

From Pastor

“You Will be My Witnesses”

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8, NRSV)

“Me? A witness? I don’t think that is my job. Isn’t that what we have an outreach team for? Right??...”

Wrong.

By virtue of our baptism into faith, we are all witnesses “...to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8b, NRSV)

A story was shared in seminary of a gentleman called as a missionary from Africa who landed on the east coast. Upon his arrival to the United States, a conversation was struck between him and an American about faith. The American asked him: “Why are you here in the U.S.? I thought missionaries were supposed to work in third-world countries to help those truly in need.”

The missionary smiled and responded: “That’s why I’m here. I heard that the United States was in such dire straights when it comes to faith that I was sent over here to help.”

Indeed, a person (or country) does not have to be materialistically poor to be people in need.

Our calling as Christians is indeed to be witnesses of all that God has done for us. There is no greater identity in the world than being “a child of God.” When God unleashes his power in the world, we and even the cosmos can never be the same again.

Our witnessing has for many decades now been mostly confined to others inside our faith community. We have gathered together and received the gifts of God that God bestows on his people. Our gatherings have, indeed, given praise and glory to God. But, is

that enough, given that we have been called as God’s witnesses?

To be a witness, we need to know two things: First, the story of how we came to be baptized into faith. Second, how we see our lives as a continuance of God’s story in Christ. Sound difficult? It does not need to be.

One of the great witnesses in the holy catholic (universal) church is the witnessing which people in other denominations of faith share with others. Because of their faith and how they were raised, sharing the good news in Jesus Christ seems to become second nature for them. The way in which they share their story of faith seems to roll off as naturally for them as breathing comes to us. But it is never too late to learn about our stories of faith and share them with others!

On a poster outside in the Great Hall at my former call in Temple Hills, MD is a little boy who looks as if he is beginning his baseball career with glove, hat, and bat all in tow. The caption reads “We ALL were once beginners!” What a great reminder in our growing and learning as God’s witnesses on earth!

We all have a faith story to share in our baptism into faith. We all are growing in our understanding of God’s story and of what Jesus Christ has come to mean for us.

Our witnessing for the sake of Christ is our calling as Christians. We are all beginners at some point and time in our lives when it comes to sharing our faith with others. When we take just small steps to share with others, we are well on the road to being God’s “witnesses...to the ends of the earth.”

And it all begins when we take that first step!

Yours in Christ –

Pastor Jeff

Visioning Process Will Begin with an All Congregation Bible Study – September 10

Questions & Answers:

- 1. Why are we waiting so long to get started? Can't we start sooner than Sept. 10?** Council discerned this question. Many people are on vacation during August (including pastor). The first weekend in September is Labor-Day weekend in which many people travel. Six weeks will also give Pastor sufficient time to prepare himself and the congregation for the Bible study.
- 2. I understand we will be studying Acts 2, 10, and 16 for our All Congregation Bible Study together. Why were these particular chapters chosen?** Pastor Jeff has done extensive work with these chapters, having been trained through the E.L.C.A.'s Division of Outreach – “Transformational Ministry Training” back in Chicago. Dave Daulbert, Pastor and E.L.C.A. leader, did his thesis work on these three chapters in Acts and thought them important enough to base transformational ministry training on them. In his previous call, Pastor Jeff held an all congregation Bible study during the summer and then followed it with an All-Day retreat for their work on core values and a vision statement.
- 3. What if I am unable to make it to the Adult Bible Study time? Will it be offered at a different time as well?** Yes, it will. Midweek Bible study opportunities will be forthcoming as plans unfold.
- 4. I don't normally go to Adult Bible study, but do my daily personal devotions at home. Do I have to participate in the All Congregation Bible study?** Yes, you do. While there is certainly benefit in daily personal devotions, it is not the same as discerning the Word with others. One of the ways we deepen our faith together is by studying Scripture together. Scripture comes alive as believers gather to discern God's Word among them. While studying Scripture together, God may give us a message through another person's reflection or insight. This is something neither you nor I can receive in our own personal devotions.
- 5. How long can we expect to study these three chapters of Acts together?** For six sessions, spread over a six-week period.
- 6. What if I have another question? Who can I ask?** The easiest answer is – You can ask Pastor Jeff. (Remember Pastor's motto – “There is no such thing as a stupid question.”) If, for whatever reason, you do not want to ask Pastor, please refer your question to a council member who can act as your liaison to get the answer you seek.

Note from Pastor/Editor: Last month's story in pastor's article was taken from a 2006 devotional guide for church councils through E.L.C.A. Credit goes to Ted Schroeder, author of the fine devotion used in the article. Please accept our apologies for inadvertently omitting the following credits:

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Letter from Bethany's Former Pastor Norman and Eleanor Dahle

We received a very gracious letter from our former Pastor Norman and Eleanor Dahle upon their past visit with us here at Bethany. As Pastor Dahle points out in his letter, they have been worshipping at Bethany at least once every summer since 1993 and have missed only one year since then. Pastor Dahle and Eleanor note how wonderful it is each time to return and renew friendships with members. He especially noted the following:

“Both Eleanor and I want you to know that we both felt the worship service was outstanding in liturgy and in the proclaimed word and sacrament. In fact, I felt as I worshipped, that if I lived anywhere nearby, I would certainly want to worship there.”

Pastor Dahle encouraged us to make known our classical traditional worship service style, along with our contemporary worship service, with ads in appropriate publications throughout the area.

Much thanks to Pastor Dahle and Eleanor for taking the time to share their encouraging correspondence with us. May we continue to remember the gift we have among us and remember to share that gift with others. As I was told, Pastor Dahle mentioned to members gathered at Adult Bible study “Have you told someone about this great gift you have (in the traditional service)?”

New Lutheran Hymnal -- Training Provided

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, a new hymnal for ELCA, makes its debut in October when pew, leaders', and accompaniment editions are made available to the whole church. A host of events will introduce, provide training for, and celebrate print and online resources for Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Oregon Synod encourages every congregation to send participants. The cost is \$20, which includes one copy of the pew edition. If you wish to attend, please RSVP soon! The event scheduled for the Portland area will be held

Saturday, November 4, 8:30 to 3:30 at
Milwaukie Lutheran Church
3810 SE Lake Rd.
Milwaukie, OR 97222
503.653.0250
RSVP: milwaukielc@comcast.net

Picnic at Wishire Park August 1, 6:30-8:30pm

The Beaumont Wilshire Neighborhood Association invites you to the annual Beaumont Wilshire picnic in celebration of National Night Out. Look for free hamburgers and hotdogs, door prizes, entertainment, and a great opportunity to meet people who live near the park across the street from Bethany. Last year's attendance was over 200.

The Bethany Day Camp leaders will also be there for the kids. This is a great opportunity for outreach and fun. Remember to wear your Bethany t-shirt, if you have one!

Second Annual Day Camp Comes to Bethany

July 31 – Aug. 4

Our summertime temperatures of 100° plus is not the only thing that will be “heating up” things around Bethany. As our Banner reads out on the front lawn “Day Camp is Coming!” Make that – **“Day Camp is Here!”**

If, for whatever reason, you have not had the privilege of volunteering or participating in some aspect of Day Camp, you are **HIGHLY ENCOURAGED** to come and take part in some form of activity with us.

Here are some little known facts about Day Camp and the staff and participants:

1. **Did you know that Day Camp holds worship twice daily?** Once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
2. **Did you know that three of the four Lutherwood staff members at Bethany’s 2005 Day Camp are now Day Camp Leaders for all Day Camps offered by Lutherwood this summer?** While there is no word yet on which staff members will be coming to Bethany this time, there is a strong chance that one of the three – **Josh, Jake, or Ruth Ann** – will be with us again.
3. **Did you know that you do not have to volunteer in order to come witness a part of Day Camp?** While we think you would totally enjoy being a volunteer, you do not have to be a volunteer in order to come and see what Day Camp is all about. Come join us for morning worship and/or closing worship (usually around 2:30pm, Mon.-Thurs, with a special closing service on Friday around 11:30am – please see schedule on back table in church) or for another activity you believe would be fun to attend.
4. **Did you know that delicious hot meals are provided for Day Campers’ lunch each day?** Our fellowship group with **LeDonna Schrumm, Phyllis Parker**, and others did a “bang up job” last year to provide nutritious and satisfying meals for our campers. As one camper remarked, out of all the summer camp programs he had attended last summer, “This one is by far the best!” I think that says it all.
5. **Did you know that, included in the cost, the campers take a field trip to Grant Pool via the Tri-Met?** This is a wonderful way for the campers to cool off during the hot days of summer and to use the terrific local transportation and park resources close to Bethany.

June Council Meeting Highlights

Council met July 18 at 7pm with one member absent. Major discussion included planning for the congregation-wide visioning process; redevelopment process, the upcoming congregational meeting on August 20, and various ideas for enhancing our volunteer transportation ministry to those who cannot otherwise attend worship. We still need volunteers to provide overnight lodging for the Day Camp staff of four. The six-month financial reports show income of \$36,377 and expenses of \$54,448. Transfers from savings were used to pay the difference. Pastor Janell Bethke’s current call ends August 6; one impact on Bethany expenses is the loss of \$498.67 per month in “family health care contribution” paid by her church. Upcoming Bethany building needs include gutter replacement and exterior painting. The next Council meeting will be August 15 at 7pm.

Herb Miller, editor, author, and parish consultant, has been offering a vast array of rich resources for congregations. In this issue “Financial Stewardship: Myths and Principles”, he offers insight into the ministry of financial stewardship backed by his research. It is never too early to be thinking in terms of our earthly stewardship of all that God has given us. . I commend this article to us for challenge and understanding of financial stewardship. – Pastor Jeff (see article on the following pages)