

July 2009
Volume 6
Issue 7

GRACELINES

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It doesn't matter what day you're reading this newsletter, the words of the above hymn ring true. God makes every day. Each and every day of our life is a gift to us from our Lord. What do we do with this gift? Do we use it wisely? Do we use it, or at least part of it, to thank and praise our Lord? Do we spend time strengthening our relationships with our families? Or are we so busy and self focused that nothing of real consequence comes out of our gift?

Somewhere around the first of July we will find that our summer, at least for those of us who are on a school based or school affected schedule, is half over. So, have we spent time with our family? Caught up on those honey do projects? If you're like me, you may find yourself wondering how so much of summer could go by without accomplishing more of the goals we had.

I suspect this is a symptom of life. We often find ourselves just hanging on, dealing with whatever is most pressing at the moment, and vowing to catch up at some point in the future. I never seem to catch up. I suspect that is true for many of us.

I've come to the conclusion that this often happens because our focus is off. We focus on our jobs, or our children's sports schedules, or some other schedule. Maybe it comes down to a balancing act between more than one schedule.

God does not want us to be running around, so busy that we never seem to catch up. God offers us peace, calm, and quiet. So how does that come about? It goes back to that focus. Or maybe we should say priority list instead of focus. What is most important? Where do we spend our time, our money, our effort?

This is the day the
Lord
has made;
He calls the hours
His own.
Let heav'n
rejoice,
let earth be glad
And praise
surround
the throne.

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Music Notes ...Continued

When our focus is on our relationship with our Lord – when He is the number one priority – then the focus will begin to come clear. Then we feel more of the peace and rest that He offers. So what does it look like to have our focus on our Lord as number one? Well, the first thing is that **nothing** interferes with our quiet devotional time and our time in worship. They become the first thing on our to do list. After that, things tend to fall in place. We spend time with our families – their relationship with the Lord is important too! We do what is needed so they can build their relationship with the Lord – that means devotions, Bible study, and worship for them, too.

In 20, 50, or even 100 years it won't matter if your child played on the state champion soccer team, or wore the best clothes, or if you lived in the best neighborhood. But it **will** matter whether or not your child, or spouse, or even you had a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Of course this sounds like the relationship is something we create. It isn't. God gives it to us – in baptism – by the Holy Spirit. Our only work is to let the Holy Spirit do His thing. And that happens when we are in contact with God's Word and Sacraments. That means, we are involved in worship and Bible study.

Let's all look at our priorities and center our focus on Jesus Christ. We rejoice and praise Him for the gift of faith, forgiveness, His love, and eternal life. What a gift!

If you'd like to support worship by being involved in the music ministry of the congregation, give me a call in the church office. I'll be happy to get you connected. You'll be blessed as God uses you to bless others!

With You in the Service of Our Lord,
Larry D. Wooster

Offering		Attendance	
Ending Sunday 5/24	3,545	Saturday 4/25	41
Ending Sunday 5/31	10,138	Sunday 4/26	202
Ending Sunday 6/7	9,378	Saturday 5/2	27
Ending Sunday 6/14	8,941	Sunday 5/3	167
		Saturday 5/9	22
		Sunday 5/10	263
		Saturday 5/16	36
		Sunday 5/17	187
		Sat/Sun Average Attendance-May	
		2008	238
		2009	333
Building Fund (BTBC)			
Ending Sunday 5/24	125		
Ending Sunday 5/31	225		
Ending Sunday 6/7	385		
Ending Sunday 6/14	230		
Total as of 6/14	794,293		

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY



The Parish Life Committee wants YOU to Join!

If you are currently participating in a Parish Life sub committee or you would like to please call Tricia Colcord 940-8167 or 373-0161 for further information.

A meeting will be scheduled mid to late July so watch for news in the weekly bulletin.

Parish Life sub committees include:

- Fellowship
- New Member Reception
- Sonshine Club
- Stewardship
- Prison Ministry
- Stephen Ministry
- Christian Care
- Card Ministry
- Funeral Reception
- Auxiliary Organizations
- Any and All Volunteer Opportunities

Congratulations! To More of Our Graduates!

We rejoice with all youth, young adults, adults who achieved special educational degrees and promotions. Congratulations on your accomplishments and God's blessings on all of your future endeavors!! Here are some additional names added to our June list of members that have graduated.

College Graduates

Nate Andrews from UC Davis, he will be applying for Medical School
Cameron Wishka from Long Beach State with a Bachelor of Science in Business Finance

Christian Wishka from Antelope Valley College, Summa Cum Laude will be transferring to Pepperdine University this fall.

Marco Nicol from Antelope Valley College, Cum Laude with an Associate of Arts Degree-Music Major

High School

Marcela Nicol from Desert Christian High School
She received the following:

- California Scholarship Foundation Honoree
- National Honor Society Lifetime Member Honoree
- Desert Christian High School Music Awards:
 - * Music Lifetime Award and Placque
 - * Commitment to Excellence Award
- ACSI Musicale Command Performance Award



Special Thanks

I Thessalonians 1:2, "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers." We thank God for all of you at Grace Lutheran Church and School. Your words, generosity, gifts of appreciation were overwhelming to my family and me. Thank you for the warm farewell on June 14th! We will always treasure the gifts you were to us the past nine years. It was a privilege to be your pastor and share the best gift of all, our Savior Jesus Christ. May His grace, love and fellowship continue to bless you. Pastor Rich Riggert and family

Kick-off Potluck for Sr. Group

Sunday, July 19th after the last service. Help with the planning for the Christ centered group 55 & older (or spouse 55& older). Drinks, table setting, meat & bread will be provided. Please bring a salad or dessert, entertainment, singing, and fun. You are needed! Please contact Deaconess June Nuckolls in the church office for further questions or information.

School News

Each summer the faculty decides on a spiritual theme for the coming school year. We learned that the Chapel Talks booklet put out by our synodical school ministry department for 2009-2010 is entitled "Christ Be My Leader." Our faculty thought this would be an excellent theme for this year. There is a hymn in our *All God's People Sing!* hymnal that has that same title. The hymn is based on John 14:6 which states: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and life. No one comes to the Father except through me." What an awesome theme to follow!

We concluded our school year in a spectacular manner. We "graduated" our preschoolers and our kindergartners on a couple of evenings. You just can't go through those events without a lump in your heart and a huge smile on your face! We were blessed to have Dr. David Vierra, superintendent of the Antelope Valley Unified High School District (and proud Dad of one of the graduates), as our commencement speaker for the 8th grade graduation. Both the salutatorian and the valedictorian also gave heartfelt messages. We closed this school year recognizing once again that we touch the lives of many families and they touch our lives as well. To be educators in this Christian mission field is such an incredible blessing.

It is quiet around here these days. We felt it best to take the summer "off" from day camp. We did not have enough interest or need to justify staffing that this year. Prisca Van Duzer is having a couple of sessions with students interested in sewing or stitching, and science and math "fun". Linda Gater is offering some time with students for reading enrichment and making crafts to enter in the AV Fair. Those of us who work year round are staying busy with projects that cannot be accomplished during the school year.

Friday, July 17, there is a "Celebrate Downtown Lancaster" evening planned. I have sent in the application to have a table on the boulevard so we can hand out information about the school. From the paperwork I understand that I will need to take our own table, etc. If you have time on that Friday evening, I would appreciate some help. Several of us discovered that the blessings go both ways when we put ourselves out into the public.

If you know of families looking for great schools, please let them know about us.

Serving the Master Teacher through our children,
Wanda Vandrey, Principal



News from the DCE

A SO-CALLED OR CALLED CHRISTIAN

George Barna, a respected researcher has recently come out with a book *The Seven Faith Tribes: Who They Are, What They Believe, and Why They Matter*. In this book, he discusses the possible impact 7 different “tribes” could have on our American society. The tribes: Casual Christians (66%), Captive Christians (16%), Mormons (2%), Jews (2%), Pantheists (2%), Muslims (.5%) and Skeptics (11%). This newsletter article uses questions from an interview based on what he talks about as the differences between Nominal and Casual Christians. In the book, he addresses their impact on society, but in this newsletter article, using his portions from the interview, hopefully we can see how we as members of Grace Lutheran Church & School “rate” as Followers of Jesus Christ.

THE INTERVIEW:

Question: You describe the Casual Christian tribe as spiritually middle-of-the-road, perhaps even ambivalent about their faith. Why, then, are they so important to the nation’s future?

Barna: Each of the seven tribes is important to our nation’s future because they include millions of American citizens. The Casual Christian tribe is especially significant because it represents a huge majority of the nation’s population – two out of every three adults. This particular tribe is comprised of significant proportions of minimally active born again Christians and moderately active but theologically nominal Christians. If a catalyst were added to this mix to deepen this tribe’s integration of faith and lifestyle, or even to simply create a more extensive sense of community and purpose within the tribe, unprecedented changes could occur.

Question: What have you found to be the appeal of Casual Christianity, as opposed to what draws people to the Captive Christian or even the Mormon tribes – that is, other tribes that are much more fervent about their faith?

Barna: Casual Christianity is faith in moderation. It allows them to feel religious without having to prioritize their faith. Christianity is a low-risk, predictable proposition for this tribe, providing a faith perspective that is not demanding. A Casual Christian can be all the things that they esteem: a nice human being, a family person, religious, an exemplary citizen, a reliable employee – and never have to publicly defend or represent difficult moral or social positions or even lose much sleep over their private choices as long as they mean well and generally do their best. From their perspective, their brand of faith practice is genuine, realistic and practical. To them, Casual Christianity is the best of all worlds; it encourages them to be a better person than if they had been irreligious, yet it is not a faith into which they feel compelled to heavily invest themselves.

Question: What are the critical elements that make the Casual Christians tick?

Barna: The comfort that this approach provides. It offers them life insights if they choose to accept them, gives them a community of relationships if they desire such, fulfills their inner need to have some type of connection with a deity, and provides the image of being a decent, faith-friendly person. Because Casuals do not view matters of faith as central to one’s purpose or success in life, this brand of Christianity supplies the multi-faceted levels of satisfaction and assurance that they desire.

Question: You list two tribes under the “Christian” umbrella. What are the primary differences between the Casual and Captive tribes?

Barna: The lives of Captive Christians are defined by their faith; their worldview is built around their core spiritual beliefs and resultant values. Casual Christians are defined by the desire to please God, family, and other people while extracting as much enjoyment and comfort from the world as possible. The big difference between these two tribes is how they define a successful life. For Captives, success is obedience to God, as demonstrated by consistently serving Christ and carrying out His commands and principles. For Casuals, success is balancing everything just right so that they are able to maximize their opportunities and joys in life without undermining their perceived relationship with God and others. Stated differently, Casuals are about moderation in all things while Captives are about extreme devotion to their God regardless of the worldly consequences.

POSSIBLE APPLICATION

In every church around our country, the pews (or chairs) are filled with So-called and Called Christians: Casual or Captive Christians. It would, therefore, be safe to say that Grace Lutheran Church & School is no different. Do we say to the casuals “leave and come back when you are ready to get serious?” No. Do we say to the captives “you need to take it easy and just go with the flow?” No. Personally, do I think there is an obvious difference between the two? Yes. Are both forgiven and loved by God? Yes, absolutely. I honestly think, though, that casual Christians are more interested in themselves and making sure their lives are filled with “just enough faith stuff” and act accordingly. One could argue that Captive Christians, on the other hand, truly see a need to get involved in their faith journey and seek to do whatever they can to reach out and live lives that testify to what God has done, is doing and will do for them and everyone they encounter along the way. Maybe we should be asking ourselves each day if we are a so-called Christian or if we are a Called Christian. I struggle with this on a daily basis, even as a DCE, because there are times when I act as if I am a Christian – in name only, but each day, I ask God to open my eyes and heart to ways in which I can live life as a Called Christian. Are you in the 66% or 16% of Christians?



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Assistant Pastor/Church Planter	Todd Niebling
Music Director	Larry Wooster
Youth Director	Jim Roberts
Church Secretary	Teri Morgan

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE

Principal	Wanda Vandrey
School Secretary	Christine Calvert

CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Ken Szalai
Vice President	Scott Smith
Treasurer	Dennis Klein
Recording Secretary	Marge Barckholtz
Member at Large	Gary Vandrey
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