

Genesis



Messiah's Newsletter

February 2009

The Church of the Messiah

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From the Interim Rector:

As I promised at the Annual Meeting, the Vestry and I have worked out a comprehensive interim plan. The biggest part of interim work is carried on by the members and commissions of Messiah congregation, carrying on in the same direction through the interim period. Messiah has so very many activities, events and ministries! That is part one of the interim plan: faithfully and joyfully carrying on. The second part is interim work per se. It's title is:

Extra-ordinary Leadership

Thinking Systems, Making a Difference

God's Children, the Church, in an Age of the Quick Fix

Be sure to see the separate article by this same title in this issue for details. I have decided to do this part of our interim together through small groups and one-on-one conversations, instead of a series of Saturday workshops for 15-20 people at a time. I believe that this format will better accomplish interim goals, namely, to strengthen leadership in this transition and on into your ministries with Messiah's new rector. We begin with our own personal stories and end, God willing, with new clarity, personal courage and spiritual strength to lead this congregation through the months and years ahead. I love this work and from now on it just gets better and better.

Please know that I hold each of you dearly in my prayers. I ask that you remember me in yours. There is nothing like the spiritual companionship we have with prayer, to know that you are loved, that you do matter and are valued for who you are is a privilege and a blessing we share in the church. This is perhaps the best gift we have to offer both members and visiting guests. Let's look out for others beyond our church fellowship with whom we can share this gift. Look for God-given opportunities to tell someone that you will remember them in your prayers.

Blessings and joy to you, your family and friends!

Fr. Steve (Swift)

Extraordinary Leadership

Thinking systems, making a difference

*God's children, the Church, in the age of the Quick Fix**

Becoming children of God: building relationships to strengthen leadership at the local level.

“Until you learn to name some of your ghosts and to name your hopes you have not yet been born. You are still the creation of others.” Anon.

Part 1. A pilot group

Four Vestrypersons with Fr. Steve as “coach.” This pilot group includes Randy Steppe, Cathy Barrow, Bob German and Bob Hayward. Three group meetings with Fr. Steve (as “coach”) in the family room for an hour and a half each in February. Each member of the group also meets with Fr. Steve (as “coach”) twice for 45-50 minutes one on one during February and the beginning of March.

Subsequent group meetings will begin with the following titles:

Emotional systems: what they are

Thinking systems: generation to generation, the family “dance”

Living systems: leadership challenges ahead

Fr. Steve is quick to point out that these group meetings and individual appointments are neither counseling nor therapy. They are the means for teaching principles and concepts of “system thinking” a revolutionary new approach to understanding how we grow into the person God creates us to be. Though secular in origin, pioneered by Maury Bowen (1913-1990) at Georgetown University, Fr. Steve teaches this material from a biblical and theological perspective. In his experience this is the best training for leadership in the age of the quick fix whether it is leadership in the family or leadership on a national level.

(continued next column)

Part 2. The interim report at Vestry meetings (January-December 2009)

Learning how to think systems through 20-25 minute interactive presentations the Vestry will learn how to think systems, the fundamental skill for extra-ordinary leadership.

Part 3. Monthly beginning in February adult forums on the principles of “systems thinking” through presentations and dialogue.

*The title and second line above are taken from *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, written by Dr. Roberta Gilbert, the flagship text for *Extraordinary Leadership* seminars for clergy (Richmond, VA). The third line in the title is from *Failure of Nerve: leadership in the age of the quick fix* by Rabbi Edwin Friedman.



New Books in the Church Library...

Bad Girls of the Bible - Liz Curtis Higgs

How to Stop the Pain - James Richardson

Margin - Richard Svenson - Restoring emotional, physical, financial and time reserves to overloaded lives

Open Mind, Open Heart - Thomas Keating - Centering prayer!

Messiah's Interim Plan, the Open Sea
"Ships are safe in the harbor but they are made for the open sea." Anonymous

Note: In a separate article in this issue of Genesis, Fr. Steve gives the details of the formal interim work for this interim period. As the congregation continues with its ministries, engages in self-study, builds a profile, the Vestry eventually calling Messiah's new rector, parishioners and other interested persons may join Fr. Steve and others to discover the transforming power of the gospel through the lens of "systems thinking."

The power of togetherness, the herding instinct, the need to come together, to remain in the harbor, as a strategy to avoid the buffeting of high winds on the open sea, works. In the harbor we are safe and secure. And oh, how we love the harbor!

Yet deep inside we know that we are made for the open sea. We know we need to get out there, to choose deliberately to set our heading for uncharted waters, to go where we have not gone before and on the way to trust and wait in hope for God, for God to act. Here on the open sea, no matter the weather, is what it means to be fully alive, to be that unique child of God that we are. God calls the faithful in every generation to live into his image; God in every generation calls people out of their spiritual harbors, into the open (spiritual) sea of adventure, challenge and discovery, always found somewhere off the map. We need to feel the wind filling our sails, our masts straining against those winds so that we might be propelled to the edge of our charts and there to discover the new life we have in Christ.



Treasurer Needed.....

But thankfully, **Mike Dowd** has graciously volunteered to be our interim treasurer!

We still need someone for the permanent position.

If you have any questions about the responsibilities of the treasurer, feel free to ask someone on the Finance Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

In His service,
The Finance Committee

Vince Vanneman
Carol Waldhauser
Jean Becker
Michele Steppe

Keep those home fires burning!

Did you see it? Did you see the awesome little "furnace" in the Tower Room as you walked into the church? Thanks to Randy Steppe's handiwork we have the perfect little vehicle in which to gather your contributions to our **FURNACE FUND**. In order to ensure heat this winter, the Vestry has had to authorize \$14,000 for emergency repairs, so we really need your help. You can just drop your loose changes into the "chimney" and listen to the beautiful sound it makes as it enters the tin can inside! The Gooding twins were generous enough to demonstrate this for us during announcement time in December. If you prefer to make a larger cash donation or to write a check, you may use the pink envelopes located on the side of the "furnace." Put your name on the outside and drop it into the chimney or into the offering plate. Donations made this way will appear on your next statement. We are already off to a great start. You can check our progress by the "thermometer" on top of the "furnace." Let's get that temperature rising!!

Food Pantry SOS!!

Our neighbors look to the Church of the Messiah during troubled times, and we maintain a Food Pantry to assist anyone who comes to our door asking for help. Due to increased demand during our Monday and Tuesday Food Pantry days, the following items are desperately needed. We have plenty of canned vegetables and pasta, but we urgently need peanut butter, jelly, tuna and canned meat. You'll note that these are high-protein and/or high "enjoyment" items that turn a bag of mere canned goods into a bag of meals for hungry families. During the month of February, we've designated a Sunday for each of these items, and hope that you'll clip this notice to your grocery list and leave your donations in the "Food Pantry" box in the Tower Room. Thank you!

February 1: Peanut butter

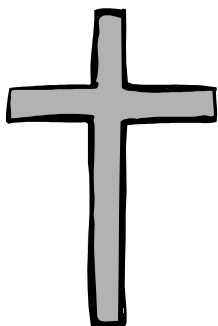
February 8: Jelly

February 15: Tuna

February 22: Canned meat

Ash Wednesday,

February 25



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Races on Feb. 24th

We are having our annual **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper with Boy Scout Troop 161 on Tuesday, February 24th from 5:30 to 7:30 PM.**



Pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs and beverages will be served. Tickets are only \$5.00 for anyone age 12 and older, or \$2.50 for children ages 6 through 11. Children under 6 years eat free. **All proceeds from the supper will benefit Boy Scout Troop 161.**

Why pancakes for supper? Shrove (or Pancake) Tuesday is the day before Lent begins. Eating pancakes is an old custom from the British Isles - a way of using up all of those decadent ingredients, like butter and eggs, that traditionally were not allowed during Lent. And this year, pancake races will also be held during the evening's festivities!

A lot of people stepped forward at the meeting January 18th to help, and we're off to a great start. But we still need everyone to come and bring their family, friends and neighbors! The best kind of publicity is word-of-mouth, and fliers for the event are located in the Tower Room. Please take a few, post them where you shop and give some to your friends and neighbors. And if you haven't signed up to help but would like to, don't worry - there's still a lot to be done! For more information, please see Janet Taylor or Sarah Miranda.

One Straw Farm CSA "Sign-up Season" Begins

2009 Season Dates: Mondays, June 18th to Nov. 16th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm

Share Cost: \$485 if joined by March 1st, \$550 if joined after March 1st.

It's official! The dates and prices for One Straw Farm's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Pick-up Site at the Church of the Messiah have been set and planning is already underway for our fifth season. The CSA will begin on Monday, June 8th and continue for 24 weeks through Monday, November 16th.

The Pick Up will start a little later this year - 5:30 - and will run until 7:00 PM.. We're hoping that this slightly later start time will make it easier for members to volunteer on Mondays. We have fun gathering with our neighbors every Monday through the season and this weekly commitment has enabled us to deliver produce to the seniors at the Harford Senior Center in Lauraville and to share our bounty with Caroline Center's Culinary Arts program.

CSAs are a way to purchase food directly from a farmer by becoming "shareholders." This eliminates supermarket middlemen, keeps farmers' cost down and restores the connection between a community and the source of its food. It also ensures farmers an income during the growing season. One Straw Farm, owned by Drew and Joan Norman, is the largest organic vegetable farm in Maryland and is getting increasing renown for their innovative methods and the quality of their produce - in fact, they will be featured in the March 2009 issue of *Martha Stewart Living*. They donate 1 share for every ten signed up at our site, and we are able to use these shares to help feed our community.

To sign up, you can visit the farm's website at www.onestrawfarm.com, e-mail csa@onestrawfarm.com, or call Joan Norman at 410-343-1828. As of this writing the Normans are in the process of adding a shopping cart to their website so that shareholders can sign up online and pay with a credit card.

More shareholders signed up at our site means more produce for us to distribute in the community.

We hope you'll consider participating in this year's CSA season by becoming a shareholder, spreading the word, and/or by volunteering at the pickup site once the season begins. We especially need people with strong backs to help unload and set up the produce at 5:00PM, and someone to schedule volunteers on pick up days.

~Sarah Miranda

Creating a Parish Profile: the Self-Study Stage of our Rector Search...

The Self-Study Committee met for the first time on Monday, January 12. We are happy to have Fr. Steve in place as our Interim Rector, and to be at the stage where we can begin the search for our next Rector.

Messiah's Self-Study Committee is a sub-committee of the Vestry, and its membership is reflective of parishioners from both the 8:00 and 10:30 services. Its members are: Karen Edsell, Bryan Gardiner, Margaret Goode, Sarah Miranda, Janet Taylor and Fay Willey. The Rev. John Price, our Search Consultant, joined us for our first meeting. The Search Consultant is a clergyperson associated with the Diocese, who guides a parish throughout the process of calling a new rector.

The committee has begun the first steps toward the development of Messiah's Parish Profile. A completed Profile is a requirement before beginning the actual Rector Search and is the "product" the committee will be creating, with the help of Messiah's members. Our Parish Profile will include demographic, financial and other pertinent data about our needs looking toward the future. It will be the most important tool we will have in seeking our new rector, a way to present Messiah and the surrounding community to prospective candidates. It will describe who we are, where we've been and where we'd like to go and the kind of person we would like to have as our next rector. It will function as a kind of "snapshot" of our congregation and will be mounted on our website and accessed by clergy nationwide. The information gleaned for the Parish Profile will also be tabulated into a form submitted to the National Church.

If the Parish Profile is the "product" that the committee will be delivering to the Vestry and the Diocese, then the "Self-Study" leading to the creation of the Profile is the "process" - a prayerful, interactive (and joyful!) consideration of Messiah's spiritual direction and of the future we will be undertaking together. The process of gathering this information presents an opportunity for sharing, discovery and knowing each other better as a community. During this phase of the search process, we need each and every one of us to share ideas and preferences about our parish: our hopes for our faith community, our views about Messiah as an urban church, and the meaning of our Christian life together. Each of us is special. No one can answer for us. Each of us has spiritual gifts that no one else can share in quite the same way, and we need those gifts for our Self-Study to truly reflect who we are.

Confidentiality is important to our Self-Study. While the Self-Study portion of the Rector Search is necessarily open, for obvious reasons no one's name will be revealed to the congregation as a whole.

Please pray for the Self-Study Committee, and join us as we explore who we are and the future we will undertake together as we work toward furthering the Kingdom of God in Hamilton.

**Shrove Tuesday
Pancake Supper
February 24th
5:30 to 7:30 PM**

**\$5.00 age 12 & up
\$2.50 children 6-11
Children under 6 free**

**Ash Wednesday
February 25th**