



Light

JUNE 2011 Volume 61 Issue 5



Over the last month I have been studying the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk is a book where one cannot help but examine the problems of evil or suffering. In theology this concept is called theodicy.

'Theos' (Gr.) – God 'dike' (Gr.) – Justice

The literal meaning of 'Theodicy' is justifying God or justification of God. Theodicy is the branch of theology, which deals with problem of evil in the world. It explains the reasons for presence of evil. Why does a good, and powerful God allow/permit evil or does He?

Out of this branch of theology we ask questions like:

"God, why is it that the evil people seem to prosper, but the good people, bad things happen to them?"

"Why is it that I work hard and I'm honest, and then the jerk over there who's kissing up gets promoted?"

"Why is it that the person who gets into trouble lives to be 102, but the good Christian father dies at the age of 42 of cancer?"

"God, why is it that we tried to raise our kids according to Your word, and we really tried to do a good job, but now, our kids are messed up?"

"How come when someone else prays you seem to do things immediately, but when I pray, You don't do anything at all?"

"How come I've got these headaches that don't go away?"

"Or, how come I'm battling with depression?"

"Or, how come someone I love is going through this?"

"God, it seems like you could do something, but you don't. Why? Why don't you seem fair?"

I remember after September 11th, living in Boston, working with families that had lost people in the towers and asking these questions myself. Each of us at different periods in our life suffer, we experience pain, or evil. These experiences move us to ask questions of God... to challenge the God we know as loving, benevolent, compassionate, reconciling, hopeful, and grace-filled to help us understand the struggle that we find ourselves in. This is a similar experience to that of the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk is wrestling with God and questioning the prophecy that God is giving him. He longs to reconcile the suffering he has seen and is continuing to experience with his personal and communal understanding of God. How can the goodness of God and the violence and suffering the nation is experiencing be reconciled? Over the month of June we will be looking at these questions and like Habakkuk we will be asking God to help us understand His presence in the midst of our suffering. We will seek to determine the type of people we want to be as we encounter evil and suffering. We will strive to understand and hold fast to the promises of God as we experience pain. Join us this month as we look the questions of Habakkuk and learn to hold our questions and our faith in tension.

President's Message

Water the Bamboo

Have you ever tried growing bamboo? How about timber bamboo?

It goes something like this...

Year 1- you tend the soil and water it regularly...nothing happens!

Year 2- you tend the soil and water it regularly...nothing happens!!

Year 3- you tend the soil and water it regularly...nothing happens!!!

Year 4- you tend the soil and water it regularly...**SOMETHING HAPPENS!**

It grows 90 feet every sixty days!!!! **YES**, that is correct...90 feet every sixty days!

Our journey through life often takes similar effort to produce desirable results. Has this ever been the case in your life journey? Have you labored in life's garden, day in and day out, hoping for positive results in your career, business or family life? Have you had a vision that you knew would eventually work out, if you just stayed the course and put in the required effort? This sometimes is very hard to accomplish, because of the negativity that surrounds our daily lives. Not only do we have friends, family and coworkers saying... "Hey, why are you wasting your time and energy on that?" We also have our own minds, which have over 60,000 thoughts per day and 75% of those thoughts are negative.

Bethel, as a community, went through a difficult period in its efforts to turn things around. Many voices said we were wasting our time, that the church and school were too far gone to survive. However, there were enough committed individuals who kept the faith and continued to water the seeds of resurrection. Much like the metaphor of watering the bamboo, each one of us now stands together as a healthy and united body in Christ. As a community of believers, let's keep "watering the bamboo" at Bethel. Our growth in the community is depending on it.

Thanks for reading....

Richard Newcomb



Congratulations to our Grads!!!



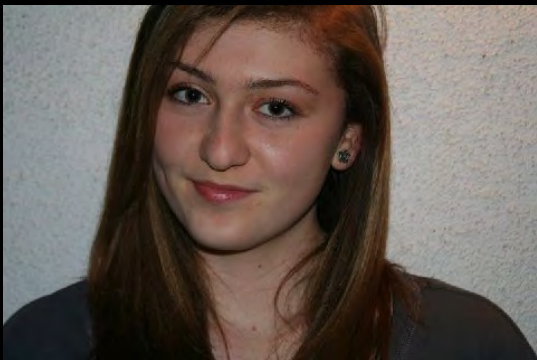
Justin Taylor



Rachel Rabska



Timothy Ouzounian



Nicole Ouzounian



Nicolas Cowles



Christian Holmes

Not Pictured: Hannah Holmes and Taylor Newcomb



GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Through one Man's righteous act, the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ... Grace might reign through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Romans 5:18 – 20

Over the last several months the Council has studied the book The Grace of God by Andy Stanley. The jacket quotes state “Grace is a foundational pillar of our faith, and understanding it is essential for every believer.” What is grace and how do we live it out in our lives?

Bethel understands that the world is full of un-grace and hopelessness. Author, Andy Stanley suggests that “Grace is what we crave most when our guilt (sin) is exposed. (Yet) it’s the very thing we are hesitant to extend when we are confronted with the guilt of others.”

We live in a world that is marked by disrupted families, uncertain employment transitions, global terrorism, and dwindling feelings of personal significance. At Bethel, we seek to come along side those crying out for personal relationships that matter, for forgiveness, for love, for grace.

We believe that we are in the world to be the embodiment of God’s grace and peace. Grace means the absolutely free expression of the fullness of God’s love or God’s favor of us though undeserved, and Peace meaning (shalom) harmony or every kind of good.

Our vision statement proclaims our desire to be a relevant presence of love, compassion, and acceptance to everyone in our community, helping them to experience the transforming love of Jesus through an intimate communal relationship with God.

Believing that God calls all of us to be transformed, and that transformation is only possible as we depend on God. Accordingly, we seek models of worship and community life that prepare us for a ministry committed to engaging people with the gospel, including a radical blend of ancient church practices with relevant technology and culture.

We welcome the opportunity to be multilingual, multicultural, and multigenerational to reach out actively and clearly to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that invite other people to hear, trust and respond to the same promise that we have received.

The good news: being **reconciled to God by Grace through Faith because of the saving work of Jesus Christ – Hallelujah!**

In His Service,
Genise Burgess
Outreach, Chair



Kim O'Kelley-Leigh
is a teacher and author

A design for conscious living

Women's Meditation Classes

Thursday mornings 9:30am-10:45am

(Classes start promptly at 9:45am)

\$15 per class or 4 class series - \$40 (\$10 a class within a month)-

Where: Bethel Lutheran Church 17500 Burbank Blvd. Encino Park in the lot behind the church Enter through gate. First door to the left. We're in the Library. (Not affiliated w/ church)

Begins June 2, 2011

Experience the peace, joy, and unconditional love found deep within the stillness of meditation.

"I have been meditating on a daily basis for over 23 years, and have taught meditation and counseled people in life enrichment, privately, and in classes, for over two decades."

Meditators at all levels are welcome

Meditation is where we can calm our restless mind and experience the present moment. The present moment is where all conscious choices are alive. The present moment is where we can cultivate and build a relationship with an infinite source made up of unconditional love, joy, peace, and intuitional wisdom. Meditation is where we can develop and strengthen our intuition, our sixth sense. And a developed intuition is always true. Each time we meditate and turn our attention and energy inward, we expand our awareness of this infinite source, ourselves and others, and deepen our levels of consciousness. We sit in the silence of meditation, and remember who we truly are. We just need to push past the surface of our restless mind to realize we are not the body, or the mind. We are soul. We are light. We are ever-new joy and bliss. This is our true nature. We are all spiritual beings continuously connected. It is our restlessness that keeps this truth hidden. And when we contact and experience our true nature all else pales in comparison. Except from "Silent M.a.g.i.c. and Other Remedies"

"Meditation has transformed my inner and outer world more than anything else I have ever done."

Call or e-mail Kim with any Questions at 818 439-7515 or kim@adesignforconsciousliving.com



For some reason within the life of a church we rarely take the time to celebrate what God is doing in and through us. Each month we receive a multitude of thank-you notes from people in our community expressing gratitude for the things Bethel is doing to support them.

This month we wanted to honor the discipline of gratitude and share with you a few of those letters. In our month of mission we collected over 120 bags of food, helped 2 of our neighbors with yard work, supported a missionary in Africa, and continued collecting change to build water wells.

This is just a snippet of what we have done communally not to mention all the incredible things that each of us individually have done to impact the lives of our neighbors. We rejoice that our God is good and continues to use our hands to complete His work. May living missionally not be something we do just in the month of May in order to have an alliteration, but may it be so embedded in our existence that we cannot help but have the rivers of life flow from us. To God be all the gratitude.

PSALM 100:1-5

On your feet now—applaud God! Bring a gift of laughter,
sing yourselves into his presence.

Know this: God is God, and God, God.

He made us; we didn't make him.

We're his people, his well-tended sheep.

Enter with the password: "Thank you!"

Make yourselves at home, talking praise.

Thank him. Worship him.

For God is sheer beauty,
all-generous in love,
loyal always and ever.



6425 Tyrone Ave , Van Nuys 91401 • 818.901.9480 • 818.901.9482 FAX • www.lsssc.org

May 23, 2011

Bethel Lutheran Church
17500 Burbank Blvd.
Encino, CA 91316

Dear Members of Bethel,

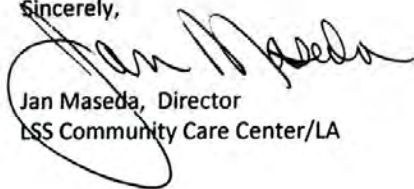
Thank you for inviting me to share your wonderful worship service on Sunday, and to allow us tell the story of Lutheran Social Services. It was great to be with all of you again – it felt like old friends on a new day. You are all so warm and welcoming. Your music is just the best I've heard in a long time – I loved it!

Thank you also for the over 60 bags of food for our Food Pantry, and all of the clothing, which we really needed. We got all of the food put away today, and it makes our pantry look great.

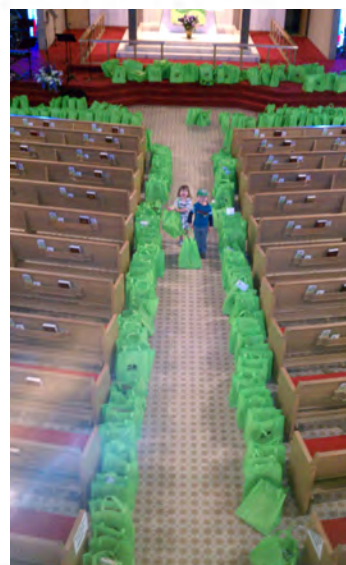
We are privileged to have the members of Bethel as our partner, and we want you to know how much we appreciate all of the things that you do for us and with us. We look forward to a long and continuous relationship with you, and may God bless your ministry there. Bethel, as a missional church, understands that it is primarily a missional community of people being trained and equipped to live among the world as missionaries to bring the kingdom of God to all. Congratulations on a job well done.

Hope to see you all soon.

Sincerely,



Jan Maseda, Director
LSS Community Care Center/LA



Helping People in need. An Independent, California Non-profit Corporation

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL
13645 Riverside Drive
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

May 9, 2011

Pastor Rustin Comer
17500 Burbank Blvd.
Encino, CA 91316

Dear Pastor Comer,

We wanted to thank you for your kind hospitality when we visited your church a few weeks back. It was really refreshing to meet truly nice people who welcomed us so profusely. We all agreed that all of you were certainly among some of the most genuine people we had ever met. Our time spent with you helped us create a great project, which we also shared with our class. By the way, each and every one of us got a perfect score on our project.

Thank you again, we thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent with you and we all appreciate that you took time out of your day to help us.

Sincerely,

Dillon Elsbury



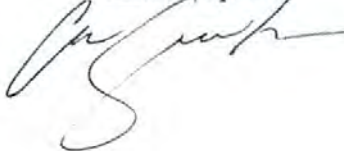
Matthew Alongi



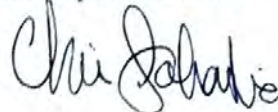
Thaddeus Maslo



Andrew Speake



Christopher Sahakian



**The Church Council and the Preschool Advisory Board
are proud to introduce to you our new preschool Director,
Lily Talamantes**

Lily has a deep passion for children and families. She loves to facilitate growth within families and children in body, mind, and spirit. Lily has been working in Early Childhood Education for 20 years. She is a mother of two; Luke who is 10, and Naomi who is 9. Her Family lives in Valley Village. They love to camp as a family, and Lily is an avid bicyclist.

Lily is greatly looking forward to meeting everyone at the church and if you are interested in volunteering at the school her door is always open.





Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

24th Synod Assembly May 20 – 21, 2011

Freed In Christ to Serve

"For freedom Christ has set us free...only do not use this freedom as an occasion for self-indulgence, but serve one another in love." – Galatians 5:1, 13

The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** was formed over 20 years ago. This new church was formed from three separate and well-established North American church bodies: *The American Lutheran Church; The Association of Evangelical Luther Churches, and The Lutheran Church in America*. Beginning January 1, 1988, these churches, with shared beliefs and missions, officially formed the ELCA. Two decades later, this energized church is composed of 4.8 million members and nearly 10,500 congregations and 65 synods across the U.S. and Caribbean. Today, the ELCA reflects the rich and diverse heritage of the people it serves. The guiding principle of the ELCA is "God's work. Our hands."

Each spring, the Synods gather in assembly to uplift and celebrate ministries and address the issues facing the leaders, congregations, and agencies within the synod. The agenda consists of Bible study, reports from the various Synod committees, elections of the Synod Council, voting on resolutions and worship.

In his opening message Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, Mark Hanson spoke of the church as "being known for rolling up its sleeves and solving problems, for being a catalyst, convener and a bridge builder." He spoke of being called to be about God's healing of a broken world. And reminding us that we act not out of obligation, fear, or guilt but out of gratitude for all we have been given. "The liberating power of the gospels releases us from our human limitations so that we may reach out in love to our neighbor. And through word and sacrament, freedom flows to the center of our being, transforming our life and making us into servant of the Spirit's liberating work." -

Freed In Christ to Serve.

Reports from Mission Support, Equipping Leaders for Mission, Rostered Mission Leadership, Evangelical Mission, African Decent Ministry, Evangelical, Outreach, Mission Team for Justice, the Synod Council and various other committees were presented during the two days.

Resolutions on Banking institutions, the California budget, Involvement in Mission and Ministry, Communication of Synod activities, Volunteerism, The School of the Americas, and Campaign finance reforms were presented, discussed and approved. Copies of the specific reports and resolutions are available in the office.

Pastor, Dr Guy Erwin conducted two bible studies. The first entitled "Slaves through Love" (Galatians 5: 1-15). During the later study - "Who is your Father" (John 8:31-42), Pastor Erwin discusses doing the work of the Father. Pastor Guy encourages us to mediate on discovering our own banner or guiding scripture for our lives.

During this year's election our own Pastor Rustin Comer was elected to the Synod Council as member at large. – ***Congratulations, Pastor Rustin!!!***

The 2012 Assembly will be held May 31 thru June 2, 2012. Bishop, Dean Nelson will retire in 2013 and a new Bishop will be elected during the 2013 Assembly.

The Synod Assembly is a wonderful opportunity to see (and participate in) the churchwide organization at work, something to consider attending. Bethel was represented by Richard Newcomb, Shelin Wing, and Genise Burgess.

Respectfully submitted,

Genise Burgess



We Need Your Recipes

We are putting together a new community cookbook and would love to share your special recipes. Send them to:
bethel_encino@sbcglobal.net
 or bring a hard copy by the church office.



BRING A FRIEND
SUNDAY

Help grow Gods kingdom;
 bring a friend to church.

Every third Sunday
 is your opportunity to invite
 that person you been thinking
 about bringing for a long time.

REMEMBERING OUR VALUES

Love, Acceptance and Compassion for Everyone

Community

Transformation & creativity

Following the Way of Jesus

Relationship with God & Humanity

Grace at all Costs

Excellence and Consistency



SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:15am

Sunday School & Nursery Care every Sunday

Pastor: Rustin Comer

17500 Burbank Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

818.788.2653

Website: www.bethelencino.org • Email: bethel_encino@sbcglobal.net



Bethel Preschool

818.788.8269

Email: blecec@sbcglobal.net

NEW WAYS TO GIVE

One of Bethel's goals is to make giving of your time, gifts, and money as accessible as possible.

So we have created a way to give online. Go to our website and click on "give & serve"

The Bethel Light is a free publication of BETHEL ENCINO ELCA