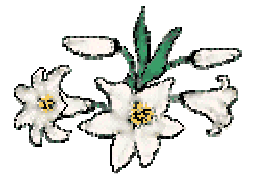


Living Word Community Church

From the Pastor

February 2010

Fellow believers at Living Word,
Grace and peace to you and your household!



Recently we have seen a flurry of activity in our congregation in the arena of community service and evangelism. This is a wonderful thing – surely a “God Thing”. However, most of the enthusiasm for this still resides within a rather limited circle of current leaders. My hope and prayer is that the impetus to involvement in community service and evangelism will move out into the ranks of our whole constituency – young and old, members and non-members, leaders and pew-sitters. This is an inevitable component of the process of becoming Christ-like (sanctification) and thus is part of God’s will for each of us. I would never want you to immerse yourself in service opportunities at the expense of, or in lieu of, your own personal sanctification because that “becoming” in Christ is the source of your joy and effectiveness, but neither do I want you to enter or remain in a state of self-absorbed complacency.

Here is a sketch of the ideal dynamics for a traditional church like ours:

1. Pastors and elders, by preaching, teaching, discipling and most importantly, by exuding a life steeped in the grace of God, lead maturing congregants into grateful worship, sanctification, and devotion to Christ.
2. Grateful devotion to Christ leads congregants to willingly engage in evangelism, community service, and Christian education in multiple settings, public and private, beginning primarily in their own homes and neighborhoods.
3. Some of those people who are touched by the efforts of the congregation eventually join the ranks of the Living Word congregation.

This process just explained is an ideal; in the reality of personal and societal sinfulness it breaks down. May God give us the insight to see where it has broken down in our case and may He also give us the courage and resourcefulness to get back on track.

One additional note: During Lent, you will have the opportunity to participate in a 7-week journaling experience called a “50-Day Adventure”. The theme for this particular adventure is “Daring to Dream Again”. The seven individual weekly sub-themes are:

1. Let God heal your painful past
2. Discover God’s present involvement in your life
3. Establish godly goals for your future
4. Empower everything you do for God with prayer
5. Confront your ungodly prejudices
6. Identify with God’s heart for the world
7. Move with God beyond your comfort zones



We will begin on Sunday, February 14th and finish on Easter Sunday, April 4th. The primary locus for discussion and motivation will be the 9:30 am Sunday Bible Class. Stay tuned for more information and updates.

God Bless you with a Lenten season during which you are truly able to reflect on and glory in the amazing sacrificial love of our Savior.

--Pastor Joel



“I love You, O Lord, my strength.” The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2

Networking is the best way to find employment. Advertisements and Internet job boards only account for 20% of the available jobs. Some of the best Networking meetings in the Valley are at Churches and Temples! The Phoenix locations include:

*Southwest Job Network @Temple Chai 4645 E Marilyn (Tatum & Greenway) Meetings are usually held on Tuesday @ 8:00 am for new members. The next scheduled meeting is TBD.

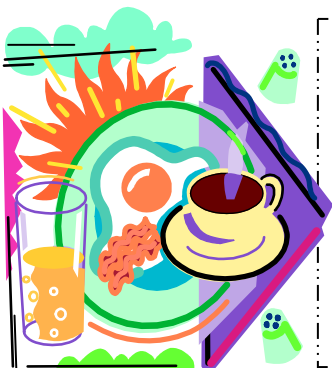
The West Valley chapter meets at Glendale Community College on Monday evenings. The next scheduled meeting is TBD. The usual start time is 5:00 pm.

*St.Patrick Catholic Church @ 10815 N 84th St. (84th St & Shea Blvd. in Paradise Valley). Next meeting is Wednesday, February 10 @ 7:00pm.

*North Phoenix Baptist Church @5757 N Central Ave. (Central Ave & Bethany Home) Meetings are usually held on Wednesday @ 6:30 pm. The next scheduled meeting is TBD.

*St.Thomas More Catholic Church @ 6180 W Utopia Rd. (61st Ave & Utopia in Glendale) Meetings are usually held on Thursday @ 6:30 pm. The next scheduled meeting is TBD.

If you have questions about meeting format or venue, please contact Steve Pellini at 602-206-6435 or stevenpellini@yahoo.com.



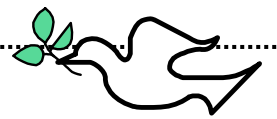
SATURDAY MORNING LADIES BREAKFAST

Some of the ladies met at Denny’s for breakfast a few Saturdays ago and had a great time. There were 12 ladies that showed up and if you can just imagine the chatter that goes along with 12 ladies around a table, it was not quiet. I think the most excited was Jeannine Cronau. She was like a little kid getting out to play. It was so much fun to watch her and her excitement about being at breakfast with the ladies from our church. We would like to invite all ladies of all ages to join us at our next breakfast gathering. We will only be meeting three or four times during the year for breakfast and fellowship. There is information on the bulletin board if you are interested in joining us. It is uplifting and good for the soul for our church ladies to fellowship together. You can bring a friend too. Blessings!





NEVER RESIGN ON MONDAY



"Never resign on a Monday." Professor J.H. Levang gave this advice to his Lutheran Brethren Seminary students. Levang understood the common blues that can overtake a pastor after an exhausting and possibly discouraging Sunday in which much of his public ministry is on display. The devil is very good at joining with the flesh to whisper words of condemnation and discouragement when one is most vulnerable.

Of course, most people are tempted at times to quit their jobs and many probably would if they could. Should pastors, when they struggle, be pitied more than anyone else? No. But we are probably all involved in churches that call and support pastors, and as such we need to understand their struggles so that we can care for them while they care for us.

As a pastor not currently serving a congregation, I write out of my own past experience and also that of many pastors with whom I have visited. I also write from my perspective as a member of a local congregation.

There are two sides to the equation. First, the pastor has a deep responsibility to follow his call in ministry. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17). Usually, along with this responsibility comes a genuine joy in serving the Lord in this ministry. It is a great privilege to be a pastor of a congregation!

The second side to this equation is the responsibility of the congregation toward their pastor whom they have called on God's behalf. We are accountable to God for how we care for our pastor. Thus we do well to be aware of our pastor's needs and to lovingly and appropriately meet them. I have seen over and over again that God blesses a congregation that really cares for their pastor.

What are some of the struggles pastors face and how can we care for them?

Probably the greatest pressure on a pastor comes from the unrealistic expectations he feels both internally and externally. The devil can further distort these expectations, driving him sometimes even to the point of despair.

Expectations. For many people, today's pastor is expected to be a visionary innovator and cutting-edge entrepreneur, his fingers on the pulse of the culture, with the ability to lead his congregation toward consistent growth. At the same time he should be a compelling preacher, who displays the caring gifts of Mother Teresa. OK, maybe that is an exaggeration, but still, not many pastors can measure up to all the expectations.

Comparisons. Pastors have told me about well-meaning parishioners coming on Sunday morning, commenting about the famous radio preacher who inspired them on the drive church. While the parishioner does not imply it, the pastor *hears* in that comment that his own sermons are sub-par by comparison.

The radio or TV preachers are especially gifted speaker, but they may not be gifted in ways that the local pastor is gifted. Furthermore, it is not Andy Stanley or Ed Young who visit and pray with us when we are struggling with spiritual our health issues.

Even without such comments, any sensitive pastor (which includes most pastors), may struggle with self-comparisons, thus inflicting self-doubt on his own abilities and even his own calling as a pastor.

Different gifts. No pastor is gifted in every area ministry skill. Perhaps a very successful preacher is lacking in such ministry gifts as evangelism, administration, or personal visitation. Or a pastor gifted in one-to-one or personal ministry struggles with preaching. It is not unusual for people to compare their pastor with a previous pastor who had different gifts, causing distress and pressure for the new pastor.

Pressure to succeed. How do we define "success" for the pastor? Even when we know better, success is often defined with what is countable: *numbers*. I have heard pastors confess they dislike attending a pastors' gathering because it feels like an evaluation. One of the first questions a pastor is asked "How many worship in your church?" If he can answer, "500 he will probably be nominated to lead the pastors' fellowship but if it is, "only 30," he may at least *feel* like he should be the one who washes the dishes after the lunch. Our society has placed so much emphasis on numbers that it is hard to get past this.

Because of this pressure, a pastor can be easily seduced by seminars highlighting methods or programs that have proven successful for others and hold out new hope that he can do it just the way they did it, he will also successfully increase his congregation's numbers. In reality, the teachings of Jesus emphasize faithfulness and measure success with very different criteria than those of our society. Healthy churches and successful ministries do not always include great numbers.

Much more could be said about causes of discouragement for pastors, including lack of time, financial struggle, emotional fatigue and loneliness.

How can we in the congregation care for our pastor?

We can encourage our pastor in his gifts. Affirm him where he is strong. Support him where he is weak. Be quick to build him up, and slow to criticize.

In the first church I served after seminary there was a woman who always found some blessing in my preaching. Another person in the same church invariably met me with some "constructive" criticism. I often marvel at that gracious woman who expected to hear God's Word even from a novice preacher. What an encourager!

This is what pastors need. My experience tells me that most pastors are their own worst critics. They don't need more of that!

I am confident that as we genuinely care for our pastors, affirming their gifts, supporting them in their weaknesses, meeting their needs and praying for them — both pastor and congregation will enjoy a much healthier ministry. And pastors will have fewer Mondays when they think about resigning.

--Rev. Joel Nordtvedt is Regional Pastor for the Central Region of the CLB

A Prayer For Valentine's Day

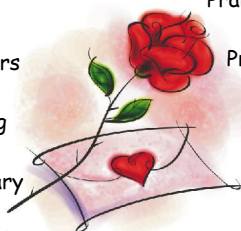
from 'Out of the Ordinary' by Joyce Rupp

Praise to the One whose love stirs the ancient embers
sparks the breath of prayer

Praise to the One whose love entices the wandering
beckons the confused

Praise to the One whose love grows wings on the weary,
dreams hope in the discouraged

Praise to the One whose love soothes with the ointment of mercy
transforms with the touch of compassion



Praise to the One whose love threads the energy of friendship
stitches the strength of fidelity

Praise to the One whose love tickles the soul with laughter
urges the heart toward joy

Praise to the one whose love embraces the untamed
dances with the passionate

All praise to this Gracious One

All gratitude to this Beloved

All love to this Mentor of Friendship

All devotion to this Shaper of Hearts

