

THE MOSAIC

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Pastoral Ponderings



More than a year ago, I discovered that the lighting in my house was dim. So dim that I could no longer see to do the needlework I've enjoyed for years. After a while, I realized I was having the same trouble reading, especially late at night or first thing in the morning. Of course, it was not the lighting; it was my eyes. I was in denial about the fact that I had reached the stage in life where my vision was in decline. Finally, I bought a pair of drugstore reading glasses. At first I just used them for needlework, then for reading when my eyes were tired, and now I use them regularly for those tasks. One day, maybe I will break down and get a pair of prescription glasses. You know, when I get to that stage in life.

Churches are not that different from people. Sometimes our vision dims and we don't realize it or we stay in denial about it. At our April discernment session, we looked at a model of the church life cycle. Most of us were in agreement that Emmanuel is at a stage where things are mostly going well and morale is high, but our vision is getting fuzzy. Our definition of vision, as it applies to church, includes a clear and passionate sense of identity, involving mission and purpose, core values and an articulated strategic journey. By the end of our conversation, most of us seemed to agree that we have a strong sense of identity and core values and probably a general sense of mission. What was less clear was the strategy of our journey. Church consultant George Bullard defines vision as "an understanding of the spiritual and strategic journey of God for a congregation over the next 7-9 years." In other words, who is God calling Emmanuel to reach with good news? How will we engage them? And who we will be, as a congregation, by the year 2020-2023?

This was an important start to our discernment process. If our vision is fuzzy, all the other tasks we do together are harder. More clarity will help us set priorities and make decisions about how to develop relationships and how to invest our resources for the work of God's kin-dom.

George Bullard has published 101 insights about congregational vision. His insight #1 is "Vision is a movement of God that is memorable rather than a statement of humankind that is memorized." As we seek to clarify our vision and to discern God's next call for us, think about the memorable ways you have seen God move within our community. Think about the excellent challenging future God is pulling us into. And tell someone else about it. Our next structured conversation will be May 11 at 5:30, with a potluck dinner. Your voice is important. Please make every effort to be there.

Blessings,
Kathy

Our healing service in April was focused on the needs of hungry and poor people in our country. Many of us signed a petition to President Obama and wrote letters to our congressional representatives advocating for government funding of anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs. Together we sent a total of 80 letters! (KD)



What difference does it make?

Dear Partners in Ministry,

My heartfelt gratitude to members and friends of Emmanuel Baptist for exercising your “advocacy arm” during Sunday worship on April 21st. I was truly moved as I looked around the sanctuary and saw so many of you thoughtfully writing to policy makers about your concern for the millions of people in the United States who don’t have enough resources to feed their families.

As much as hymns, scripture reading, prayers and preaching, -- advocacy, and sharing our love for the “least of these” is one more holy expression of communal worship. It is “doing” justice. Our voices and our pens make our concerns known. Legislators can’t read our minds so we must let them know what is important to us as people of faith. Your letters remind our elected officials that food is a constitutional and human right for all people.

At risk is SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) and other nutrition programs. SNAP is lauded as one of the most effective means for combatting hunger in our country. If SNAP funding is reduced it will mean up to a 50% increase in the number of households who will need to lean heavier on food pantries and soup kitchens to feed their families. FOCUS receives funding from both federal and state sources, about 67% of FOCUS food program costs.

Many of those programs are at risk in the ongoing budget debates. Our voices matter and we must challenge our elected leaders to make ending hunger a national priority and protect hungry people from bearing the burden of deficit reduction. Your letters, calls, emails and visits do make a difference. Legislative staff tally phone calls, read, and respond to your issues.

Advocacy, as much as volunteering, donating money, providing food or personal care items, is essential in our work to end hunger. Your letters count!

In Unity,
Rev. Deb Jameson, FOCUS Churches



*if we want to make
headway against hunger –
then we cannot neglect
the critical and crucial
role of government and
our critical and crucial
role as citizens*

You Make A Difference: Victories from Recent Offerings of Letters

2009

- Bipartisan bills were introduced in the House and Senate to begin the reforming the Foreign Assistance Act. President Barack Obama and the State Department ordered reviews to better coordinate how the United States delivers foreign assistance;
- Congress increased funding for programs that fight hunger and poverty worldwide.

2010

- Congress passed two bills for which we had been advocating: The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act—a five-year renewal of child nutrition programs—authorized an increase of \$4.5 billion over 10 years, the largest increase of its kind; The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010—a compromise tax package— included key tax credits for low-income working families. The law continued the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit improvements that were about to expire.

2011

- Bread for the World (Bread) continued to press forward with reforms to make U.S. foreign assistance more effective in reducing poverty;
- Bread worked to create a circle of protection around programs that are critical to hungry and poor people and prevented disproportionate cuts to programs affecting hungry and poor people;
- Bread successfully advocated for important reforms to U.S. foreign assistance and assisted in a House of Representatives bill that would promote better accountability, transparency, and efficiency in U.S. foreign assistance.

2012

- Bread called on Congress to maintain a circle of protection around funding for programs vital to hungry and poor people. The House passed proposals that would have cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) by nearly \$170 billion over the next decade. Yet, after two years of budget fights and over \$2 trillion of enacted deficit reduction, Congress made no major cuts to programs for hungry and poor people.
- Congress also extended for five years the current Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit benefits—assisting millions of low-income working families.
- In the final days of the 112th Congress, the House unanimously passed the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act, a bipartisan bill to improve efficiency among U.S. foreign aid programs. Unfortunately, the bill was held up in the Senate because of one senator who opposed it. We are optimistic that a similar bill will pass both the House and the Senate in the 113th Congress.



From the Benevolence Treasurer... As of the end of the first quarter in 2013, our Benevolence pledge income was \$5,864, or a little less than a third of what was budgeted for the year. Although this is encouraging it is important to note that some people pay their whole benevolence pledge at once, instead of distributing it over the year, so this rate of giving is unlikely to be matched in subsequent quarters.

Disbursements of budgeted benevolence funds totaled \$6,055 for the first quarter. For special offerings in the first quarter, the RMMO offering was \$606, America for Christ was \$684.63, and the Pennies for Haven collection was \$48.29.

Many thanks to the Emmanuel community for your generous support of missions. ~ Kathleen Moore



From Service to Others...



“Thanks” to our Volunteers

The Service to Others Commission would like to express appreciation to all who have helped prepare the meals which Emmanuel has supplied to the Interfaith Shelter and to the Emergency Overflow Shelter this winter. As you will read below, this outreach ministry is greatly appreciated by not only the shelter guests, but also the staff of these programs.

In addition to delivering occasional meals to Interfaith Shelter, we recently provided “Love Kits” for the Shelter guests. Due to your generosity, we were able to supply 50 kits this year. Thank you.

A Note from Bonnie St. Onge, Director of Development Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless

“...Thank you for your recent in-kind gift to Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless...With your help we are able to improve our programs and services and help people get back on their feet and into the community.

Donations of meals, clothing and household items are so helpful for our guests. Meals remind our guests that our community cares. Donations of items help our guests with their transition from emergency shelter to a new apartment... All of us here at Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless thank you for thinking of us when you make your donations...”

“Thank You” from Vernon Victorson at Capital Area Council of Churches

“...With your generous support (of the Emergency Overflow Shelter) we have provided meals, laundry and bathing accommodations, safe sleeping quarters, and resources to homeless men in the Albany area. The shelter will close for the season on May 1. We thank you for your support of this very important program...”



CROP Walk Happening this Month

Karen Green is Emmanuel’s recruiter for this year’s CROP Walk, which will be held on Sunday, May 6. The walk begins with registration at 12:30 and kicks off from First Lutheran Church (181 Western Ave) at 1:30. If you would like to participate as a walker, you may get your registration materials from Karen or if you wish to sponsor a walker, Karen can direct you to one of the Emmanuel team.

SAVE THE DATE...

Plan to join your Emmanuel friends at a summer ballgame watching the Tri-City Valley Cats play against the Staten Island Yankees on Sunday, **August 25**, 2013 at 5 pm in the Bruno Stadium at Hudson Valley Community College. This particular evening is a ‘Ladies Night Out’ and includes a ‘Diamond Dig’ at the end of the game. A local merchant donates a diamond ring, which is hidden in the dirt on the edges of the playing field. At the end of the game, women who have signed up to participate are admitted onto the field to dig up the ring. The evening will end with a fireworks display.



If we have interest enough, we can get discount tickets with a group of 20 or more for only \$5 for grandstand seats. Another option is a pack of 4 tickets for \$25 that also includes a hotdog and soda/person. Please let Barbara Lahut know if you are interested in being part of this group. She needs a head count as soon as possible, and payment by the church picnic on June 9th. You can notify her at church, call her home phone at 766-9333 or email her at blahut@nycap.rr.com

“Discernment” Conversation Continues

Every church has to continually ask itself if it is on the right track, where it is being led by the spirit and its vision in line with the examples of Jesus. Where are we in mission, discipleship, stewardship of our resources and building and how do we support each other in worship and prayer? Asking these questions is a discernment process and one that is different from those of corporations and businesses as we are driven by very different guidelines.

We will spend some important time in trying to grapple with discernment of our direction on **May 11**. We will use a process from the Quaker tradition of discernment to help us. According to Parker Palmer, discernment occurs with "simple but crucial conviction: each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems". We will begin the evening with a potluck supper at 5:30. Join us for an important session in the connection of our vision to the Holy Spirit. ~ Anthony Malone

Mark Your Calendar...

May 5 ~ Corporate Meeting
6 ~ Coordinating Council
5:30; Malone's
18 ~ Work Day
~ Springbrook Appreciation Day
19 ~ Diaconate
~ History Fair and Church Tour
Watch for details in Sunday bulletins!
27 ~ Church Office Closed

History Fair & Church Tour

Historic Cherry Hill, in partnership with the Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center and Historic Albany Foundation, will present the *14th Annual Albany History Fair* on Sunday, **May 19, from 1 to 5 p.m.** This year's fair theme is "Faith, Spirit, Community," and the event will be hosted by Westminster Presbyterian Church, located at 262 State Street in downtown Albany. Noted Albany historians will offer presentations, and a "Sacred Spaces Open House" will be held at several houses of worship located in and beyond the Center Square neighborhood. (Emmanuel is on the tour!) A scavenger hunt for families and a variety of displays will also be featured. Admission is free. Watch for further information.



A Note from Sam Hill...

"I was overwhelmed by the support I received from the Emmanuel congregation during my recovery from heart surgery. The thoughts and prayers, calls, cards, and flowers (especially the Easter lily) were tremendously uplifting for me during this time. A special thank you to the Emmanuel children for their beautiful cards, pictures and notes. Thank you so much for your love and caring."

Remember the
Food Pantry

toothpaste



Deadline for the June issue of the MOSAIC is May 18.

Work Day Scheduled

Saturday, May 18

9 a.m. to Noon

Lunch will be provided.



Happy Birthday

Beth Malone
Aaron Neer
Henry Dodds
Lauren Neer
Amy Garner
Ericka Silverman
David Malone



11th
12th
16th
17th
18th
21st
23rd

If your birthday is not published in our monthly listing, please notify Dorothy at 465-5161.

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