in the western part of El Salvador, which had been giving warning signals for a couple weeks. The other is due to the relentless rainfall, caused by the "Stan" tropical storm off the Yucatan peninsula, and causing flooding and landslides throughout the country, much of Central America and parts of Mexico. Since almost all of El Salvador is residential, almost any landslide has potential tragic effects. To date, there have been 65 persons killed, most buried by landslides while sleeping. Many homes have been destroyed, many more are flooded, and many roads

are blocked. The crisis caused by heavy rains has been going on for a couple weeks, though it has become more intense this week. Over 60,000 persons have been evacuated to 360 shelters in different parts of the country, including a neighbouring community to the one in which I live, which was buried by a landslide in 1982. School and university classes have been suspended for the week, though most private businesses are still obligating workers to show up for their regular shifts, in spite of the difficulty of mobilization and the risks faced by their families left at home.

"No hay guerra que dure 100 años" (There is no war that lasts 100 years), as García Márquez wrote. Nor is there a storm that lasts forever, though a family caught living suddenly in the midst of a rushing river, facing seemingly unending rains, may not see the future from that perspective. Today [Thursday] has brought a respite from--though not likely an end to--the rains. The sun even tried to shine briefly. This relief does not provide much peace of mind to the 60,000 persons evacuated to shelters, left without homes, or with homes in what remain--and what may always remain--dangerous areas in which to live, and with few or no alternatives.

The river delta areas continue to be seriously flooded, especially as the dam floodgates of several reservoirs are opened. The tragedy of the drama is now shifting west and north, to Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico.

Action by Churches Together (ACT), of which the Lutheran World Federation office in San Salvador is a part, is active, coordinating Lutheran and ecumenical efforts in response to the multiple needs. Thank you for your concern and prayers.

For further information on ELCIC Missionaries and Mission in the World, please visit: <http://www.elcic.ca/mission/index.html>

LIVING IN AN EARTHQUAKE ZONE - BE PREPARED!

Some things to think about: Major earthquakes happen in our region every 200 to 400 years. The last one was in the mid-1700's.

In the event of a major earthquake, you should expect transportation and communication systems to be down for up to a week. How will you communicate without phone or cable service? Will you have enough food and water to see you through 7 days. Shipments to local stores will probably be interrupted, so extra supplies will run out quickly.

If the earthquake happens in the colder months, how will you heat your home if gas and electricity service is interrupted for 7 days? How will you cook?

If the gas and power systems fail, the water system will probably fail too. What will you do? Do you have a first aid kit?

Do you have batteries for your radio and flashlight, or perhaps a wind-up radio and wind-up flashlight?

ADDED BENEFIT OF EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS

If you have stocked up on supplies to see you through a major earthquake, you will also be prepared to withdraw into your home in case of a pandemic (a pandemic is a global epidemic). If the avian flu currently being monitored by the World Health Organization (WHO) or some other disease triggers a pandemic, public health authorities will shut down public gathering places such as schools, churches, and community centres, as well as ask companies to limit their activities so as to reduce the opportunities for the disease to spread. You will be asked to reduce your contact with the general public as well. Earthquake preparedness can also be pandemic preparedness.

The deadline for the December Messenger is Friday, November 25.

Please send your submissions to the office via email at hopeluth@nanaimo.ark.com or phone (250) 758-1232. You can also speak to Olena directly or through email at mind-body@telus.net.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

by Jan Nilsson

Well, fall is certainly here and is as colour full as always but not quite as colour full as I remember it from Northern BC. So I thought, when moving from a place with four distinct seasons to the coast with "five seasons" not very well defined, the incubation time would be much longer. But it hasn't taken that much time at all to find and to accept all the good things that come with this climate and this place.

Where else can one find roses in full bloom and being able to wear shorts in December? And where else can one garden so late in the year, and where else can one forget about shovelling snow most years? And where else can one bike all year round? And I like biking. How much you may understand from a separate write-up by my Thursday biking partner Gerry Owen.

A large part of my enjoyment of the coast and Nanaimo is also the ministry that is provided at Hope Lutheran Church through our pastor and members of our congregation. We have had regular Tuesday morning work-bees all spring, summer and now we are into the fall season and we are still going strong. We come out for only three hours a week but we have still accomplished so much together. Not only with the work of digging, pruning, lawn mowing and other things around the church and the Memorial garden but also by becoming more attached and appreciative of each other. At least I have.

I appreciate all the efforts and the dedication of the regulars who come out to do the work and also of those who come less often. I'm looking forward not only to the work but also sitting down together around the table having coffee and goodies and talk and laugh. And many volunteers too are making sure we can keep the church office open 5 days a week after our secretary retired. Thanks to all.

Maybe it is because I have a strong belief that the church is for all ages that I find it so nice to see more children in church again. But I'm sure I'm not alone in this. I like the children's church concept very much. It seems to lend itself to both fun in learning and also includes the congregation. I appreciate the skill and enthusiasm of the leaders and supporters who make this happen every Sunday. Fun is important in our lives and it certainly helps the learning process and the desire to come again. A fun place is easy to come back to.

Did you know that children smile at least 50 times per day but an adult only 15 so if you like smiles in the church bring your children.

We also have started a choir and we meet every Wednesday from 6:30-8:15pm. We had our first practise on the 19th and it would be great to get a few more members. I for one like to see a tenor that could help me and even better two or three so I could go back to singing baritone.

God's blessing - Jan

WANTING TO SEE GOD

One Christmas as I put out nativity figures at the children's table in my church I quite unthinkingly lined the figures up on either side of the stable (much like I do on my piano at home). A four-year-old, who was in the church at the time with her mother who was on altar guild duty, saw what I was doing and came to join me. She considered very carefully what I had done and then equally carefully she rearranged the figures in a semicircle around the stable and the figure of the Christ child. She looked at me and gently said, "They all want to see God."

Beth Hammond, Seasons of the Spirit writer

SOCIAL ISSUES

Oct 14th marked one year of monthly Red Willow Coffee House events at Hope.

Musicians for the evening varied in age and instruments and all were exceptionally talented. Our very own [well, we can sort of claim her] Deborah ended the evening by leading everybody in "A Closing Prayer for All To Sing".

Much appreciation and many thanks go to Gillian Ames and other workers for their continued help and support over the year.

Entertainment and information was shared by 9 speakers. 40 different musicians and singers headed up several groups that took to the stage.

Approximately \$1304.00 was raised; \$427.00 of which went to the church for usage of the space and \$835.00 went to charities including \$200.00 to the paving fund.

Thank you to the membership and families and friends of Hope for the moral and financial support, your participation has made a difference.

It's fun and it's challenging as well as a way to reach out –

The next Coffee House event falls on **Fri Nov 11th @ 7:30pm**. We will honour our War Veterans.

All are welcome. An open mike to performers – FYI - call Charlie 245-4659 or e-mail fcmfox@telus.net

The local Kairos group held their monthly meeting at Hope on Tues Oct 18th.

A guest speaker was William Cruz, a young Columbian who lives and works in Nanaimo and who has recently become a Canadian Citizen.

William is hoping to have other members of his family enter the country as well.

There will be a free public forum by Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council of Canadians on Tues, Nov 8th from 7 – 9pm in the Parksville Community Conference Centre, 132 Jensen Ave. East:

'WATER for LIFE – NOT PROFIT is the Topic

Lisa Rokeby spoke about the Paraguay Project. The Human Rights Committee of the Malaspina University Students are supportive of this by helping with the sale of crafts made by the Indigenous people of Paraguay. The profits will be used to buy roofing supplies. Crafts will be available at Global Village and @ the Country Club Mall on Nov 9th – 12th.

Lisa will also be at the Dec 9th Coffee House Evening to do a presentation of the Paraguay Project.

A letter from Haven Society to Hope Lutheran Church:

Dear Parishioners,

We are grateful for your generosity. Your contribution is important to the women and children we serve, and we will do our utmost to ensure that your gift helps as much as possible.

With the support of our wonderful donors, Haven House continues to operate at full capacity. From January to the end of August this year, 137 women and 124 children sought shelter at Haven House. Staff have responded to 1558 crisis calls. Your donation will also help to provide programming for Willow WAI, a new program which is delivering a comprehensive care system of shelter and services to support homeless women, youth, men, and their families, and the community-based Victim Services Program in Parksville.

At the Wentworth St. Outreach Center, 31 women are currently receiving counselling, and support groups are available on a weekly basis. The Women's Assault program is taking new referrals, and there is a weekly drop-in service available. The Children Who Witness Abuse counsellor has just begun groups for boys and girls, and the children's counsellor has just begun the program "Strengthening Family Ties". Experience has shown that our work with children is critical in stopping the cycle of violence.

Thank you for your confidence in our work. It takes a community to heal a community; together we are making a difference.

Jane Templeman, Executive Director

JAN AND GERRY'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Richard Whiting was born on July 28 1948. He died on May 17, 1999, officially his cause of death was colon cancer but I believe Richard's true cause of death was his broken heart. Richard's psychiatrist Phillip Wong picks up the story from here in a piece he titled: "What Richard Taught Me About Psychiatry".

"Richard graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1971. The next year, he experienced the onset of schizophrenia and had his first psychiatric hospitalization. Over the next 17 years, Richard had nearly yearly psychiatric hospitalizations for schizophrenia.

Despite the severity of his illness, Richard always tried to work. He obtained a teacher's certificate from the University of British Columbia in 1976 and worked for one year as a teacher. Then he completed his Masters in Animal Nutrition in 1983 at the University of British Columbia. Richard then worked for one year as a research assistant in poultry science. Unfortunately, illness prevented his employment for the next four years. Then in 1988 Richard returned to steady employment as a janitor at the Vancouver General Hospital. After a few years, he secured employment as a janitor at a local health care facility where he was permitted to live in his own tiny quarters.

Richard's Religious Beliefs.

Richard asked me to be his psychiatrist in 1986. When I first started treating Richard, I asked him: "What gives meaning to your life?" He told me that his religious faith gave him the strength to survive his illness. Richard's faith stressed peace, faith, hope, forgiveness, understanding, and - above all - brotherly love. Soon after we first met, Richard established a weekly prayer group for people with mental illnesses, called "Easter Friends." A number of my patients attended this prayer group and found great comfort in knowing that others shared both their religious beliefs and their illness experiences.

Richard's Private Crusade.

One of Richard's most remarkable gifts was his great empathy. He was deeply moved by the suffering of the homeless mentally ill. Richard couldn't understand how our affluent community would turn its back on the severely mentally ill. I told Richard about the hospital cutbacks and lack of mental health funding, and he pointed to the millions every year that the government wasted.

One winter, Richard took action. He started offering his tiny living quarters as overnight shelter for any homeless, mentally ill person he saw sleeping on the street near his home. Every morning, Richard would quietly slip the homeless person out the back door before anyone could discover his overnight guest. Soon, however, Richard's employer discovered that he was giving overnight shelter to the homeless at his care facility, and Richard was fired. That was the last job that Richard ever held.

A few years later, Richard was diagnosed as having bowel cancer. Knowing that he only had a few months left to live, Richard decided to leave Vancouver and return to live with his mother in Sidney, on Vancouver Island. A few months later, fifteen of his friends and I visited Richard in Sidney. He was the gracious host, and thoughtfully prepared a luncheon for our entire group. At lunch, Richard spoke of his acceptance of his pending death, and of the beauty of life and of friendship. Richard's one major regret was that he was now too weak to do his mental health volunteer work. Richard ended our visit with his favourite prayer, and I left not knowing that I would never see Richard again. A few months later, at age 50, Richard suddenly died of cancer."

The true-life story of Richard Whiting reads like a chapter out of a Rohinton Mystery novel, a combination of accomplishment, intense pain, courage and constant vulnerability to the whims of others. Yet in the midst of this life of pain and terror he found the strength to keep his connection with God and with others.

Richard could not witness the suffering of others without taking some action to connect and to assist. In doing so he lost the only vestige of connection with the normal world he had left, his job.

In many ways Richard was lucky, he was a functioning Schizophrenic. He sought and maintained connection with a supportive and insightful psychiatrist whose treatment plan extended beyond the simple expedient of pills. For many their disease is so debilitating that they are incapable of working and incapable of living in community with others without constant understanding and assistance.

In the early 1980's Riverview Mental Hospital housed (it is inaccurate to call much more than that) over 4000 patients. While some of these patients were in need only of short-term acute care, for many their disease was chronic and their disability permanent. As the policy of de-institutionalization preceded many of these chronically ill were discharged to the street. While the policy called for local health authorities to take on responsibility for treatment at a local level, little has been done to address these needs locally. The result is that many of the chronically ill patients (and those who have developed mental illness since), have ended up on the street where their initial problem is compounded by the ravages of drug addiction and its companions prostitution and petty street crime.

The average wait for assisted housing is now approximately 5 years. In that span of time many street people fall victim to AIDS, and Hepatitis while many others simply die on the street or disappear. In a society capable of producing the richest standard of living in the world, we cannot find the relatively meagre resources to provide shelter and supportive companionship for our most afflicted and vulnerable. Clearly the work started so quietly and courageously by Richard Whiting needs to continue.

What to do?? In May 2006, Jan Nilsson and I will hop on our bicycles and ride across Canada to raise money and (more important) to raise awareness and reduce the stigma for our homeless who suffer from mental illness. This time rather than trying to sneak a few homeless people into a shelter for the night, we hope to shed light on the plight of people most of us would rather forget.

We want your money, but more than that we want your heart. We want you to imagine the pain and isolation of those our society would rather ignore and we want to encourage the homeless mentally ill to stand up and claim for themselves the help and support they so desperately need. We need sponsors, we need drivers for each province, we need organizers we need shameless publicity seekers and we need your encouragement and support.

Interested? Contact Pastor Curtis Aguirre at Hope Lutheran Church.

Gerry Owen

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

The Season of Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation for the joyous festival of Christmas that honours Christ's birth. There is, too, in the Season of Advent an element of anticipation of Christ's return at the close of history.

For the early church the focus during Advent was one of penitence but today the season focuses more on the hope that Christ's birth and rebirth in the world will usher in a new age.

It is a season of tension, of balance between the "already" and the "not yet" as we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus and anticipate his second coming.

Advent began as a six-week season of preparation for baptism at Christmas, paralleling for baptism at Christmas, paralleling the Season of Lent. However, because Christmas was seen as a lesser festival than Easter, Advent was shortened to four weeks in the 6th century. Yet it is still a "little Lent" in which we reflect and prepare. While in recent times this has meant preparing for the Christmas festival, it should be a time of spiritual preparation as well, for the indwelling of Christ in our lives in a new way. According to Father John Mack of SS Peter and Paul Antiochan Orthodox Church in Topeka, Kansas, "Let us not become preoccupied with the external preparations so as to miss the preparation of the heart. Better a poorly trimmed tree than a poorly trimmed heart! Better an empty refrigerator than an empty soul!"

TREASURER'S REPORT *by Arnold Gill*

Here is a short summary of our finances to date.

To the end of September, expenses exceeded offerings by \$10,338. Offerings are also \$12,000 below budgeted requirements. Both of these numbers are slightly higher than at the end of August. In order to finish the year in the black, this trend needs to be reversed. As of today, I do not see evidence of this reversal.

Total paving offerings to the end of September is \$3,532.

August offerings/attendance:

– general	\$6,886	
	(\$2,426 short of budget)	
– CLWR	\$50	
– Haven House	\$25	
– GHDA – AIDS South Africa	\$10	
– Paving	\$890	
– Attendance	\$332	

September offerings/attendance:

– general	\$7,915	
	(\$1,397 short of budget)	
– CLWR	\$50	
– Habitat for Humanity	\$80	
– Taskforce/Justice/Americas	\$60	
– Paving	\$75	
– Attendance	375	

MOMENTS OF HOPE and Humour

A woman was asked by a coworker, "What is it like to be a Christian?" The coworker replied, "It is like being a pumpkin." God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. Then He cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, and greed. Then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see."

IN THE SERVICE

One Sunday morning, the minister noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. It was covered with names, and small American flags were mounted on either side of it. The seven year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the minister walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex." "Good morning, Preacher," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Preacher, what is this?" "Well, son, it's a memorial to ail the young men and women who died in the service." Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible, trembling with fear, when he asked, "Which service, the 8:15 or the 10:30?"

TWO WOLVES

An Old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life.

"A fight is going on inside me, " he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."