

Faith Matters

October 2019

Pastor's Page

One really bright spot at Faith Lutheran over the last decade has been a dramatic improvement in her financial health. Ten years ago, we were running large deficits in the General Fund and accumulating more operating debt each year. Since then, however, Faith has paid off all that operating debt and the church council even decided recently to close a line of credit with the bank, because we had not used it in years!

That is great news, but there is also some not-so-good news. This financial turnaround has depended almost entirely on massive year-end giving. Nearly 40% of Faith's General Fund offerings come in the last three months of the year—and nearly 30% in just the last two! These late giving surges have enabled the church to start each new year with a cash cushion which has been essential to avoid borrowing funds to cover her expenses during the first nine months.

The problem is that giving during those first nine months falls far short of expenses—but we can't wait until December to pay those obligations. So far in 2019, General Fund offerings are \$100,000 below expenses—even though the annual budget has remained nearly flat for several years. We pray that year-end giving will cover that deficit again this year. If it does not, the church will face a major financial crisis. For as much of a blessing as huge year-end offerings are, Faith is much too reliant on them and that poses a serious risk to the congregation.

Meanwhile, giving for January through September has also remained flat for several years. In fact, in 2019 it is slightly below 2018 at the same point. That suggests, at least, that, rather than adjusting their giving each year according to their income, Faith's members are giving at the same rate each year—and then giving more at year's end depending on how big the church's deficit is.

Again, those year-end gifts are invaluable and deeply appreciated, but this giving *pattern* is not healthful, nor does it reflect sound Biblical stewardship teaching. The Bible calls us to give according to how God first blesses us, not according to how big a hole there may be in the church budget. We are called to give a percentage of our income, before other expenses, as an expression of trust in God's promise to provide for us.

In fact, trusting God to provide for us makes stewardship a vital spiritual discipline. Money can exercise immense power over us, whether we are wealthy, just scraping by or anywhere in-between. Giving a percentage of our money away is an ongoing reminder that it is a tool God gives to us, not the basis of our security. Stewardship teachers have often said that Christians do not only give to needs, but we have a need to give, in order to strengthen our faith.

~ Continued on page 2



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So this article comes with two challenges—or maybe pleas! The first is that, in this last quarter of 2019, the family of Faith will continue its pattern of enormous year-end offerings. Since giving has fallen far short of expenses so far this year, the church will be in a world of hurt without that typical year-end surge.

The second plea is that, starting in 2020, we commit as a congregation to change that typical famine-feast pattern of giving. Base your offerings on a percentage of what God first provides you. Spread out your giving more evenly through the year, trusting God to keep providing for you. Help put Faith Lutheran on a more solid financial footing, so that this ministry God has entrusted to us will be reliably funded all year long.

Grace and peace to you,
Pastor Scott Grorud



Q: Was Jesus ever a “teenage boy”?

A: This question was submitted by a group of teenage boys which makes me wonder what all they meant by a “teenage boy”! The quotation marks point more to typical—and not always positive—teenage behavior than simply to physical development, and that makes the question very interesting.

Since Jesus was fully human, he obviously passed through his teenage years with all the issues that period of rapid development typically brings. However, since Jesus was also without sin, it raises the question of whether, and how, he avoided the kind of hijinks in which teenage boys often engage.

Interestingly, the one and only account of Jesus’ childhood in the Bible, his visit to Jerusalem with his parents in Luke 2:41-51, suggests how God led Jesus through those tumultuous years. During that visit, Jesus wandered off from his parents and caused them tremendous anxiety before they found him. But the reason he had lost track of time and his parents was that he was hungrily learning about his heavenly Father from the teachers in the temple. So, Jesus showed a lack of responsible awareness as teenagers often can, but he did so out of utterly faithful reasons, not disobedient or careless ones. In fact, Luke ends that passage by noting, “Then he went down with them (Joseph and Mary) and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.”

So, was Jesus ever a teenage boy? Absolutely! But was he ever a “teenage boy”? No, because God the Father equipped him for faithful obedience and protected him through his growing years, until he became fully aware of his divine identity and mission

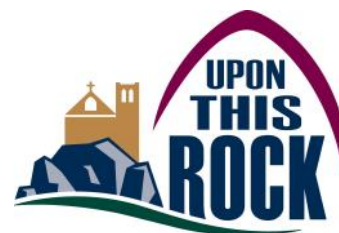


New Hope Mission Society

Abdul Messiah returned to the U.S. in late September to continue his theological studies and to promote the work supported by the New Hope Mission Society. The story and work of Abdul and his father are fascinating, and this month offers a great chance to learn more about it from Abdul himself. On **Sunday, October 20, at 2:30 p.m.**, NHMS is hosting an event in the Faith Center for anyone interested in the mission work it supports. Abdul will describe the ongoing work at the Bisharah center in India and be available for questions. NHMS is a major mission effort of Faith Lutheran, so we encourage you to take this opportunity to learn more about it.

Upon This Rock Capital Campaign

The capital campaigns Faith Lutheran has run, including Upon This Rock, have received wonderfully steady support through the years, but each month's offerings are not always enough to cover the mortgage payment. So, the church has held some funds in reserve to make up any difference between the gifts received and the payment required to make sure we can make each month's payment.



As the mortgage has been paid down, we have reduced the amount in reserve and applied the funds to the loan balance. The amount currently in reserve would only cover a couple of months' payments, so the congregation's ongoing support for Upon This Rock is vital.

By now, Faith is reducing the loan balance by \$18,000 every month. At our current rate of payment, the loan will be finished in mid-2021. It would not take that much more effort to finish it off in late 2020, as the capstone to Faith's 150th anniversary. Can we reach that goal?



Greetings Faith Lutheran!

Much going on but only a little space to fill you in! BELLS are BACK. As an option for Confirmation students, we will be slowly introducing bells to these middle schoolers. It will be a beginners class/rehearsal style get-together oriented for that age group, so if you know anyone who fits the bill, send them our way!

Faith Singers have returned this month, having looked at several new pieces of music to sing for upcoming services. We still need more singers, so if you sing at all, the choir and I would love to have you.

With all these new and regular tasks ahead, I have an overarching goal that I hope everyone will pitch in to help reach within the next few months. I want to have special music EVERY SUNDAY. I know this is something we all want, but I can't do it alone. Come chat with me about people you know who play an instrument or jump into one of the several opportunities to participate in services. The options are endless and made for people of all musical backgrounds, so please talk to me about what you want to see or do.

I hope you are all as excited as I am for the Sundays ahead and I hope to hear from you soon.

Blessings,
Will

Musical Trivia!
Where was Johann Sebastian Bach born?
Hint: It's where Martin Luther started translating the Bible....



**Why does Faith Lutheran Give Leadership to Witness through NHMS?
Take in This Inspiring Word from the Administrator of the Shaliach's Bible College
(Report from Dr. Abdul Messiah)**

Most of our students come from Northeast India that borders Bangladesh and Bhutan, and Northwest India which borders Pakistan. These bordering areas are unreached for Christ. There are about 30 house churches along those borders that we are in contact, and their members are working among some of the most challenging communities. Our students after graduation will work with the pastors to impart training, encouragement, and guidance. It is anticipated that our students will increase the number of house churches, strengthen new believers, and equip them to reach out to their neighbors. Despite great personal risk, as many as 50 pastors are presently engaged in evangelism and church planting near the borders where there is a high percentage of Muslims. The pastors in these locations have approached Shaliach's Bible College to train their young men and women to reach the Muslim homes. Most of the students are referred to the Shaliach's Bible College by the pastors of the house churches.

We at Bishara and the Shaliach's Bible College train our students to work among the Muslims to invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to proclaim, through both word and deed, God's reign of justice, peace and abundant life for all creation. With the present central government policies, it is becoming difficult for Christians all over India. It's not that India lacks laws that guarantee religious freedom. In fact, settled precedent says that house churches do not need permission from the government to operate. Unfortunately, it is the implementation of that law that matters and those implementing the law have already shown their willingness to side with local Hindu radicals against Christians.



"I will keep my promise to you and to your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants."
Genesis 17:7 (Good News Bible)



"Faith Seeks Understanding"
Continuing Learning Opportunities for Adults

"If I had a Parenting Do-Over"

Pastor Dave is leading this parenting Digging Deeper looking at seven changes we could make in our parenting, from author Jonathan McKee. The class is full of laughs, support, and practical advice for moms and dads. Meeting in the third floor conference room.

Engaging the Epistles: The Letters of St. Paul

This class meets in the Faith Center and is looking at the letters that St. Paul wrote to early Christian churches they comprise a large part of the New Testament and provide much of the raw material for Christian theology and doctrine. They can also be some of the most difficult books of the Bible to read and comprehend. As part of the *Bibleopoly* project, this Digging Deeper session is providing an overview of Paul's letters and their background, with the goal of making them more meaningful to the reader.
Meeting in the Faith Center

Opportunities for Food and Fellowship



Mugs and Muffins Returns!



Women of Faith and Friends, please join us for the first Mugs and Muffins of the year! We will meet on **Saturday, Oct. 19 at 9:30 a.m. in the Faith Center**. At this gathering, we will be **making a prayer journal** and learning some ideas of how to use them in our daily lives. Come and enjoy a yogurt parfait bar! Please sign up near the church office so we can plan numbers. We encourage you to invite a friend. Also, please look for the Mugs and Muffins calendar for the year and get the dates reserved now. The committee is looking forward to a great year of Mugs and Muffins and getting to meet you at the monthly events. Join us!




Progressive Dinner
Progressive Dinner

Please join us on Sunday, October 13, from 4 to 6 p.m., for an early evening of fellowship, food and fun. The Congregational Life Ministry Team is hosting a Progressive Dinner. We'll begin in the Gathering Space at 4 p.m. with appetizers, moving to the Faith Center at 4:30 for the entrée and a few surprises. At 5:30, the dinner will progress to the Youth Space for a choice of dessert; there *will* be something chocolate. Tickets will go on sale soon. Watch the bulletin for more information.

10.08.19

MEN OF FAITH

6PM
Wings
Word
Guys

Faith Lutheran



A New Faith Groups Small Group Study Has Just Begun

This Faith Groups small-group study is “Blessed Is the One Who Reads...the Prophecy’: The Meaning and Message of *Revelation*.” This study will guide you to learn more about the inspiring, but much misunderstood book of Revelation. It is not too late to plug into a group or to download the booklet or videos from the website at faithlc.com.

FAITH GROUPS

BUILDING FAITH TOGETHER

- Sharing
- Growing
- Serving

Seniors' Scene

I just read another of the many articles telling us that active people are healthier people. That includes senior citizens. When seniors attend purposeful meetings or events, or when they join others in work activities, they actually feel better physically and emotionally, even spiritually. Often one of our people tells me something like this, "I wasn't all that anxious to get out and come here. Now I'm so glad I did. I'm feeling good."

That's a large part of the reason we urge seniors to share in events and work opportunities at Faith Lutheran. Meeting together with other people, whether seniors, or an intergenerational group, does give us opportunity to have conversation, laugh and get to know people better. If there is work to be done, besides benefiting the congregation or a mission it serves, it can give the worker a sense of accomplishment. That's a healthy note! Benefiting ourselves while benefiting others can be a very good thing...right? Why not try it, if you have not already done so..

Let me mention some possibilities:

- Why not join the **Faith Matters** assemblers? They meet once a month, have a great time, and do a lot of work in a short time.
- Or how about Fridays, at 1:00 p.m., when you can help with **bulletin assembly**? It, too, may be more fellowship (and treats I hear) than work. Yet it is one of those vital tasks that need to be completed; and it is currently in need of more participants.
- Watch for the day the Seniors' Potluck group fills Christmas boxes (**Operation Christmas Child and bandage rolling** for Global Health Ministries).
- Likely you've heard of "**Spit and Shine?**" What a blessing that group is, keeping things clean around here. There's always room for more helpers. You can do what appeals to your work skills and desires.
- How about **quilting**? Once every month, those ladies do some vital and creative work, and have a lot of fun at it. They are literally providing warmth for people they don't know, but God does.
- Maybe you are looking to grow in your faith? When you're already here for Sunday morning Worship, choose a "**Digging Deeper**" opportunity.
- Have you noticed **Crossways Bible studies** have started up again? Participant numbers are growing so that must be something you don't want to miss. Check your bulletin for times and locations. Don't be nervous about going "back to school." Several have told me, "I was a bit anxious about attending, but I learned so much."
- Tuesdays over the noon hour, you can bring your noon lunch and get a heads-up on the next Sunday's lessons by attending **Lectionary Text study**. Those who attend tell me how much more the sermon means to them. No sign up; just come—to the office area conference room.
- Small groups** are a great way to learn and grow closer to fellow members. There are currently 11 groups functioning, at different times and locations. I hear so many positive comments about these groups. This year, Pastors Grorud and Wollan take us through the book of Revelation, with a TV appearance to each group.

OK, so what have I missed? I know—**SENIORS' POTLUCK**. Every month from September through May, we gather for food, fellowship and a program. Our next meeting will feature our newest staff member, **Kristen Matthews, Director of Youth and Family Ministries**. Come and get acquainted with her, and hear about her work and goals. We meet on **Thursday, October 31**, beginning with potluck dinner at **12:00 noon**.

Will you actually feel better if you participate in one, two or more of the above? You may not attend just to feel more upbeat about life; but I can almost bet you will. **SO...see you at potluck**; and more, I hope.

God bless you!
Pastor Paulus Pilgrim





Please remember all those who are serving our country through active duty:

- Braiden Bjorge (Marines - grandson of Sandy Curtiss)
- Corporal Colin Bos (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Dawn Bos)
- Sgt. Jason Gaulke (El Paso, TX - nephew of Alice Fransen)
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Mason Rutledge (Navy, Norfolk, VA - son of Lenny & Patti Rutledge)
- Pat Scharn (Air Force, Qatar - husband of Elizabeth)
- Col. Rob Skaar (Minneapolis/St. Paul Air National Guard - son of Dave & Marian Skaar)
- LT Brett Stadskev (Navy, Corpus Christi, TX - son-in-law of Judy & Tom Felber)
- Corporal Nathan Thunstrom (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Andy & Shelly Hedin and grandson of Dennis & Barb Hedin)



Remember our Faith members in nursing homes & health care centers:

Birchwood House
Ardell Novotny

Cedar Crest – Silver Lake
Patricia Lambert
Janice Rohrbach
Bernice Vorbeck
Lucille Wehking

Dassel Lakeside
Doris Betker
Harold (Swede) Sandgren

Harmony River
Margaret Alrick
Myrt Bauer
Irene Christensen
Betty Jensen
Jerome Lindquist
Karol Nolte
Joanne Olesen
Jean Pittman
Doyle Thielman
Harriet Thor

Oaks
Marcella Brede
Arlyce Drahos
Ellsworth & Delores Lorentzen
Barb Ryan
Charlie & Harriet Wixcey

Pines
Mayonne Martin

Prairie Senior Cottages
Pat Fimon

Woodstone

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OUR MISSION IS:
BUILDING FAITH
*"EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST"*
EPHESIANS 4:12

TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:

FOLLOW JESUS
ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL
INVITE ALL PEOPLE
TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH
HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

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