



The Voice of Hope

The newsletter of Hope Lutheran Church, San Mateo, CA
"Knowing and sharing the good news of Hope in Christ"

Pastor Daniel Severson



Dear Friends of Hope, I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas wherein the celebration of the birth of Jesus became an occasion for a renewed sense of his life-giving presence in your hearts and minds. That God, out of love for us, would condescend and step into our shoes by taking on our humanity so that he might establish a redemptive relationship with us is a story that can be absorbed only by faith. Only the gift of the Holy Spirit makes this possible, for the creation of such faith in us is miraculous.

Speaking of the Holy Spirit, I had the opportunity last month to baptize my nephew's two small children: Nora, who is three, and Lars, who is one. This provides me with a good reason to reflect a bit on the meaning of baptism in advance of Sunday, January 10 which is the day we celebrate The Baptism of Our Lord. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, and a voice from Heaven declared, "This is my Son and with him I am well pleased."

While we don't see doves descending or hear a voice from Heaven, nevertheless, we too are given the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized. And we do hear the voice of the pastor declaring that we are sons and daughters of God, a declaration based on his word.

The promise conveyed to us in baptism, that God considers us his very own children, does not come as the result of meeting some condition or because we made a decision to believe. Rather, God gives us this lofty status out of love and as a gift. Yes, we participate in the process of making this promise effective in our lives. This is done as we come to believe it. But, were the promise not already there to believe, there would be nothing to believe in. So, does that mean we have to make a decision to believe after the fact—after the promise was conveyed to us in baptism?

Before answering that, let me make some

observations about how the promise of baptism changes our lives. First, it is important to understand that a promise from God is not simply something nice to think about. It is more than an abstract message as when we say to someone, "You are in my thoughts as you are going through this difficult period in your life." As nice as that is, it doesn't change anything, any more than telling a victim of gun violence that they are in our thoughts changes the danger that guns pose in our society. A promise from God is meant to become a message that changes our lives in an essential way. That is, it is meant to be internalized. It is meant to shape who we become. Moreover, as such, it is meant to counter other messages, no matter where they may come from, if they stand in contradiction to what God says.

Suppose I am so unfortunate to have been brought up having heard the message that I'm not a person of value: that I don't live up to important expectations: that I'm not worthy of positive regard from others, or some such negative judgement. As children, and as adults for that matter, negative messages such as this tend to be internalized. What others think about me thereby becomes what I think about me. My self -esteem plummets, failures are not seen as opportunities to learn and grow but rather as evidence that confirms my low opinion about myself, and I may even get stuck in a pattern of comparing myself to others in an attempt to make myself feel better at the expense of someone else. Not good.

A better idea would be to believe God's judgement, namely, that I am judged worthy and a person of great value, just like everyone else, because that was God's promise to me when I was baptized. This requires faith. Sometimes it requires a lot of faith due to the fact that the noise from the world around us often sends messages that are very different from the word of God. The promises of God become effective in our lives: they become life changers: they redeem us from lies and distortions when we put our faith in them. The only messages

Continued on page 2

that count in an ultimate sense are God's. That's not to say we aren't sinners. That's not to say we won't fail from time to time. But it is to say that these things need not define us or control who we become.

Through faith in God's redemptive promises, we can be picked up and dusted off again and again. With God, the future always holds new possibilities. So, faith is necessary for God's promises to affect us in a positive and redemptive way. However, fear not if you do not feel up to the task of believing by your own strength. Fear not if you feel like the person who said to Jesus, "Help my unbelief!" Remember your baptism. You were given both the promise and the power to believe it, namely, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to believe as we hear the word and receive the sacraments. Communing with nature can bring a sense of peace. It may even give you the feeling of God's transcendent presence. But it is not enough to shape you into a new person, and lift you out of hopelessness.

So, do we have to make a decision to believe? Read Luther's explanation to the third article of the Apostles Creed in the Small Catechism. And in the meantime, remember your baptism. Meditate on it. Absorb it. You are a child of God.

Blessings,
Pastor Dan

from our Choirs Director



Resting on our laurels

I know for sure that our musicians of every description did not rest on their laurels during December. There was much rehearsing and hard work done by all. Christmas Eve was followed by some down time, except for a faithful few who continued to inspire us with their time and talent. Now we're all refreshed and looking forward to another season of worshiping with you through music.

Do you realize that Ash Wednesday is only a few weeks away? We'll be learning new music and preparing for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. It is our mission to lead you through this time of preparation and look forward to rejoicing with you at Easter.

Shirley Fitzgerald, Choirs Director

Pastor Paul's Notes



"Single Seniors" will meet on Tuesday, January 5, in Nielsen Hall, from 12:30 to 2 pm. Bring a bag lunch! Our guest speaker will be Laura Fanucchi, director of H.I.P. (Human Investment Project) H.I.P. is a non-profit Home Sharing Program that has

served over 2,500 people each year. The program links people who have homes with those seeking homes. The program interviews clients and makes referrals to match people in homes. It also has a "Self-Sufficiency" Program that enables low-income families to transition to self-reliance. H.I.P. is eager to connect with people who have an extra room or are looking for a housemate or renter. This is an especially important matter, as our county has become one of the most expensive areas to live in the United States. All are welcome to attend our January 5 session and hear from Laura!

"Single Seniors" will also have a lunch-outing on Thursday, January 21. The place to be determined---see Sunday bulletins of the 10th and 17th.

A "Celebration of the Life of Carol Joanne Michelsen Way" will be held at Hope on Saturday, January 16, at 1:30 pm. We give thanks to God for her life and we hold the family (Bob, Mark and Scott) in our prayers during this time.

We also remember Elis Nielsen these days in our prayers, as she suffered a heart attack on December 10. We pray for her continued healing as she is in the midst of recovery.

Subscriptions to THE LUTHERAN magazine are invited. Please sign up in the narthex if you would like to receive it at home. We will receive the bulk rate with a minimum of 15 subscriptions. Thank you for your interest.

From our Council President



Happy New Year! H is the final letter in the T-R-U-T-H series.

H: Humility vs Pride: Pride is the greatest impediment to a successful transition. Pride is rooted in a high view of ourselves. Pride refuses to listen, to pray, to allow time, to gather information, to take counsel, to receive criticism, to see the need for change, and to admit that others may have a better idea. Pride kills discussion, fuels fantasy, destroys unity, and forces decisions that never win the whole-hearted support of the congregation.

Humility is rooted in a high view of God. Humility welcomes discussion, depends on prayer, treats others gently and respectfully, invites correction, admits wrong, learns from others and patiently waits for God to reveal his will through the united agreement of the entire congregation. We are all in this together.

Through prayer, we should ask God for guidance to approach our transition with **T-R-U-T-H**. Transparency, Reality, Unity, Timeliness and Humility. I think these five qualities will enable us to achieve our goal of finding new pastoral leadership.

Lord, our God, our future is not yet known. Help us see which way we should go, and whom you will send to us as pastor. Help the members of Hope to look for the Light of your Son, Jesus the Christ, that the Way may become clear, and your will may be done. Amen.

Jerilyn Struven
Council President

Ash Wednesday, which we will observe on February 10, 2016, is the beginning of Lent. Before we wrapped up our Christmas celebration we were already thinking of Lent. With that said Lent begins with the tradition of burning the Palm Branches from last year that become Ashes we will use this year.

Even if you are not able to attend our Ash Wednesday worship, please bring or send your Palm branch to the Fat Tuesday celebration. You can find more information on Fat Tuesday and Ash Wednesday in our weekly bulletins and in our February Voice of Hope.



Stewardship

How Should a Christian View Materialism?

Got Questions.org

Question: "How should a Christian view materialism?"

Answer: Materialism is defined as "the preoccupation with material things rather than intellectual or spiritual things." If a Christian is preoccupied with material things, it is definitely wrong. That is not to say we cannot have material things, but the obsession with acquiring and caring for "stuff" is a dangerous thing for the Christian, for two reasons.

First, any preoccupation, obsession or fascination with anything other than God is sinful and is displeasing to God. We are to "love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5), which is, according to Jesus, the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-38). Therefore, God is the only thing we can (and should) occupy ourselves with habitually. He alone is worthy of our complete attention, love and service. To offer these things to anything, or anyone, else is idolatry.

Second, when we concern ourselves with the material world, we are easily drawn in by the "deceitfulness of wealth" (Mark 4:19), thinking that we will be happy or fulfilled or content if only we had more of whatever it is we are chasing. This is a lie from the father of lies, Satan. He wants us to be chasing after something he knows will never satisfy us so we will be kept from pursuing that which is the only thing that can satisfy" God Himself. Luke 16:13 tells us we "cannot serve both God and money." We must seek to be content with what we have, and materialism is the exact opposite of that contentment. It causes us to strive for more and more and more, all the while telling us that this will be the answer to all our needs and dreams. The Bible tells us that a person's "life is not in the abundance of the things which he possesses" (Luke 12:15) and that we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

If materialism was ever to satisfy anyone, it would have been Solomon, the richest king the world has ever known. He had absolutely everything and had more of it than anyone, and yet he found it was all worthless and futile. It did not produce happiness or the satisfaction our souls long for. He declared, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). In the end, Solomon came to conclusion that we are to "fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Upcoming Events

Invitation to Young Adult Coffee Hour Sunday January 10, 2016



Hope's "Young Adults" (ages 14 to 29) are invited to a casual morning coffee hour as an opportunity to visit and reconnect.

Hope's Young Adult Coffee Hour at San Mateo Coffee Co.
Sunday, January 10, 2016
8:30am-9:30am
127 W. 25th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

We hope you will also consider attending Pastor Dan's Bible study at 11:30am in Hope's Education building, which addresses some key areas of interest to us all. If you would like to learn more about the class, please call Pastor Dan at (650)-349-0100.

Sponsored by Hope's Education Committee,
Paul Forbes, Monika Hastings, Sandi Kane, Deb Stucke, and Heidi Waters

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

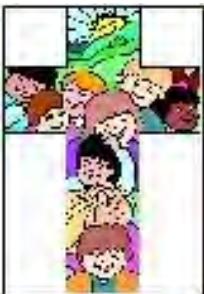
Sunday, January 24, 2016
following worship

Main Agenda Items
Budget

Call Committee Election - Prayerfully consider serving.



Preschool Corner



The New Year finds us busy as ever. Registration for the 2016 -17 school year has begun. Tours and visits will be held on Monday and Thursday mornings.

We will also have pajama week the middle of the month and will stay warm and cozy.

We are so lucky to have such supportive and caring families at the preschool. The parents gave so generously to the toy drive at church, as did the teachers.



Wishing all a Happy New Year!

Blessings, Jeanne



HLCW Circles

Mary Circle

3rd Tuesday of the month 10:00 am
Location Varies
Contact: Martha Welch

Priscilla Circle 3rd Tuesday of the month 9:30 am
Location Varies
Contact: Joan Cleven

Sarah Circle

3rd Tuesday of the month 10 am
Location Varies
Contact: Elis Nielsen

Lydia Circle is open to women of all ages and stages; Evening or weekend meetings; Our schedule is flexible.
Location: Hope Youth Room
Contact: Heidi Waters



December 6, 2015

Dear Hope Family,

Shafer loved his College Care package and he is sick so very much Appreciated!

Thanks,
Joanne Smith

December 17, 2015

Dear Hope Family,

Thank you, to all who helped during the Christmas season. All who helped decorate, helped with the services and those who helped putting the bulletins together.

May God bless you,
Hope Lutheran Church Staff



Celebrating birthdays in January

Anne Hermansen

Bob Smith*
Holly Hermansen
Hillary Coyne
Mehri Vatanparast
Verena Brauen

Carol Feige

Stewart Hoffheins*
Jack Jr. Coyne
Anders Voss
Margo Kannenberg
Bob Paulus

Jerry Butler

Douglas Johnson
Marilyn Johnson
Gilbert Schroeder

Names in bold = our brothers/sisters turning 90-90+ years!

* = Friend of Congregation





Spark Time Sunday School in January

Children from Kindergarten thru Grade 6

dismissed to Sunday School during Sending Hymn and

join parents in Café Hope after approximately 30 minutes of study and activity.

Date	Theme	Scripture
January 3	Jesus the Word	John 1:10-18
January 10	Jesus' Baptism	Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
January 17	Wedding at Cana	John 2:1-11
January 24	Jesus Goes to Nazareth	Luke 4:14-30
January 31	Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:4-10

Ministry Assistants

Date	Assisting Ministers	Communion Assistants	Readers	Spark Leaders
1/3	Margo Kannenberg	Phil & Marilyn Gaal	Margo Kannenberg	Judy Jeschke Kailen Sallander
1/10	Jerilyn Struven	David & Mary Phillips	Kristen Severson	Deb Stucke Rachael Stucke
1/17	Skip Dahl	Jerry Brooks Bill Hroziencik	Lois Nieman	Monika Hastings George Studle
1/24	Sandi Kane	Bill & Margo Kannenberg	Lyle Johnson	Jessica Stucke Emma Worthge
1/31	Jack Coyne	Bob & Ruth Lillo	Monika Hastings	Deb Stucke Rachael Stucke

~ January 2016 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27 10am Worship 11am Café Hope	28 9:30am Aerobics 7:30pm AA*	29	30 9:30am Aerobics	31	1 New Year's Day – Office Closed 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	2
3 Home & Hope 10am Worship 11am Café Hope 12:30pm Confirmation Class	4 Home & Hope 9:30am Aerobics 7:30pm AA*	5 Home & Hope 12pm Staff Meeting 12:30pm Single Seniors: Guest Speaker	6 Home & Hope 9:30am Aerobics 6:45pm Bells 7:45pm Choir	7 Home & Hope 7pm Evangelism Committee Mtg.	8 Home & Hope 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	9 Home & Hope
10 10am Worship 11am Café Hope 11:45am Adult Bible Study	11 9:30am Aerobics 10am Women's Bible Study Leaders 7:30pm AA*	12	13 9am Quilters 2pm Worship Committee Mtg. 6:45pm Bells 7:45pm Choir	14	15 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	16 7:30am Men's Breakfast 9am Decorations Take Down 1:30pm Carol Way: Celebration of Life
17 10am Worship 11am Café Hope 11:45am Adult Bible Study 12:30pm Confirmation Class 1pm Estonian Church*	18 Office Closed 9:30am Aerobics 7:30pm AA*	19 9:30am Priscilla Circle 10am Mary Circle 10am Sarah Cir. 12pm Staff Mtg.	20 9:30am Aerobics 6:45pm Bells 7:45pm Choir	21 9:00 am Peninsula Quilters* 12:30pm Single Seniors: Lunch Outing	22 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	23
24 10am Worship 11am Café Hope <i>Semi-Annual Congregational Mtg.</i>	25 9:30am Aerobics 7:30pm AA*	26 9am Quilters	27 9:30am Aerobics 6:45pm Bells 7:45pm Choir	28	29 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	30
30 10am Worship 11am Café Hope 11:45am Adult Bible Study	Feb. 1 9:30am Aerobics 7:30pm AA*	2 12pm Staff Meeting	3 9:30am Aerobics 6:45pm Bells 7:45pm Choir	4	5 9:30am Aerobics 8pm AA*	6 7:30am Men's Breakfast * = Outside Organization

Hope Lutheran Church
600 W. 42nd Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94403

Address Service Requested

January 2016

Voice of Hope Deadline for February 2016 edition: Wednesday, January 13



Hope Lutheran Church

650-349-0100

Email: helc@pacbell.net

www.HopeLutheranSanMateo.org

Sunday Worship at 10:00 AM
Sunday School at 11:00 AM