

## “Church Health”

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Just about two weeks ago the congregation made it possible for me to attend a “symposium” at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Since it is located north of Milwaukee, it took a little extra effort to get there. Still it was worth the trip. The symposium has been conducted since 2000. Usually there are three presenters, and three Seminary professors who offer reactions to the papers. 2008’s symposium was on the Church and Ministry with an emphasis on the public administration of the Gospel. This year’s was on “church health.”

Initially I didn’t know what to expect. Church health could cover a wide range of topics. However, the three presentations narrowed the focus to the following: “God’s Bible Men Assess Congregational Health; 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastors Address Congregational Health; and Brothers in Ministry Arrange for Congregational Health.”

What I immediately came to appreciate was brought out by the first presentation. Pastor David Kolander from Brookfield, Wisconsin, made it clear and simple. In order to assess congregational health a pastor – God’s Bible Man – needs to be healthy. He needs to understand and apply Law and Gospel to himself first. This is the first step in determining a congregation’s health. I also appreciated the definition he offered regarding a healthy congregation. A healthy congregation is “one where faith is growing more and more, and love for each other is increasing.” Great care was given not to make a congregation’s health dependent on statistics. While they are important, they may not be the best indicators. The same thing can be said about what constitutes a pastor’s faithfulness.

Since a healthy congregation depends on a healthy pastor, faithfulness isn’t always measured by numbers. Rather, faithfulness is measured more accurately by attitude. God’s Bible men need to have the right attitude toward God’s people. The author focused extensively on the apostle Paul and his attitude toward serving God’s people. “He approached God’s people as one who did not deserve to be one of God’s people himself. He could not help but marvel that he had the joy of being chosen by God to share such mysteries.” As a result of his humility before his God and Savior, his attitude to God’s people was easily seen. The following statements were shared on the basis of Paul’s observations:

- The people we serve are people with whom we want to share the grace of God so that they can understand the peace of God that goes beyond understanding.

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*Church Health, from page 1*

- The people we serve prompt our thanksgiving to God as we hear of their faith and love. They are miracles of God himself.
- The people we serve are our partners to be cherished and trained and sent out in the ministry of the gospel.
- The people we serve are holy through Christ and faithful to the word of Christ.
- The people we serve are going to be our undeserved glory when Jesus comes again on that glorious day.
- The people we serve need encouragement and strength.
- The people we serve give us encouragement and strength in our daily work.
- The people we serve have been granted many gifts in God's grace to serve him with joy and purpose.
- The people we serve have received the Lord's benediction – both now and forever.
- The people we serve are the people of God!

Too often a congregation becomes susceptible to poor health when the pastor's attitude does not convey this understanding. Often this can lead to a "me versus them" relationship. The results of this struggle will be seen in the vital signs of the congregation.

For a congregation to maintain its health, the pastor needs to remember the pattern his Savior provides. Paul uses three points in Ephesians 5:8.

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

Pastor Kolander offers this insightful explanation of what this means.

"These are declarative facts. These words do not call for manipulation, whining, complaining or brow-beating. They are words which reflect the reality of life for a child of God, who still bears the burden of his old self. They are the words which speak of the everyday cycle of repentance for a child of God: I need a Savior; I have a Savior; I want to live for my Savior."

Keeping this pattern in mind, Pastor Kolander offers pastors – God's Bible men - the following practical application:

"We can encourage each other to make this the way we look at people, talk to people, correspond with people, preach to people, teach people. Look at them as people who need the cross, who are redeemed by the cross, and who want to follow the cross, all the while bearing the hard cross of Christian discipleship. The joy of knowing Christ crucified does not take away the earthly reality that God's people need to deal with the Savior's description of discipleship (Mark 8:34).

He further adds:

"Understanding the struggles our people face will remove any unrealistic expectations we may have about the level of their sanctification. At the same time, we will not minimize the holy standards the Lord has set for his purchased people. These standards were set for them by their God and met for them by his holy Son."

The rest of the presentation built on this principle. Everything the pastor does for his people, and together with his people is based on the attitude, these people I serve are God's people. With this in mind I appreciated the humor Pastor Kolander injected, especially when a pastor thinks "it's only about me."

"There is a fine line between looking at ourselves as indispensable in God's kingdom and as important in God's kingdom. Indispensable we are not. Funerals for pastors have failed to stop the advance of the kingdom. But

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*Church Health, continued from page 2*

important we are. Three of Paul's letters were designed to show the importance of those who share the Word in a public way."

Because pastors do play an important role, men of God need to take the Lord's command seriously to keep their doctrine pure and their living holy. Pastors cannot escape Paul's directives to Timothy or Titus, or even Paul's own personal testimony on his ministry in 2 Corinthians.

Pure doctrine and holy living make it possible to be credible teachers of God's Word. It dispels the notion some may offer, "do as I say and not as I do." The pages of Scripture are filled with those who clearly proclaimed God's Word with their lives and words. They are also full of those who created obstacles with the same.

Pure doctrine and holy living also become important as pastors shepherd "perfected people through Christ" in an imperfect world. It is the clear proclamation of God's promises that lift people from the disappointment and despair brought about by sin. It is also the devoted prayers of the shepherd that encourage and sustain the flock. Pastor Kolander shares numerous examples of shepherds praying for their people - Moses' intercession for rebellious Israel, David's prayer rejoicing in the Lord's rich blessing, Ezra's prayer of confession and repentance. Together with these we can add the kings Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, as well as the prophets Daniel and Nehemiah.

Although there are many facets and requirements for God's Bible men, one still supersedes the others. God's shepherds lead their flocks again and again to the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Here is where true congregational health begins and grows.

In closing, Pastor Kolander offered an appropriate observation: "Congregational health cannot be objectively defined, but we do know it can be wonderfully described." It is all about Jesus Christ - Christ for us and Christ in us, pastor and member alike. It is a strong connection to our Savior that makes real health possible, namely where "faith is growing more and more and love for each other in increasing."

At the end of the day, there was no compromising where a healthy congregation starts. It starts with pastors - with me as God's Bible Man. This could become a daunting task, one filled with disappointment over the lack of accomplishments and guilt over perceived failures. However, through Christ I know I am forgiven. I also know the one who brought me to this position has equipped me with his Word. He will renew and strengthen me for the work he has set before me. Each of us can live with the same assurance, so that together we can accomplish the blessed work the Lord has set before us. In the end, this will constitute a healthy congregation.

*Editor's Note: Presentations 2 and 3 will follow in November and December.*



We rejoice in the many blessings our Lord continues to give to the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless all richly.

2<sup>nd</sup> — Greg G.  
 4<sup>th</sup> — Kyle K.  
 6<sup>th</sup> — Deborah P.  
 7<sup>th</sup> — Dawn N.  
 8<sup>th</sup> — Erle P.  
 13<sup>th</sup> — David G.  
 17<sup>th</sup> — George H.  
 25<sup>th</sup> — Michelle J.

**in the month of OCTOBER**

## California Lemon Festival Outreach Opportunity Beckons

By Carl Schueler

Our fifth annual California Lemon Festival Outreach weekend beckons! Saturday and Sunday, October 17th and 18th, ORLC will host a booth in Girsch Park near the Camino Real Shopping Center. Through the years participating in this annual Goleta Chamber of Commerce sponsored event (celebrating the historically significant, if no longer agriculturally or economically significant Goleta fruit) has provided our congregation with added exposure beyond the corner of Turnpike and Cathedral Oaks.

While historic Goleta lemon groves from the '60's may seem to be pretty much replaced with condominiums or shopping centers, the lemon is on Fairview Shopping Center facades, Goleta police cruisers (sporting the Goleta City "logo" complete with a lemon), and is featured each October at the California Lemon Festival at Girsch Park.

This year, the California Lemon Festival will compete with a number of other local events including the Santa Barbara epicurean and wine connoisseur events, and of course the weekly Art Walk on Cabrillo Blvd. But these events are all-day, and folks can attend more than one.

We anticipate a good turn-out for the Lemon Festival, which offers music, food, and a car show for good measure. Past years have demonstrated that this is a good way to advertise ORLC, what we have to offer, and to provide basic evangelism whether visitors to our booth may later visit ORLC or not.

As in years past, we always benefit from a good member turnout to assist with booth duties. From set-up Friday evening to take-down Sunday evening, there is plenty to do. Volunteer work can extend from an hour or two to as much as you would like to do. Let Alan Todd or Pastor Proeber know.

We plan a number of activities to garner visitor interest. These include our popular bean-bag toss, a drawing for Trader Joe's \$30 gift certificates (four available). The drawings require name, address, email, and phone number, which provide the Outreach Committee with prospect contacts. Moreover, we have scheduled two Wednesday evening "follow-up" DVD events at the Goleta Library which will be advertised at our Lemon Festival booth. These will be October 28th and November 4th, both at 7:00 pm.

Perhaps one new item this year may interest you, in particular. We are conducting a religious opinion survey, with a gift of an ORLC Tote Bag for each party who participates. The survey will only require two minutes, as it comprises just four multiple-choice questions:

### Question 1

I think the primary purpose of the church should be  
 to teach God's Word  
 to right social wrongs  
 to support healthy families

### Question 2

I think I am  
 a good person  
 not perfect, but better than most  
 incapable of pleasing God

### Question 3

I think heaven and hell  
 don't really exist  
 are only experienced here on earth  
 are real and for eternity

### Question 4

I think Jesus is  
 a good man and role model  
 a fraud  
 my only Savior

We pray that this simple survey will not offend, yet provide both a subtle evangelism opportunity and information about the range of opinions of folks in our vicinity. (If you have any insights or suggestions to improve the questions, please speak to Pastor Proeber as soon as possible).

Please consider volunteering to assist with this annual outreach event! There is a sign up sheet on the table outside the front doors. There will also be a training meeting on October 10th, starting at 10:00 am.

And don't miss the Festival, worth an hour or two itself. May the Lord bless our efforts this year to express the joy of his salvation and the truth of his Word to the Lost among us!



## *Festival of Friendship*

### *Good Friends, Good Food, and a Gracious God!*

On the second Sunday in September a fine tradition and regular outreach event continued. Our Festival of Friendship was host to over 80 people. Members of Our Redeemer, as well as invited friends and relatives were present. We were also privileged to celebrate the reaffirmation Sullivan Russell's Baptism - the infant son of Jessica Habeck.

Although we were ready to have the service outside, and even with more comfortable chairs, the weather did not cooperate. There was a heavy marine layer which added a steady mist throughout the morning. Consequently, we went inside for the service and for meal.

Following the service, we moved to the fellowship hall for the traditional fare - Caesar salad, garlic bread, baked beans, fruit and salads were all part of the feast. Again, the highlight was the tri-tip - marinated with Sue and Pastor's special recipe and cooked to perfection by Ray Coussa. The meal was topped off with a variety of desserts - most with "limited" calories.

In the early afternoon everyone began to filter home. None left without feeling this was a special day. Our visitors were especially thankful for the gracious invitation, the warm reception, and the wonderful day. All left looking forward to next time.

### *A Special Note of Thanks*

A service, such as the Festival of Friendship does require advanced preparation, as well as extra help for set up and clean up.

There were many who helped, so it would be good to acknowledge these people who worked behind the scenes to make this service and day so special --

- the Outreach Committee
- those who helped with set up
- those who helped with clean up
- those who cooked and served
- those who brought food and bought the food

*Even more important . . .*

Those who brought friends and offered invitations. Although they may not have been accepted at this time, there will be another time. Keep up this precious work!

### ***Reporters Wanted!***

Book review?

Personal Story of Faith

Event Reports Potluck, Gathering, Party, Field Trip

Half-page to three pages

Reviewed for scriptural consistency and readability by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy to Carl Schueler, or email to Carl Schueler (cfs\_home@cox.net) or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

### ***A simple and rewarding way to serve!***

Thanks to Alan Todd and Carl Schueler for their articles. *The Reporter* continues to benefit from a variety of perspectives, and this issue again contains material from volunteer "reporters."

There is always an open invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. In the past, ten members authored over 45 articles which really makes every issue more interesting. These included articles on a wide variety of subjects: ORLC news, past and planned events, thought-provoking instructional articles on WELS history and other religions, and articles relating to personal perspectives on our faith in Jesus.

We pray that more members will continue to think about possible articles for the remainder of 2009. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber or Carl Schueler for advice. Thanks!

*"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

*Hebrews 10:25 NIV*

### **Meetings for October**

October 6th - Church Council

October 10th - Outreach Planning / Training

**October 11th - Congregational Quarterly Meeting with Council Elections**

October 20th - Board of Elders

October 27th - Board of Trustees

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## *Notes and News*

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### *Study and Service*

We continue to offer two regular Bible Studies on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Currently the Sunday morning class is completing Luther's Large Catechism and a study on the Lord's Supper and Confession.

The Wednesday evening class is finishing the book of Ezra. Following the study of Ezra we will begin comparing the new "Lutheran Study Bible," with the NIV and the Concordia Self-Study Bible.

**Sunday Morning Study @ 10:45 am**  
**Wednesday Evening Study @ 7:00 pm**

Also as a regular part of the weekly schedule is the Handbell choir practice on Monday evenings. Ringers are preparing for Reformation, Thanksgiving and the End of the Church Year.

The Adult Choir is making preparation for the same services. Both groups meet at 7:00 pm. If you would like more information, please contact Debbie A. regarding the handbells and Pastor Proeber for the choir.

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### *Trustees & Property Report*

*By Al Todd*

The storage shed is now virtually complete. The gutters have been installed and the concrete sidewalk along the North side of the building was formed and poured. Many people helped with the concrete work including the Pastor, Bruce and Dustin B., Ian S., Roger J., Jim E., Frank F., Ray C., and John F. Pastor was able to finally move some large items that were being stored in the Parsonage garage to the shed with more to come as shelves are built inside.

The paving stones were cleaned up in preparation for the Festival of Friendship Sunday. This included taking several of the old heavy tables, which were being used as work benches for the shed project, to the dump.

We had irrecoverable problems with the replacement Financial Secretary computer installed last month; however, Dave V. was able to procure yet another computer from his company. This one works fine and will provide much more storage capability and is significantly faster.

Linda W. donated an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; 1990) compliant high rise toilet which was refurbished and installed in the men's restroom. We also ordered two additional ADA compliant high rise toilets for the women's restroom which should be installed next month. So now no one except the occasional wheelchair-bound person (I'm having trouble recalling the last time someone in a wheelchair attended or used a restroom) can comfortably use the restrooms. Small children will have to climb onto the toilets, so warn them to be careful not to fall in.

6 sample chairs were ordered for the sanctuary which should be delivered in November. This task is part of an ongoing project to determine how to best use the space we have now since adding an additional building is not anticipated in the near future. Replacing the pews with attractive and comfortable chairs will allow us to rearrange the sanctuary for other uses when it is not being used for church services.

Pastor repaired some leaking faucets in the parsonage bathroom, and was present for the yearly recharging of the fire extinguishers, and 5 year inspection / certification of the suppression system.

There is still a list of a lot of little projects to complete around the church. Please speak to any member of the Building and Grounds Committee or the Pastor if you would like to help.

## Member's Corner

By Alan Todd

Recently, Sonja and I boarded a Holland-America cruise ship for 7 days to visit several ports in Alaska including the Hubbard glacier. It was the first time we had ever done any cruising and I must admit it was very enjoyable. Not only was there plenty to do on the ship every day and night including games and entertainment, but the ports we visited were spectacular and educational. Not a dull moment! And the ship's cruise director made it all happen.

The cruise director is the person who oversees just about everything that concerns the passengers from entertainment to life boat drills. In addition, the cruise director acts as the master of ceremonies for most of the entertainment and passenger informational meetings.

Our cruise director, a very personable young man from Canada, shared with us his list of the "Top 10 Silly Questions" he has been asked over the years (including on our particular cruise) by passengers.

Accordingly, I thought I would share them with you. Remember that the cruise ship is basically a floating hotel complete with 650 crew (to service 1300 passengers), several restaurants, pools, elevators, gym, spa, bars, and even a casino.

### Top Ten Silliest Passenger Questions:

10. Do these stairs go up or down?
9. Is the television satellite or cable?
8. What do you do with Ice Carvings AFTER they melt?
7. Does the elevator go to the front of the ship?
6. Is there fresh or salt water in the ship's toilet?
5. What religion are the people with the patches behind their ears?
4. How do I know which photo is mine? (Photos are displayed in a special room for everyone to see)
3. Do we set our clocks back before or after we go to sleep?
2. Where is the bus for the Walking Tour?
1. Does the Crew sleep on board?

I highly recommend a cruise if you are looking for nice accommodations, fine entertainment and service, all the high quality cuisine you can possibly eat 24 X 7, or just want to "get away from it all" for a while.

## Death of Common Sense?

By Al Todd

I thought I would share this thought provoking obituary written by Anne Whitfield in 12/04/2007 in light of the apparent lack of common sense we often witness today.

### London Times Obituary of the late Mr. Common Sense

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as: Knowing when to come in out of the rain; why the early bird gets the worm; Life isn't always fair; and maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge). His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband; churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault. Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust; his wife, Discretion; his daughter, Responsibility; and his son, Reason. He is survived by his 4 stepbrothers; I Know My Rights, I Want It Now, Someone Else Is To Blame, and I'm A Victim.

## CORNER ☩

# DEVOTIONAL



### “The Dumb Question”

*[Jesus] said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.*

*Mark 9:31-32*

Gary always asked many questions. Usually they were good ones. Sometimes they were silly. One day he asked a question to which the reply was, “That is the dumbest question I have ever heard.” That response silenced Gary, not only for that day, but for many days to come.

There is an inborn fear of asking a dumb question. I don’t want to look foolish. Nor do I want to subject myself to the derision and “eye rolls” of those around me. This is what kept the disciples quiet. None of them wanted to ask the dumb question: “What do you mean, Jesus?”

Jesus had just shared a lesson that left them wondering. What does he mean he is going to be betrayed, killed, and raised? It didn’t make any sense to them. Still none of them want to appear foolish. So in fear they remained silent.

It is not a dumb question. As a matter of fact, it is a question I need to ask myself. Why did Jesus have to be betrayed, killed, and raised to life? The answer is simple, yet precious. Jesus did all this for me, and for my rescue. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of his enemies because of my disobedience. Only Jesus’ capture and his shameful treatment could begin to accomplish his work as my substitute. He endured what I should have endured. The same is true concerning his death. I was the one who should have died. I brought God’s just sentence upon myself through my foolish and rebellious ways. However, Jesus died so I could be declared not guilty and free from God’s just punishment. Finally, it was his resurrection that provided me with a new life and the certainty of life in heaven.

The disciples eventually came to understand why the question and answer were so important. When I am faced with the same question, or any uncertainty regarding Jesus’ work to offer me forgiveness and life, I need to ask the question the disciples were afraid to ask. Why did Jesus have to be betrayed, killed, and raised? The answer provides a precious and comforting truth. Jesus did it for my peace, my forgiveness, and my confidence of life in heaven.

### Prayer Thoughts

O precious Savior, you are the answer to every question I have regarding my hope of heaven. Comfort me with the truth that your precious work is what I truly need. Amen!

Daily devotions can be accessed through [www.whataboutjesus.com](http://www.whataboutjesus.com) or [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net). Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as “podcasts.”



# The FESTIVAL of the REFORMATION

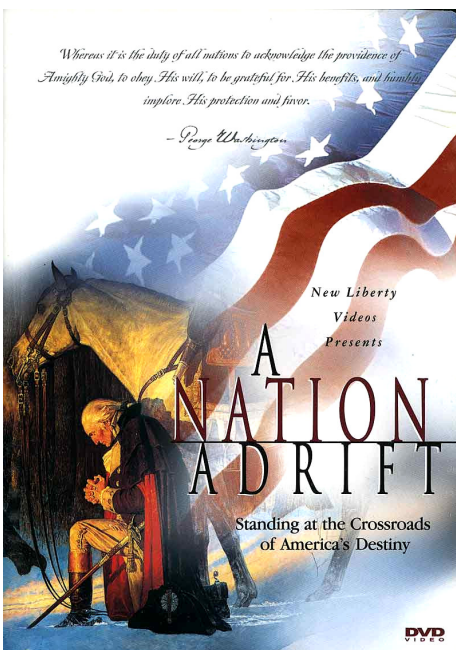
November 1st, 2009 + 4:00 pm  
St. Paul's First Lutheran Church

5244 Tujunga Avenue + North Hollywood, California  
(818) 761-1846

**Preacher: Reverend Jon Buchholz**  
*President of the Arizona-California District*  
*Tempe, Arizona*

*Fellowship and Meal to Follow hosted by St. John and Messiah Lutheran Churches*  
*(Please watch for more information on car-pooling)*

*Coming in October & November*



As a follow-up to the Lemon Festival, the Board of Education is offering a two week DVD / discussion session at the Goleta Library. The topic of the study will be the presentation we viewed on the 4th of July. "A Nation Adrift," looks at the foundation of our country, a solid foundation created by the original framers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It also considers how changes over history have eroded this foundation.

The first night will be Wednesday, October 28th at 7:00 pm. The second night will be November 4th, also at 7:00 pm. Please watch the service folder for more information.

Also, if you have a friend who might be interested in viewing this well produced documentary, invite them to come along with you. It is important that we never forget the "rights" with which we have been endowed by our Creator. Even more important, it is imperative we never lose the freedom we have, a freedom that allows us to worship and proclaim the name of the Lord our God - Father, Son and Spirit.