

The Faithful Reporter

July, 2015

FAITH MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

753 N. CALUMET AVE.

VALPARAISO, IN 46383

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Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing within and throughout our community



It's Only Natural!

How many times have church leaders counted the number of people in Sunday services but really had no true sense whether the members of the church community were growing to greater spiritual maturity and contributing all they could to Kingdom growth? Are numbers really a true measure of health?

Over the past several months a group of our congregation's leaders and members have been exploring a process called **Natural Church Development (NCD)**. After a careful look, we are now excited about the possibilities this process could have for our ministry here at Faith.

NCD is a way of understanding church health and growth that views the church as a living organism. It does not ask the question "How can we grow our church?" It assumes that God desires to see every church actively involved in God's redemptive mission. Paul wrote, *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.* (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). God clearly desires to see growth both in terms of people coming into relationship with God and in terms of spiritual growth within individuals and the Christian community.

The question that needs to be asked then is "What are we doing to embrace or *hinder* God's growth in our churches?" NCD helps pinpoint areas of strength and weakness in the local church. Using a structured approach, NCD aids the church in determining what systems are working and which ones need attention, and then to respond.

In this way of thinking, growth should be about quality (health) and not just quantity (numbers). In fact, NCD has demonstrated that quality should take priority over quantity in church growth thinking. The NCD process says that if church growth is about growing an organism, the health (quality) of the organism will have a direct impact on its size (quantity). If a church becomes increasingly healthy over time, it is more likely and better able to reproduce disciples, ministries and eventually even itself.

The Natural Church Development was not developed in a vacuum. It is currently based on an international study of 70,000 churches on all six continents. The original research was first published in 1996 by Christian Schwarz, and has continued to be in ongoing development. The goal of this extensive research project was to discover principles of church health that are universally valid across cultures and congregations and evaluate them in the light of scripture. By doing this, Christian Schwarz has been able to create several tools to help congregations evaluate themselves using these church health principles. Congregations can then use the knowledge they gain and additional developed tools to help encourage the overall quality of their church's ministries. By focusing on principles, rather than seeking out one size fits all programs, the NCD process is able to help congregations within their own specific contexts to identify and unleash the specific potential that God has already implanted in their own particular congregation. It is my prayer that, like many other congregations, this process will have an increasingly fruitful impact both on the members of our Faith Family and on those with whom we come in contact.

Stay Tuned for more information about Natural Church Development over the next several months.

In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schoeck



For any of us who have experienced a death of a family member or friend, it is hard to feel optimistic about the future. Even if the death was years ago, grief can still leave us confused, sad and angry. GriefShare groups meet weekly to help us face these challenges and move toward rebuilding our lives.

Each of the thirteen sessions includes three elements: a video, group discussion, and personal study/reflection. You are welcome to begin attending the GriefShare group at any session. Each is "self-contained", so you do not have to attend in sequence. You will find encouragement and help whenever you come.

GriefShare begins August 16, Sunday mornings, 9:30-10:30am, thirteen sessions, led by Deaconess Becky Graef.

Cost: \$15 per participant workbook. There is monetary assistance for those who can't afford the cost.

A NOTE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Fair Warning

At a Board meeting I did not attend, the BOD made the incredibly unwise choice of selecting me to go with Pastor Schoech to the convention sponsored by the Indiana District of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. I have decided to make this journey an adventure of a layperson into the land of learned clerics trained in ancient languages and with knowledge beyond the grasp of most of us. This note is fair warning that I will next month be reporting on this personal safari into the darkest reaches of Lutheranism. Pray for me--I'm only a lawyer.—Bruce Berner



"I know we're trying not to be stuffy around here, but let's not refer to 'A Mighty Fortress' as 'Martin Luther's Greatest Hit.' "

**Church
PICNIC**
You're Invited

Date has been changed to Sunday, August 16!
Mark your calendars!

THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

"Giving to the Needy"

Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:1-4

There is a story in Acts 9:36-43 about a woman, whose name was Dorcas (her Greek name – or Tabitha, her Hebrew name). Other than these eight verses, she is never mentioned again. And yet, you would think that she would be just a bit more important. She died and was then raised back to life by the apostle, Peter. There are not that many death to life stories of human beings in the Bible. So, it is intriguing that what is really remembered about Dorcas is her sewing skills in making garments for the needy.

Dorcas lived in Joppa. She was a disciple and did many good things for those in need. She died. Of those who grieved, many were widows. Now we have to put ourselves in the shoes of people who lived in the Mediterranean during the time of the Early Church. Widows, orphans, and prisoners were ignored by society. Often in scripture, God calls his people to care for the outcasts. As the Early Church grew, Christians became known not only for their faith in Jesus Christ, but also for their care of the outcasts. Dorcas was one of those who cared for the needy.

The Christians in Joppa knew that Peter was in Lydda and two men went to get him. What they hoped from Peter, we don't know. Peter came immediately. He entered the room where Dorcas was being mourned. The widows showed him the garments that Dorcas had sewn. Peter had everyone leave the room, kneels, prays, and says, "Dorcas, rise." She begins breathing, sees Peter, and sits. He helps her up and takes her to the mourners. Word spreads through the surrounding areas as to what Peter has done. That is the last we read of Dorcas in scripture.

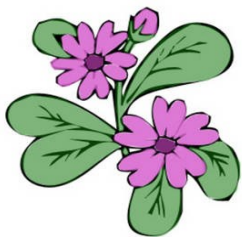
Over the centuries, congregations have had "Dorcas Societies" and "Dorcas Circles" made up of women whose focus has been on caring for the needy. They have quietly, with little fanfare, gone at the task of seeking the outcasts both in their congregation and the community. We are blessed at Faith Memorial to have small groups and individuals who help those who are in need or often marginalized in our world.

But we can't turn this task over to others and think that we are exempt from caring for the needy. Christ has called us, through our baptism, to be his body in the world. As St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he sees, yours are the feet with which he walks, yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world." We are crucial to Christ's task of bringing love and compassion to all of creation.

"The restoration of the church will surely come from a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ". Dietrich Bonhoeffer

BLOOMS, BREAKFAST & BLESSINGS

PLEASE JOIN US AT CHURCH ON JULY 11, FOR A MORNING OF FELLOWSHIP AND GROWTH, AS WE GATHER TO PLANT PERENNIALS AROUND THE CHURCH GROUNDS. WE WILL HAVE PLENTY OF PLANTS TO GO AROUND, BUT IF YOU HAVE A FAVORITE NO-MAINTENANCE PERENNIAL WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLANT, BRING SOME ALONG. WE'LL PLANT FROM 8-9AM AND WILL FOLLOW WITH A POT-LUCK



BREAKFAST FROM 9-10AM IN THE CHURCH BASEMENT.

BRING A BREAKFAST DISH OR SIDES.

COFFEE AND JUICE WILL BE PROVIDED.

MEETINGS AND GROUPS

MARK MAKERS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1,
6:30PM

SEWING SEEDS OF LOVE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 8 & 22

6:30PM

WOMEN WANTING

WISDOM (@ HOME OF MARY DUNLAP)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15
6:30PM

All groups meet at FMLC unless
otherwise noted.
Everyone is welcome!

MARK MAKERS

The next meeting will be at Faith Memorial on Wednesday, July 1 at 6:30pm. Sue Schoech will share some creative ways to decorate bottles and enlighten us with some other interesting ideas. Please bring a bottle or jar you would like to enhance and a spare to share in case someone comes without one.

NO ARTISTIC TALENT or any kind of talent necessary – just come for some fun and fellowship and bring a guest!

Call Marilyn Lindner:

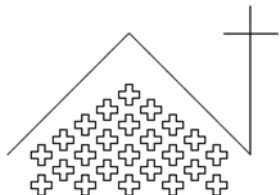
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Lutheran Church**

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office@faithmemorial.net**



**FAITH MEMORIAL
CHURCH DIRECTORY**

Our last church directory was published in 2012. In an effort to keep our information current and our Faith family connected, we would like to create and distribute a new directory with names, postal addresses, phone numbers (landline, cell or both) and email addresses. Forms are available in the Narthex. If you live out of the area, but would like to be included in the directory, please email any address, phone or email changes to office@faithmemorial.net or call the church office Tuesday-Thursday (9-3) at (219) 462-7684.

FAITH MEMORIAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 5, 9:00, Holy Communion
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 12, 9:00, Morning Prayer
The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 19, 9:00, Holy Communion
The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, July 26, 9:00, Morning Prayer
The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 2, 9:00, Holy Communion
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 9, 9:00, Word & Prayer
The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, August 16, 9:00, Holy Communion
The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 23, 9:00, Word & Prayer
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 30, 9:00, Holy Communion

*Now faith is being sure
of what we hope for
and certain of
what we do not see.*

Hebrews Chapter 11 Verse 1