



## Guest Columnist-Paul Thomas

### *On Beliefs and Politics*

About the time this “guest column” appears, most of us will once again have undergone that time-honored custom of voting – or if not, at the very least we will be enjoying the end of those horrible political commercials on television. When I agreed to write something for this issue of the *Good News* and then began to wonder what I was going to write about, the topic of politics was suggested. Since we are all instructed never to talk about politics or religion, I figured, goodness, who could possibly be offended?

So what is the relationship between our religious beliefs and our politics? Or should there be one? Should we let our religious faith get in the way of our politics? It certainly is not difficult to find those whose political ideas and activities are totally dominated by what they hear from the pulpit (or from God as some politicians claim). These people often cite the Bible to promote their side of an issue. While most of us are probably too young to remember how the Bible was used to defend slavery in the years leading up to our civil war, perhaps we remember its use to promote Proposition 8 not so long ago.

On the other hand, there is also a large number of people who believe we should not let our religion inform our politics, a continuation of the idea of separation of Church and state in the electoral arena. Luther’s theology of the Two Kingdoms (one spiritual and the other secular) is often cited as an example of this kind of thinking, although many disagree that was precisely what he meant. Either way, it is argued we are all better off in our democracy to keep the two quite separate.

So which is it? I feel that my political leanings, as with most other things in my life, are indeed based on the Gospel, on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. I don’t mean to say that I pick out a quotation from the Bible to justify my vote for a candidate or stance on an issue, but I do try to frame the way in which I approach politics generally through what I think the Gospel teaches us. In that way I believe I am in accord with our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s statement, *The Church in Society: a Lutheran Perspective*. It reads, in part, “In witnessing to Jesus Christ, the church announces that the God who justifies expects all people to do justice. God’s good and just demands address people in the obligations of their relationships and the challenges of the world. Through the divine activity of the law, God preserves creation, orders society, and promotes justice in a broken world. God works through the family, education, the economy, **the state**, and other structures necessary for life in the present age. **God institutes governing authorities**, for example, to serve the good of society.” (my emphasis)

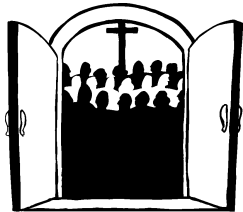
If this is so, if we are asked to do justice, to serve the good of society, then I wonder about those churches that recently threatened to burn copies of the Qur’an or that rail against the building of mosques in their communities. I wonder about the motives of the politicians who did their best to block the provision of health care for all. How do they compare to Hubert Humphrey who said “Compassion is not weakness, and concern for the unfortunate is not socialism”? And I wonder about the large, powerful corporations that are spending huge amounts on politicians they feel will work to help maintain their quarterly earnings. What do they think of Bishop Desmond Tutu’s quote, “Injustice and oppression will never prevail. Those who are powerful have to remember the litmus test that God gives to the powerful: what is your treatment of the poor, the hungry, the voiceless? And on the basis of that, God passes judgment.”

There is no doubt that we do not want the Church telling us how to vote or for whom to vote, but can the Gospel do so? Does the Gospel affect your decision-making when it comes time to vote or to be politically active? How does your faith affect how you see and react to the world around you? What kind of connections do you make between your understanding of the Gospel and the politics of our society? These are questions I think we all need to wrestle with – and not just when it comes time to vote.



## **NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT (NCD) TASK FORCE TO REVIEW DREAMS FROM SUMMER SUPPERS**

Thanks to everyone that participated in one of the Summer Supper gatherings held over the past few months. Your candid input is greatly appreciated! The NCD task force will be meeting in early November to review this input and work towards a revised mission statement and recommendations for Council and the Congregation. You can still play a part in helping us listen to the Spirit's direction for CGS by keeping the Task Force in your prayers. And, if you'd like to be part of this task force, please contact Theo Olson ([tjo\\_range@yahoo.com](mailto:tjo_range@yahoo.com)).



Congregational  
**MEETING**

## **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING—NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>**

On Sunday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. there will be a congregational meeting in the Great Hall. The major agenda items are presentation and discussion of a draft budget for 2011, and the election of council members.

In December the terms of office end for council members Shirley Woods, Marty Olson, Kris Kothe, and Randy Presuhn.

The Nominating Committee (Paul Jensen, Ellen Berg, Beate Teufel, Esther Rechenmacher, Betty Stromfeld, and Paul Thomas) elected by the congregation last January has identified four candidates willing to stand for election to those seats: Linda Sparling, Peter Moen, Chelsea Mathis, and Wanda Roszel. The term of office will be from January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013. Next month's Good News will tell you more about each of these candidates.

Don't forget to offer a word of appreciation to the outgoing council members and the nominating committee, and a word of encouragement to those willing to serve our congregation in the coming years!



## **SOCIAL ACTION UPDATE**

The holiday season is quickly creeping up on us. We would like to encourage donating turkeys to Martha's Kitchen for Thanksgiving. They feed many hungry people Thanksgiving dinner. When I talked to them they said they would prefer to receive turkeys the week before Thanksgiving when possible. The week of November 15 they are open Monday through Friday 5:30 am to 5:30 pm. Their address is 311 Willow Street. This year due to logistics and storage we would like those of you who are able to take your donation directly to Martha's Kitchen. If you are unable to do this you can bring the turkey to the church office on Tuesday November 16 by noon and we will take them.

This year we will have some alternative Christmas gifts available from Palestine. We have ordered some items from The Cave Arts and Crafts. They make traditional handcrafts and provide economic and cultural livelihood for Palestinian women. They are a part of the International Center of Bethlehem started in 1994 as an outreach of Christmas Lutheran Church. It is an ecumenical institution serving the whole community committed to empower and create life in the midst of despair and to continue to call for justice and reconciliation in the midst of violence. We also have taken some orders for olive oil with hand blown bottles from Hebron. This oil is from olives harvested on land on the Mount of Olives owned by Lutheran World Federation. The donation for the oil goes to LWF for the Augusta Victoria Hospital, which provides a large amount of charity care and other projects of the LWF Jerusalem program. I think these will provide some meaningful choices for Christmas gifts. We hope to have them available the Sunday after Thanksgiving November 28.

This year The Lord's Pantry has asked us to provide gifts for six year old boys and girls. We will have cards available on the Christmas giving tree in the narthex in December. The Lord's Pantry is located at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in east San Jose. They provide food to 500 families in the community for Christmas as well as Christmas gifts for children up to 13 years of age. We will have a list of needed food in December's Good News.

## **Pueblo de Dios** 2<sup>ND</sup> MILE GIVING FOR NOVEMBER IS PUEBLO DE DIOS

2nd Mile Giving for November is Pueblo de Dios. It is the mission of Pueblo de Dios to Seek, Invite, and make Disciples of Christ. We have been a mission church of two Lutheran churches for the past 5 years: Zion and Prince of Peace. We are actively becoming a financially self-sustaining body of believers. It is our goal to plant 5 new Spanish Speaking churches in the Northern California area within the next 7 years. It is impressed upon every member of Pueblo de Dios to recognize the Lutheran heritage of our theology that we are saved by Faith and the Grace of God. This enables us to have an identity through Christ.

## **SOLAR PANEL SYSTEM**

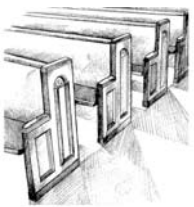
Solar City will finally begin working on the installation of our new solar system on November 1. Installation will take about 2 weeks and then soon, we shall be up and running.



## FREE ORGAN MASTERS CONCERT

The San Jose Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is in existence to promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles, to encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music, and to provide a forum for mutual support, inspiration, education and certification of Guild members.

The next event is on November 21, at 3 pm when Joyce Rhodes will present a recital (free admission) at Stone Church of Willow Glen-located at 1937 Lincoln Ave, San Jose, CA. For further information about the AGO, contact Richard Coulter, 408-395-0909.



## News from the Pews **NEWS FROM THE PEWS**

Welcome back to **Pastor, Matthew and Randy** from their trip to China. Randy has already begun processing the many photos and uploading them to facebook. Also welcome back to **Jean Jensen** from her sojourn to Italy. Be sure to ask her about it. It seems the **Hargens** are finally home to stay (at least for now), after their many travels this summer.

## *★ Thank You! ★* **THANK YOU! ★ TO MY CGS FAMILY**

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your showering of wonderful gifts for my daughter, Kariel. Every day, I use your gifts and am reminded of what a caring and loving family you are. The handmade stitches of the blankets and quilts and garments are awesome and I treasure them. I would also like to thank those who gave gift cards which has supplied Kariel with diapers and formula. Thank you for the special prayers and blessings offered for both of us.

I hope to bring Kariel to Church soon to meet you. So far she has been keeping me on a pretty sleepless schedule. I am so grateful and I appreciate everything that has been given. Thank you so much!

*Gabi*

## *★ Thank You! ★* **THANK YOU! ★ DEAR PASTOR BEA AND CGS FAMILY,**

Dio and I want to extend our sincere gratitude and thanks for all the prayers and encouragement over these past several months. The experience has been a lesson in faith, trust and patience as the doctors try to figure out what is going on. While there are still no definitive answers, they have been able to figure out what isn't wrong, so that is helpful. Thankfully, I am feeling stronger each day. Thank you all again for all the ways you

have ministered to us through your kind wishes, visits, prayers, and comments. They have been important to us over these months of uncertainty. We are very blessed to be part of a caring church community.

Sincerely,  
*Theo Olson & Dio Dandoy*



## **THE LAND CALLED HOLY**

Many of you have learned that before moving to San Jose, I served for a year with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Young Adult in Global Mission program. I was assigned to the Jerusalem and West Bank team and embarked on the journey of a lifetime; learning and living with the Christians of the Holy Land.

As we begin to think about the holidays, our focus turns once again to the little town of Bethlehem--a quiet, hilly village awaiting the birth of our Savior. If Mary and Joseph were to come upon Bethlehem today, the town they would see would be much different. The once agricultural hillsides that lined the historic road to Bethlehem have been cleared for settlement expansion. These massive, modern settlements are considered illegal under international law and cover nearly every hilltop. A 25-foot high concrete wall greets visitors as they approach Bethlehem. This illegal barrier, built by the Israeli government for 'security reasons', confines the town of Bethlehem, cutting it off from nearby Jerusalem, the surrounding villages, and much of the Palestinian farmland. Palestinians from Bethlehem wishing to cross into Jerusalem must obtain permission from Israel, wait in grueling lines, and frequently undergo interrogation and humiliation to cross the checkpoint. Muslims and Christians wishing to visit religious sites in Jerusalem or Bethlehem must also apply for permits, available only during holidays and on special occasions.

The list of illegal, violent, and unethical methods of occupation that Israeli imposes on Palestine is long--too long for this short article. The collective impact of these egregious acts could be described as suffocating. Yet through these dire circumstances, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land continues to shine as a beacon of hope, life, and faith. The vibrant ministries of the Lutheran church include 6 churches, schools, community services, and the continually growing International Center in Bethlehem (including The Cave gift shop, where the Alternative Christmas Fair items are coming from). This Christmas season, I encourage you to learn about the Christians of the Holy Land and support the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. More information can be found on their website: [www.elcjh.org](http://www.elcjh.org). May we pray for the day when this land called Holy lives in justice and peace.

*Chelsea*