



HAPPENINGS

FROM THE PASTOR

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Pondering what to say about Lent, I was thinking about structural sin. This is the idea that there is a social dimension of turning from God. When the prophets pronounced God's judgment upon Israel and Judah, they were not talking about the sums of individual sinful parts. They were talking about the whole shebang, in which the people took part. In this way, individuals have collective responsibility for sinful social systems. We are the shebang and the shebang is us. Even if we were born into it and never gave it any thought, we also therefore never woke up.

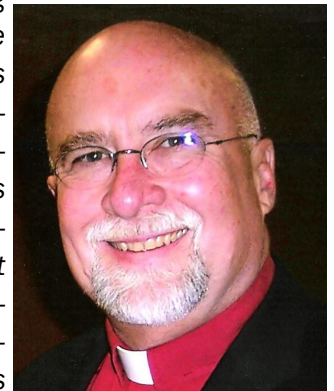
What came to mind was how much the "golden rule of oligarchy" seems with us these days: "the ones who have the gold, rule." This is not a new phenomenon. Thirty years ago my graduate school mentor Alan Chartock was making a strong case for how this rule ran Albany, and had for a long, long time.

It just seems that this demonic rule has metastasized, and we are coming to a breaking point. Yet unless this society "measures twice and cuts once" spiritually, we'll make a bigger mess. One side clamors "Make the rich pay their fair share!" The other side counters "Cut taxes to stimulate the economy!" Both slogans seem to mismeasure the sin. There is a deeper point.

Katy Scrogin published a thoughtful article in *The Other Journal* (an online quarterly journal for Christian interdisciplinary reflection) last month in which she applies Vaclav Havel's vision of societal hope to American culture.

"The way in which many Americans envision the good life, then... involves being constantly on guard against potential constraints that may be placed upon us. True autonomy, we believe, is equivalent to freedom from anything that would make claims upon the individual. Demands are feared as encroachments upon our ability to direct our life as we desire... Additionally, if people dare to ask others for assistance, such requests are not only seen as proof of the petitioners' weakness, but they are also often interpreted as attempts by the petitioners to achieve their desires by piggy-backing on the hard work of others instead of doing that work themselves. Absent here is the understanding that humans cannot act in isolation from each other and that interdependence contributes to the health, strength, and richness of individuals and societies."

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MESSAGE TO THE
HOGREFE FAMILY

THE GLC READING GROUP

Caleb's Crossing, by Geraldine Brooks, author of *People of the Book*, a past group selection, is the choice for the February get-together.

In truth, Caleb was the first Native American to graduate from Harvard in 1665. Brooks takes this fact and weaves an incredible story that includes “passion and belief, magic and adventure”. Narrated by Bethia, close friend of Caleb while also being the daughter of the leading Puritan minister on the island (now known as Martha’s Vineyard), we glimpse a time when Native Americans “needed” to be converted and females should keep their ideas to themselves.

Caleb and Bethia meet on the beach and their lives will never be the same

* * *

In addition to our book choice we continue to read selections from *God:stories*, edited by C. Michael Curtis. This month we will discuss *Exodus* by James Baldwin. Cynthia Nimmer has extra copies of the book if you need one.

* * *

Everyone is invited to the Book Group—it is **NOT for women only**.

See you on Monday, February 20th, at 7 pm in the Narthex at Church.

WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP

Study Group will meet twice in February: Monday the 6th and Monday the 20th, @ 1 pm at Cynthia Nimmer’s house.

We are still discussing our options for our next study. Does one of these topics appeal to you?

- ⇒ **The Lord’s Prayer**—Why is praying so hard? Or do we make prayer harder than it has to be? The author unveils the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer and how this ancient prayer is a model for all prayers. Join in exploring Jesus’ model prayer and other scripture passages with your heart, making connections to your daily life.
- ⇒ **The Rising—Living the Mysteries of Lent, Easter and Pentecost**—Helps you discover Jesus’ resurrection in the fabric of everyday life. This book offers a unique blend of theology, poetry, hymns and penetrating personal stories. Explores themes of reconciliation, forgiveness, love, community and the mystery of pain and brokenness.
- ⇒ **Living into the Answers—A Workbook for Personal Spiritual Discernment**—Large or small, the decisions of life point toward particular paths. Paying attention to the process of discerning God’s desire for our life starts us on a journey that leads to abundant life...it opens us to a larger number of life choices and to a more interactive relationship with God who calls us for future possibilities. Be guided by your own wisdom within the context of the always divine voice.

Talk to Cynthia Nimmer for more information.



FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



SHROVE TUESDAY

PANCAKE DINNER

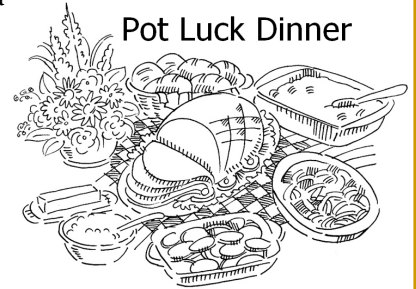
As we approach the Lenten Season, save the night of Tuesday, Feb. 21 for Grace’s Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner. This “boundary” of Lent has been a traditional night where we have gotten together as families and enjoyed a special dinner together. Everyone, of all ages, is invited and welcome. It’s a very informal night with a menu of pancakes, applesauce, sausage and turkey-sausage. Doors will open at 5:30 pm and serving for dinner will begin at 6:00 pm. You do not have to bring anything.—“cooks extraordinaire” will be in the kitchen. Cost for adults is \$3, children eat free!

FIRST MONDAY POT LUCK

Every month (unless otherwise noted) we have a Pot Luck supper on the first Monday of the month. No elaborate planning ahead of time! Just bring a dish to share and your own place setting, and be ready to eat at 6:00 pm.

Coffee Hour (after worship each Sunday) is great for saying, “Hi, how’re you doing?” and giving a smile. And, there’s nothing wrong with that! However, the pot luck supper gives us special extra time to get to know each other in a more personal way. Besides, it’s a great way to enjoy a banquet with very little trouble! Give it a try! Come join us!

Pot Luck Dinner

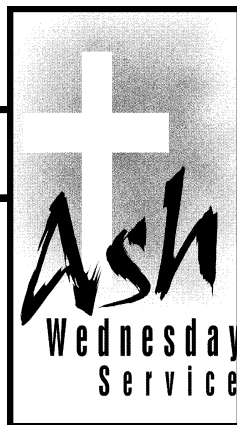


See you Monday, Feb. 6th, downstairs at Grace!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

FEB. 22, 2012

7:00 PM



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 2/1 Jean Sampson
- 2/4 Milly Spring
- 2/28 Sue White

OFFICE NOTES:

GRACE CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATES:

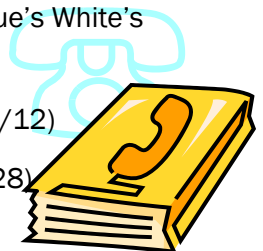
With our apologies,

Please add Sue White to the 2011 list of Council Members. Phone # 346-0951.

And, correct John and Sue’s White’s birthdates to:

John—October 12th (10/12)

Sue—February 28th (2/28)





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Grace Lutheran Church is an inclusive community grounded in the love of God and committed to welcoming all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, creed, age or physical ability. We encourage all people to share in thoughtful worship, relevant education, and service through faith in action.

FROM THE PASTOR (CONTINUED FROM P.1)

Immediately I thought back to conversations I've had over the years with people who had grown up elsewhere – Europe, and even Canada. Americans, they all have said, have a terribly underdeveloped sense of collective interdependence.

If so, one of our primary structural sins is our blindness to how we are connected to each other. So my Lenten meditation is contemplating recovering our sense of interdependence, and my prayer is that this nation does so. In her article, Scrogin offers this nugget of hope:

"... In spite of the division that occurs due to this devotion to self-sufficiency, hope may lie in the reality of our interconnected lives. Although we praise personal independence, Americans often participate in volunteer work and social groups that encourage or even require members' involvement in each other's lives."

Well, wait a minute – doesn't that describe the church? Of course it does, but of course the church is much more. We "encourage or even require members' involvement in each other's lives" not simply because it's good for America but because we gather in the name of God, in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). That "we" means one people. It does not mean "you, you, you, and you" – a group of otherwise disconnected individuals. We come from one source. We are sustained by one source. We survive by the grace of one source. Thus we awake to reality beyond a dreamed autonomy. —*Rev. Hahn*

A Message for Christian, Olga, Misha and Johannes Hogrefe:

Today is one of those bittersweet days in a community as Christian, Olga and their family take a step in a new direction in their lives. As friends, we can't help but be happy for the new opportunities that they will have, but as friends we will also miss all of them. They have been at the core of our community in so many ways -

Church Council, Social Justice, Sunday School and much more. Many of us also benefited from the wonderful music and personality that their older son, Misha, brought us.

So, today, we say, "Good luck, and good life. You will be remembered and you will be missed."



Your friends at Grace Lutheran Church