

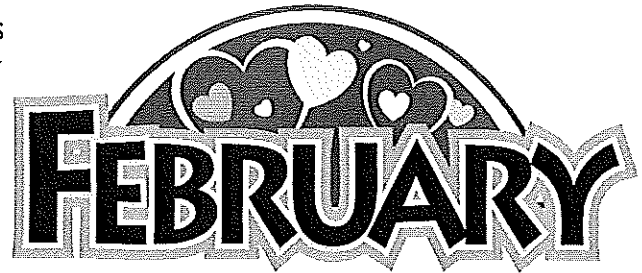
St. Paul's News

475 State Street Albany, New York 12203

February 2011

All across our country everybody from preachers to politicians to the police find themselves under fire and everyone gets on edge.

We live in anxious times. As the family therapist and Rabbi Edwin Friedman wrote in his classic work *A Failure of Nerve*, "Anxiety escalates as a society is overwhelmed by the quantity and



speed of change." When a social system is anxious, people will tend to gravitate toward people and messages that reinforce what they want to hear as a way of mitigating their anxiety. In chronically anxious systems, people become reactive rather than thoughtful. They develop a herd mentality that organizes around the idea of a "togetherness" that discourages dissent, values feelings more than ideas and prefers comfortable certainty over novelty and change. Chronically anxious systems tend to blame outside agents (i.e., the "government," liberals/conservatives, immigrants, etc.) for their problems, and they have a quick-fix mentality that cannot tolerate any pain or discomfort. People in such a system will look to those who can soothe their pain or, to borrow Paul's marvelous phrase, scratch their "itching ears" with messages that soothe their anxiety (2 Timothy 4:3).

Politicians, pundits and publicity hounds ...and not a few preachers feed off the anxiety of our culture. No wonder that a Glenn Beck or a Keith Olbermann or a Terry Jones (advocate for Koran burning) can get more of a hearing than more rational folks do. But I also think chronic anxiety was part of Jesus' culture, as well. He stood alone, took well-defined stands and refused to give in to the reactive anxiety of the religious establishment or the fickle crowds.

Of course, Jesus did get crucified for it. As one of my seminary profs used to say, "If you want to stand with Jesus, make sure you look good on wood."

It's tough to be an authentic witness for the gospel, and times like these should remind us it has never really been easy. It wasn't easy for Jesus, nor was it easy for prophets such as Jeremiah and Elijah or missionaries such as Paul. God often calls us to stand alone and, as painful as that can be, it's the only way things can begin to change.

More than ever, our Christian mantra has to be to "speak the truth in love" in a world where all kinds of anxious winds are blowing (Ephesians 4:14-15). In fact, why not add it to your New Year's resolutions—Pray for wisdom, for courage and for the strength to stand on the promises of Christ and his kingdom — the only political reality that ultimately matters.

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Pastor

FESTIVAL OF WORKSHOPS

The annual Atlantic District Festival of Workshops will be held on Saturday, March 12, 2011 at Concordia College in Bronxville.

Two copies of the Workshop Booklet are on the piano in Luther Hall. They describe the many workshops available. If you are interested, please speak with Pastor Hempel. Prior registration is required.



Festival of Workshops



In our newsletter, we frequently make mention of the “Albany Lutheran Cluster”. Many good things are happening because of it, but there is a vague feeling that not everyone is aware of exactly what it is--- or what its goals and activities are. To help with that, we’ll try to include a monthly article that gives some background and other more current information. This month will focus briefly on its history and evolution.

The genesis of the Cluster actually took place two or three decades ago when the Pastors of four ELCA congregations in the Albany area had the inspiration to create opportunities for interaction among their churches: First (Albany), Good Shepherd (Loudonville), Holy Spirit (Albany), and St. John’s (Albany). Initially, this included Pulpit Exchanges where each of the Pastors would occasionally lead worship at one of the other congregations’ Sunday worship. On occasion, committees of the churches would meet together to exchange good ideas and productive ways of doing things.

As time went on, more opportunities presented themselves for cooperative ministries. For example, the Youth Groups would come together for joint activities and retreats. But probably the most ambitious and noteworthy collaboration was the “Lutheran Community Ministry Project” (LCMP). Thanks to an initial Synod Grant and ongoing donations from the churches, an LCMP Board of Directors was established, comprised of dedicated members from each congregation. The Board, in turn, hired a Community Social Worker who ministered to those needing help within the congregations and surrounding neighborhoods. A spin-off effort was the “Threads Clothing Ministry”, in which a storefront was leased in the Delaware/Second Ave. area of Albany, offering free or low-cost clothing donated by church and community members. These were vital, thriving ministries that, for several years, gave significant help and hope to many people. In the aftermath of LCMP/Threads, a primary emphasis has been on collaborative social ministry projects to benefit various local organizations or events-----which you regularly read about in our newsletter.

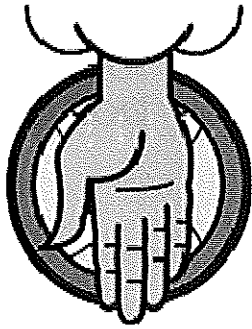
Still later, the congregations collaborated to offer Midweek Lenten Services-----with the more-recent addition of fellowship dinners beforehand. The congregations also saw the benefits of holding combined Catechetical Classes. This has enabled young people from all the churches to meet and get to know each other better, and it takes advantage of the collective teaching strengths of all the Pastors.

Speaking of the Pastors, by now they had become accustomed to working together collegially, meeting on a regular basis to discuss items of common concern, pray and do Bible study in preparation for upcoming sermons, and provide mutual support to each other.

In recent years, the four ELCA congregations have been joined by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (Albany), and together the group has crystallized into something a bit more formal-----a recognized Cluster within the ELCA and Upstate New York Synod. Although there may be some differences in approach among the churches, there is no doubt that we share a strong commitment to carrying out meaningful ministries in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The epiphany has been that-----now more than ever----we can do more by collaborating with each other than we could ever do separately.

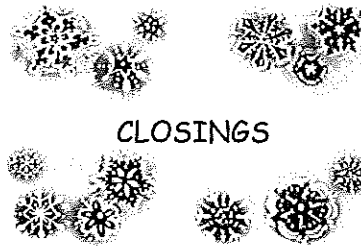


The cluster collection will be for the Voorheesville Food Pantry. They will need all the regular staples, but are asking specifically for extra Pampers and grape jelly.



Hand of God

This symbolizes God the Father, as well as his ownership and care of all creation. During the Christian church's first 800 years, the hand was about the only symbol used for God. Many Bible verses speak of God's loving, protective hand (Psalm 138:7; Ecclesiastes 2:24; 1 Peter 5:6). In heaven, Jesus sits at God's right hand (Mark 16:19).



CLOSINGS

If it becomes necessary to cancel worship because of inclement weather, you can tune to the following television and radio stations for posted information,

Capital News 9
WRGB TV
WXXA TV
WTEN TV
WNYT TV

WGY—810 AM
WFLY—Fly 92 FM
WYJB—B95.5 FM
WRVE—The River

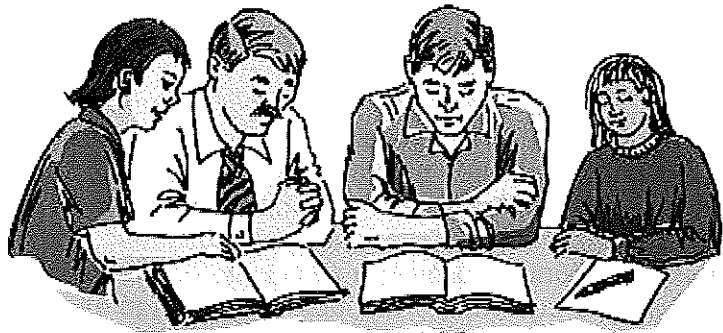
NEW ADULT FORUM SERIES

Last Sunday we began a new Bible study series using short videos. We watched and then spent the time discussing a provocative short film, *Noise*. See the video on YouTube:

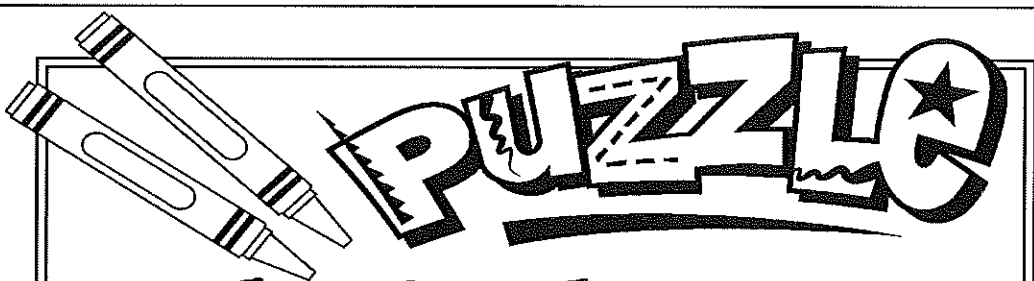
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvyXie8_aYw

See what you think and then join us Sunday morning at 9:00 AM to discuss our next film.

NOOMA is a series of short films that explore our world from a perspective of Jesus and invite us to search, question and join the discussion. They are available courtesy of Holy Spirit, one of our sister cluster churches.



Adult Forum



A Love Letter

In the New Testament, John writes a letter about God's love and the love we should show to other people.

DIRECTIONS: Working from left to right, write down all the 1's in the word blanks. Continue with the 2's and finally the 3's. Then read about love, from 1 John 4:11-12, NIV.

lives 3	in 3	us 3	Since 1	and 3	God 1	so 1	loved 1	his 3
us 1	love 3	we 1	If 2	also 1	is 3	made 3	we 2	ought 1
to 1	love 2	love 1	one 1	complete 3	one 2	another 1	in 3	us 3
another 2	God 2							

1 John 4:11-12, NIV

Answers: Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Love conquers all

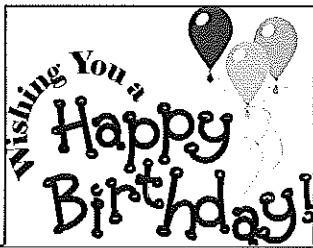
The love for equals is a human thing – of friend for friend, brother for brother. It is to love what is loving and lovely. The world smiles.

The love for the less fortunate is a beautiful thing – the love for those who suffer, for those who are poor, the sick, the failures, the unlovely. This is compassion, and it touches the heart of the world.

The love for the more fortunate is a rare thing – to love those who succeed where we fail, to rejoice without envy with those who rejoice, the love of the poor for the rich The world is always bewildered by its saints.

And then there is the love for the enemy – love for the one who does not love you but mocks, threatens and inflicts pain. The tortured's love for the torturer. This is God's love. It conquers the world.

—Frederick Buechner,
The Magnificent Defeat



FEBRUARY

- 7. SHIRLEY SCHMITT
- 8. CARL MUELLER
- 12. Brian Devaprasad
- 14. TIMOTHY BARTHOLONEW
Sarah Gebreyes
- 15. Duncan Bartholomew
- 19. STEFANIE CALAMARAS
- 20. Luke William Hempel
- 24. NICHOLAS ALDI
- 27. THOMAS KINGSTON

Ash Wednesday

LOOKING AHEAD:

ASH WEDNESDAY—The beginning of the Lenten Season begins on March 9th. It is our spiritual journey toward Easter. The Cluster will once again join together for our Wednesday evening Services, beginning on March 16th. The topic for our Lenten services will be "Envisioning our Future through the Cross."



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DATE	FLOWERS	SERVICE STEWARD	Communion Assistant	ALTAR COMMITTEE	Coffee Hour
2/6	The Brady and Calamaras family in memory of Joseph Brady	Sheryl Baum	Linda Calamaras	Tina Harris/ Tracy Devaprasad	Joan Aldi
2/13	The Hempel Family/ The Alexanders in celebration of Julie and Alan's wedding anniversary.	Tom Ragoni	Linda Calamaras		Linda Kindlon
2/20	The Harris Family	David Devaprasad	Julie Alexander	Joan Aldi/ Frances Van Acker	Viola Stevens/ Ophelia Ameghashie
2/27	The Harris Family	David Devaprasad	Julie Alexander		Calamaras/ Brady

February 2011

St. Paul's Monthly Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																		
		1 7:30 PM DARTS AT Nassau	2 7:00 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	3	4	5																																																																																																		
6 9:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT FORUM 10:00 AM WORSHIP	7 8:30 PM ESL CLASS 7:00 PM PLANNING COUNCIL	8 7:30 PM DARTS HOME vs. Holy Spirit	9 6:30 PM ESL CLASS 7:00 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	10	11	12																																																																																																		
13 9:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT FORUM 10:00 AM WORSHIP	14 6:30 PM ESL CLASS	15 7:30 PM DARTS AT Castleton	16 6:30 PM ESL CLASS 7:00 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL	17	18	19																																																																																																		
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