

February 2012



Messiah Winter

Worship Schedule

Sunday Church School 9:00 am

Worship 10:30 am

Fellowship-Coffee Hour 11:30 am

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Emerging Evangelism: Thoughts from your Pastor

The “Emerging” Church movement is a popular stream of theological and ecclesiological thinking and practice in western Europe, North America, New Zealand, Africa and Australia that has been around for many years, but has really caught on more recently in the US. Very basically (*since by its very name it defies static description, it is always emerging*), the movement seeks to present the gospel and the content of Christian faith in ways that engage the “postmodern” generations—ways that make use of what one scholar, Marcus Borg, calls the “emerging paradigm.” He defines the term in his book The Heart of Christianity. It is “a way of seeing the Bible (and the Christian tradition as a whole) as *historical, metaphorical, and sacramental*, [and] a way of seeing the Christian life as *relational and transformational*.”

This way of thinking about the church—that it is always bubbling up from mixture of tradition and society, instead of monolithically neither impacting nor being impacted by the world—retains the message of gospel, but hears and responds to it in a fluid fashion, one that allows the church to engage modern life in a give and take reciprocity. Perhaps more simply (and sacramentally put, the world is capable of bearing the church—much as wine and bread are capable of bearing Christ’s body and blood.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of emerging church practice, and simultaneously the most liberating, is that the metaphorical is stressed over the literal. Much like scientists use mathematical formulas to represent the wonders of physics which cannot be seen, a numerical metaphor in essence, the emerging church looks at scripture as a metaphorical construct in which essential truths are revealed. For those who care not to regard the bible as an earthly story with heavenly meaning, but would rather hold fast to a literalism which locks in a standard interpretation, this might be where you turn the page and read about other Messiah news. But for those who want to harvest meaning from scripture in an environment of discovery and universal truth—the emerging principle opens the doors to new listeners. Those who rejected the “one size fits all” way of believing and following Christ, plus those for whom the church was a brick wall impervious to diversity and change.

That all was a lengthy and somewhat esoteric introduction to some thoughts on a word we utter only in a whisper—evangelism. (*shhhhh*) The topic comes up periodically, usually on the heels of a budget crisis or shrinking attendance figures. “We need more members. What does the council and pastor intend to do to get

new members.” Concern is expressed, anxiety is felt, “blame” is assigned, and then we all go back to business as usual. Never considering that we should actually *do something* about it. Not once looking beyond “the way things are and always have been” to an “emerging evangelism” that neither looks past earlier efforts, nor targets the standard demographic, nor even resembles evangelism as we often think of it. (*Ding! Dong!*)

Here are five principles of an emerging evangelism, each with an accompanying description of how we might put it into practice.

1. Emerging evangelism is relational. *Better for telling the good news than newspaper ads, web sites, better even than facebook, is face time—one on one interaction with people. Your testimony is your life and Christ’s place in it. Your witness is your willingness to engage people in conversation, include them in your life, and demonstrate what God has done, and is doing, in you. At Messiah this will be achieved when new members, and some shy not-so-new members and our guests (visitors) are engaged in a meaningful way on Sunday mornings, and are left with the knowledge that here all people are part of the body of Christ, and each is valued and valuable.*

2. Emerging evangelism reveals that, for the most part, we are the seekers. *Time was when people who were looking for God were called seekers. But as emerging (cont)*

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Communications Team,

All of the people of God at Messiah

Editor, Lisa Teichmann

Emerging Evangelism: Thoughts from your Pastor

Evangelists we constantly seek the opportunity to share the gracious love of God. At Messiah we should dedicate ourselves to discovering the needs of our community and beyond, and seek to address them in Jesus' name. We are also seekers of those who used to be called seekers—we fish for people, we don't wait for them to leap into the boat.

3. Emerging evangelism does not start at the door to the church, nor does it end there. *This isn't "build it and they will come." A building is a tool for evangelism, it isn't the evangelism plan (the door's open—come on in!). Emerging evangelism begins with Christ's command to "Go!" and it knows no boundaries. And evangelism doesn't conclude when someone visits three times, or when they "join" or pledge. The good news should be proclaimed loudly in worship, at Sunday School, at youth events—wherever people gather as Messiah. The name of our Ministry Team Inreach/Outreach is based on this principle. We follow it when all we do, all we say, all we feel, and all we believe is grounded in Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of God.*

4. Emerging evangelism takes place in an environment of modernity, metaphor and mystery. *The people we need to reach out to are no longer predisposed to attending church or reading scripture. They will not follow in their parents footsteps to belief, because their parents left the church. They do not know the story of faith. They are skeptical. Emerging evangelism makes room for new ways of looking at the bible and for questioning its traditional meaning, while preserving the idea that some things are a mystery—and that's not a bad thing. At Messiah we could address this principle, without upsetting those more traditional bible-ists in the congregation by forming a small group whose mission is to examine and discuss scripture from this perspective. We must design it for those who are not members, and hold to it as a core program (like Adult Forum).*

5. Emerging evangelism's goal is not members, it is transformation. *Evangelism's goal is not quantitative, but qualitative. If our only aim is to increase membership, we may grow. But we'd be missing*

the point. Sure we want people to join us in serving and praising God here at Messiah. But we need to realize that transforming the mind and body of all who come in contact with us (including us) is what it's all about. It's about seek, ye first the kingdom of God. It's about new life. It's about loving the neighbor. Messiah must first let go of the tyranny of the statistical measurement and grab firmly the core value of changing lives. Then the question will be not "how many in worship," but "have we provided a space in which lives are changed and transformed in Christ?"

That's a lot to chew on. I expect we'll talk about emerging evangelism at **Talking and Listening Together** - the first of our new congregational gatherings whose intent is to discuss things in a comfortable, non-legislative, friendly way, and to listen to each other to understand each other. But more on that another day...

In Christ's name,
Pastor Tom

"Emerging evangelism does not start at the door to the church, nor does it end there."

Income & Expense Summary

(through December 2011)

	Actual	Budget	\$ Over Budget
Total Income	\$ 201,889	188,256	13,633
Total Expense	\$ 205,182	188,256	16,926
Net Income	\$ -3,293	0	-3,293

Note - Full details of each Monthly Treasurer's Report can be found on the hallway bulletin board next to the kitchen entrance.

In Our Prayers

Al DeMello, Barbara Wilson (B. Wurst's Mom), **Janey Stokes** (rel of the Wurst's), **Perham Family, Ed Burgess** (friend of B. Wurst), **Terry Klecker** (rel. of the Costa's), **Sarah, Pat Sapienza** (Friend's of the Costa's), **Pastor Tom** (Parkinson's Disease), **Mike** (friend of R. Bonfiglio), **Andy Wyliee, Sue Strock** (R. Ball's sister), **Frank Genna** (friend of

the Ensinger's), **Judy Johnson, Becky Herlihy** (friend of the Davison's), **Barbara Bonfiglio** (Bob's Mom), **Our military personnel, Annemarie Chuchul, Bill Wurst, Rebecca Peterson, Peggy Pulfer** (Doug's Mom), **Tom & Jeannine** (friends of L. Teichmann), **Jean Ahrendt** (Nancy's Mom), **Louis Yensz** (Mike's Mom), **Krista Seck-**

inger (Karla's sister), **Taylor Cordts, Bob Ensinger** (Rob's Dad), **Phyllis Duesing** (K. Duesing's Mom), **Charlotte Hildebrandt, Gabrielle King** (J. Mitchell's relative), **Walter Aunio** (Kauko's brother), **Margie Rowe, Baby Ahrendt, Karin Di-Virgilio, Duane Holm** (K. Berkner's brother).



Annual Meeting Highlights

Elected – to council: Deanna Cordts, Jay Davison, Ken Duesing, Rande Neukam, Meagan Clickner (youth rep); as officers – Deanna Cordts President, Deb Scheetz VP, Bill

Mitchell Secretary, Jay Davison Treasurer; to synod assembly: Jeff and Deanna Cordts (youth rep to be named by council); we ratified a constitutional amendment extending council

terms to 3 yrs; we approved a balanced budget, reports available on the table in the Narthex.

Worship News and Plans

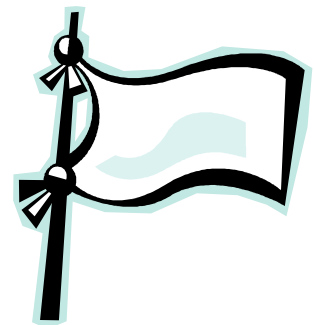
Lent begins with Ash Wednesday Feb 22. Service times are 11 am and 7 pm.

Wednesday Lenten Evening Prayer

This year's theme is "Giving Up" for Lent. It encourages us in this season of introspection and repentance to

see those, not as a *means* of grace, but what drives us empty-handed to an encounter with a gracious and loving God. The five weekly focal points are giving in, giving to, giving away, giving back, and giving of. If you would like to be a guest speaker, please see Pastor

for more information. As is our custom we will provide a soup and bread supper from 6 – 6:45, and the service will begin at 7:05. Volunteers are needed to supply soup, bread, and drinks—see sign-up sheet on table in narthex.



Do What Matters

Mission Area Assembly

Part of being part of the church at large is periodic gathering together of her people.

As part of the ELCA New England Synod, we meet in Assembly each June, and in between at Conference Meetings (clergy) and Mission Area Assemblies.

This year such meetings are of great importance,

as we will choose a new bishop (Margaret Payne retires this year after serving two terms). Messiah *needs* to be represented at this meeting. It is open to all, and promises to be a good day of discussion, discernment, fellowship and to top it off a great lunch!

See Pastor for registration form. The meeting is

March 10 from 9:30 am—3:00 pm at Holy Trinity in Newington, NH. Lunch is provided for all registered people.



Christian Education

Our Sunday school is back in session and our teachers (Barbara Scholz and Melissa Clickner, with able assistants Christina, Meagan, and Miranda) are ready for all ages. The younger tots are taught by Mrs. Scholz, and the upper elementary students are in Mrs. Clickner's capable hands. Class begins at 9 am at Messiah

House, and ends at 10 after music with Linnea in the sanctuary. Parents are invited to gather and socialize in the narthex, or be a part of Adult Forum, which is convened by Dean Jahns and hits a variety of faith issues. Confirmation students (grades 7-9) are reminded that they are to attend Mr. Larry Gordon's class (9-

10am Messiah House) on Sundays, as well as scheduled evening classes with Pastor Tom. Sunday School schedules are available on the table in the narthex.

*News from Anne-Marie House:
Taking care of the homeless "one family at a time".*

We presently have 7 families calling AMH home right now. Thanks to our volunteers for their dedication. We did have a few members attend the last training session: The Castell family and Bryan Clickner. Thank you so very much!

Our next host week is the week of February 19th.

Addendum to annual report: Just received some 2011 statistics from Laurie:

families served: 18
adults: 23

children: 30
Total persons: 53
83% of guests attained housing independence
6,444 bed nights of shelter were provided
19,014 meals furnished

Average length of stay: 364.4 days (seems long but NH has no subsidized housing for these people to transition into) 50% of guest population racially or culturally diverse.

Any questions or interest, please see Marge.

Upcoming events for 2012:

April 21st-22nd: Box City @ Nashua North High School. A great way to get youth involved and aware of homelessness.

May 19th: 4th Annual AMH Yard Sale and Front Lawn Festival-at AMH in Hudson

Sept 16th: 5th Annual 5K Walk/Run for AMH

Dec 6th: 2nd Annual Homeward Bound Food & Wine Tasting & Auction @ Radisson Hotel, Nashua

We're on the Web,
www.messiahnh.org

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