



The Link

Spring 2014

The Quarterly Newsletter of Little Falls Presbyterian Church

We joyfully
PROCLAIM
the love of God
in Jesus Christ,
GROW
in His truth, and
SHARE
His Gospel with
our neighbors.

*Be merciful
to me,
O God,
be merciful to
me, for in you
my soul takes
refuge;
in the shadow
of your wings
I will take
refuge, till the
storms of
destruction
pass by.
- Psalm 57:1*

Caring for People in the Midst of Tragedy

Dr. Matt Merrill, Pastor

Over the last three months, two women from Little Falls, Grace Marquardt and Jennifer Lawson, have died in tragic accidents. While the suddenness of their deaths surprised us all, their families are not the only ones experiencing grief. Every week, someone we know finds out about a death, a diagnosis, a divorce, the loss of a job, etc. Those grieving are all around us. So, how can we minister to one another during times of grief? I have a few ideas:

Most important is the ministry of presence. Simply being there is much more important than any words you can say. This is one thing Job's friends got right. They came to their friend in his hour of need and just sat with him. It's actually better to say, "I don't know what to say" than to offer some pithy quote. People in grief need love more than they need advice.

Know that the grieving person is experiencing a flood of emotions. In the course of their grief they will go through the following stages: denial, anger, bargaining with God to make it all go back to how it used to be, depression and acceptance. People often cycle through these five stages of grief several times, especially during the first year after a death. Feel free to tell people that it's okay to feel what they are feeling and to share all of their emotions with God – for He is strong enough to handle the full scope of our emotions.

One more idea is to offer practical help. Things like making meals, running to the grocery for them, doing laundry, cutting the lawn, babysitting children, etc. can be extremely helpful. Don't force them to take the type of help you want to offer. Instead, let them know that you are ready and willing for whatever they need. If there are several people who want to offer this type of help, using an online tool like "lotsahelpinghands.com" to coordinate meals and other assistance can be very useful.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Finally, remember your friend one month, three months, six months and a year after their loss. People get a lot of immediate attention, which is great. But often, the real help they need will be long after the initial event. Thank you for being a congregation that cares.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, THE FATHER OF MERCIES and GOD OF ALL COMFORT, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Financial Update

Rich Palmer, Elder

God continues to bless Little Falls Church through the generosity of our congregation. As many of you heard at our annual congregational meeting, 2013 offerings exceeded our budget by 10 percent, or \$57,000, contributing towards a surplus of \$40,000 for the year when we had budgeted a deficit of \$40,000. Our 2014 pledges continue to reflect this generosity. With approximately the same number of pledges as we had in 2013, the total amount pledged is up 12 percent, or \$58,000. Our total offerings always include a significant amount in addition to pledged amounts. And 2013 was no exception, with several large contributions in December. In order to be prudent, our 2014 budgeted offerings increase is significantly less than the percentage increase in pledges.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded." (Luke 12:48) We believe God is calling us to be good stewards of his financial blessings through stepping out in faith and investing in reaching more of our neighbors for Christ. Our financial position is such that we can afford to be in a deficit position for a couple of years if necessary. We are budgeting a deficit of \$49,000 this year largely in order to hire a Ministry Associate for Discipleship. With God's help, He will lead us to the right individual who will help us obey His command to go and make disciples. We believe God will continue to bless us with the necessary financial resources to reach more of our neighbors as long as we remain faithful to His Word.



The Angel Tree and Me

Julie Verry

Last Christmastime, our congregation generously gifted fifty local children with presents to celebrate the birth of Jesus. My family, like many others, participated with eagerness. It is always heartwarming to brighten a child's Christmas.

As a parent, I consider the church's "good works" projects like these an occasion to give my kids an opportunity to bear witness to others the love of Christ, His saving grace and His majesty. So it was with great parental hope that I asked my children to find a child's nametag. My son chose Jason, a 12-year-old boy. We bought presents for him and wrapped everything nicely. On one cold December Sunday morning, we put the gifts under the Angel Tree at church, then smiled at each other as we walked into the sanctuary for the worship service, content that we did a good thing and hopefully brought Jason a little Christmas cheer. Score one for Team Verry!

Unfortunately, what I have just given you is not the full picture. There is more to the story. Or maybe less. My son did choose Jason's name. We did all put the gift under the tree. The middle is where it gets messy.

We have four lively kids and as you would suspect, it's exhausting work to take them all to the store to shop for another child. The thought alone increases my heart rate. It was so much easier for me to take one child while the others were in school. So much easier for me to pick out what I thought Jason would like rather than ask my kids to weigh in. So much easier to wrap the gifts myself than to work with my exuberant kiddos. So much easier...and quieter, too, with no arguing, no complaining, no whining, no problems. And therein lies the obvious rub: if they didn't really participate in the project, then they missed out on part of what God could show them in the process.

Recently I asked my kids what they thought about the Angel Tree and they confirmed my suspicion. The three oldest said it was nice because it is nice to give to people who don't have much. Seeing God's love for us and how we are called and privileged to bear witness of that love to others wasn't even on their radar. I am sure the Lord still blessed Jason. God is bigger than the Verry family and can use our imperfect efforts. Nonetheless, I was discouraged my children seemed to miss part of the lesson.

So I will try harder next time to involve my kids the whole way through and teach them the "why" behind what we are doing, even though this will mean extra work for me. I will involve my children in the mundane and the exciting, the difficult and the simple, the risky and the easy because this is what God has called each of us to do – to do EVERYTHING FOR HIS GLORY. He can and will fulfill His purposes with or without our participation, but we will miss out on the blessings and beauty and life lessons He might have for us if we don't jump in and get a little messy.



Recent Baptisms at LFPC



Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
– Matthew 28:19



The Marriage Retreat

Stacie & Hal Constantine

As the parents of two small children, my husband and I don't have a lot of free time to talk about marriage, conceptually or practically, on a regular basis. So, when the Little Falls marriage retreat was advertised, Hal and I thought it might be a good opportunity to step back and look at the "big picture" and talk about our relationship to each other and to God. These are topics we had not focused significant attention on probably since our premarital counseling seven years ago. Hal's parents came to town to watch the kids and off we went to the retreat. To say that the weekend vastly exceeded our expectations would not be an overstatement. We had wonderful fellowship with other church members (some of whom we had never met before), learned about each other and our relationship, examined Scripture about marriage, and talked about the role of God in our marriage with a new and better understanding of what that means.

One of the most important things that Hal and I learned was to pray together. We had occasionally done this in the past, but not regularly. Now we take a few minutes each day to either pray for our own needs and/or for the other person's needs. In the simple act of uniting our prayers, we are finding that we are much more attuned to one another.

We are grateful for God's provision through Matt's teaching and through Kelly in organizing this fantastic retreat. The Lord used this time to touch both of our hearts and draw us closer to Him and to each other in a fun and joyful way.



Church Family News

Births

Ethan Frady - January 6
Annie Linville - February 23

~

Promoted to Glory

Grace Marquardt - November 23
Fran Harwell - December 23
Dave Roderick - December 30
Jenn Lawson - February 24

~

Baptisms

Chloe, Kayla & Konnor Rakowitz
December 1

Magnolia & Elizabeth Merrill
December 8

June & Thad Odderstal
January 19

Sloane Gassner
January 26

Charlie Sursa
February 9

Reagan Rainbolt
March 2

If one member suffers,
all suffer together;
if one member is honored,
all rejoice together.
– 1 Corinthians 12:26

Two Congregations – Under One Lord and One Roof

Erica Chapman, Restoration Anglican

Our brothers and sisters at Restoration Anglican Church have been worshipping in our building on Sunday evenings since last spring, while they await the completion of construction on their new building on North Quincy Street. Here is a word from one of their members.

On our first Sunday, I took a picture as I walked up the hill to church. I was excited about the idea of walking to church in the weeks ahead. In the wake of memories of leaving our old building, I'm not sure I bargained for how dear LFPC would become.

There is just something about living with other folks that helps you get to know them. I've worshipped from the balcony, prayed before service in the Tree House, eaten pizza in the basement, chatted over snacks in the front yard (you have really plush lawn!), brought trash down through the kitchen maze. I stood with my friends as we presented their daughter for baptism under the beautiful mosaic cross. I attended a memorial service for a beloved Restoration "grandpa" in the chapel. So in a year, there have been a lot of memories in your space. And I am glad for it; the laughter, silence and tears – all of it. I won't pass Little Falls now without one of those memories bubbling up.

I have loved the places of overlap: sharing the advent wreath, passing LFPC parishioners when we had events on the same night in different rooms, hearing Matt preach at our service (knowing David and Erin have done the same at yours), praying for Matt's family as they celebrated the birth of their twins. It was a blessing to imagine the staff of both churches in communication and coordinating.

There have been heartaches and urgent prayer requests shared; there have been joys and some adjustments. But mostly there has been a whole lot of normal parish life that's passed for both congregations. And the Lord's been faithful.

I'm grateful for the shared space while Restoration's new home is under construction. There are some really good things we're looking forward to when we get back to Quincy Street. As we wind down our time at Little Falls, I'm sure to miss the regular reminder of what God was up to at Little Falls Presbyterian. It's been more than a visit, but a home away from home.

Thankful to our Lord for His provision and His work through both our parishes.

For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we
feel for your sake before our God.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:9

Ashes and Idols

Ruth Hudock

Ash Wednesday has been celebrated by Christians for years. The ashes are meant to provide a solemn symbol of grieving and mourning for our sins. This is the time to feel the weight of our sin and repent. Ash Wednesday ushers in the season of Lent – the 40 days before Easter. Oftentimes Christians give up something during this season. The intent is to give up something--usually something that takes a lot of our attention or energy away from God and replace it with something that brings us closer to God.

I went to our Ash Wednesday joint service with Restoration Anglican Church. I am thankful I did not miss it! The church sanctuary was filled and there was a holy and humble sense throughout. The service brought us through a journey of recognizing the seriousness of sin to the glorious hope of God's forgiveness and grace. There was a beautiful time of repentance with music to draw us into the Lord's presence. One song had the lyrics, "Oh there are a thousand charms," and as you thought of your thousand charms, you were encouraged to lay down those "charms", and embrace a fresh beginning. We also sang, "But this I know with all my heart, his wounds have paid my ransom" – the confident truth we have as believers.

As we received the ashes on our foreheads, we were also reminded that we are dust, and to dust we will return. Again--the humble thought that we are on this earth for a short time, and to think about our life's purpose.

What are you searching for to bring you fulfillment? Our fulfillment can only be found in our Savior. Anything else we look to for our ultimate purpose and meaning in life is a "charm" or as Pastor Matt called it, an idol. I want to give up one of these charms to help me be more free and to live the life He has for me. What idols do we have?

I can name a few right away; however, during this service, I could sense that worry/fear was a big issue for me. The Lord reminds me again and again not to worry and not to be afraid. That is hard for me when I see bills adding up, the future that I'm still not sure about, etc. Ugh...and yet how can worry fix any of this?

So I told God I wanted to lay that idol down. I want to trust more in the One that holds my future than I trust in my own worry. I want my thoughts to focus more on His greatness, not the fear. His promises are my strength and my salvation. His love for me is amazing. His thoughts of a good future and a plan for me fill me with hope. I want to see Him and the treasures He has for me.

And then I imagine a day without worry. I would laugh more! I would have more fun and spend more time playing with my kids! I would enjoy nature more. I would look for ways to give and receive joy. That would be an awesome day! And imagine 40 days like that?!?!? But I cannot do this on my own. Tim Keller calls our hearts "idol factories". We need to continually ask the Lord to show us our idols and ask Him to remove them. I cannot stop worrying by sheer willpower so - Lord, I am looking to you!



And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
– Acts 2:42

Little Falls Presbyterian Church



www.littlefallschurch.org
6025 Little Falls Road, Arlington, VA 22207
703.538.5230

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage PAID
Arlington, VA
Permit No. 631

Current Resident or