

Voice of Grace

We are called to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments. We gather in Christian community for nurture and support. We are sent out in service to others.

A Monthly Newsletter

March 2015

The Gift That Lives On

Elizabeth Silance Ballard



Teddy Stallard certainly qualified as "one of the least:" disinterested in school; musty wrinkled clothes; hair never combed; one of those kids in school with a deadpan face; an expressionless, glassy, unfocused stare. When Miss Thompson spoke to Teddy, he always answered in monosyllables.

Unattractive, unmotivated, and distant, he was just plain hard to like.

Even though his teacher said she loved all in her class the same, down inside she wasn't being completely truthful. Whenever she marked Teddy's papers, she got a certain per-

Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.



Adult Forum & Sunday School 9:15 a.m.

verse pleasure out of putting Xs next to the wrong answers, and when she put the Fs at the top of the papers, she always did it with flair. She should have known better; she had Teddy's records and she knew more about him than she wanted to admit. The records read:

- 1st Grade: *Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but poor home situation.*
- 2nd Grade: *Teddy could do better. Mother is seriously ill. He receives little help at home.*
- 3rd Grade: *Teddy is a good boy but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.*
- 4th Grade: *Teddy is very slow, but well behaved. His father shows little interest.*

Christmas came and the boys and girls in Miss Thompson's class brought her Christmas presents. They piled their presents on her desk and crowded around to watch her open them. Among the presents, there was one from Teddy Stallard. She was surprised that he had brought her a gift, but he had. Teddy's gift was wrapped in brown paper and was held together with Scotch tape. On the paper were written the simple words, "For Miss Thompson from Teddy." When she opened Teddy's present, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with half the stones missing, and a bottle of cheap perfume.

The other boys and girls began to giggle and smirk over Teddy's gifts, but Miss Thompson at least had enough sense to silence them by immediately putting on the bracelet and putting some of the perfume on her wrist. Holding her wrist up for the other children to smell, she said, "Doesn't it smell lovely?" And the children, taking their cues from the teacher, readily agreed with "oohs" and "aahs."

At the end of the day, when school was over and the other children had left, Teddy lingered behind. He slowly came over to her desk and said softly, "Miss Thompson...Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother...and her bracelet looks real pretty on you, too. I'm glad you liked my presents." When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and asked God to forgive her.

The next day, when the children came to school, they were welcomed by a new teacher. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She was no longer just a teacher; she had become an agent of God. She was now a person committed to loving her children and doing things for them that would live on after her. She helped all the children, but especially the slow ones, and especially Teddy Stallard. By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He had caught up with most of the students, and was even ahead of some.

She didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then, one day, she received a note that read:

*Dear Miss Thompson:
I wanted you to be the first to know. I will be graduating second in my class.
Love, Teddy Stallard*

Four years later, another note came:

*Dear Miss Thompson:
They just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I liked it.
Love, Teddy Stallard*

And four years later:

*Dear Miss Thompson:"
As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the 27th to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now; Dad died last year.
Love, Teddy Stallard*

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat where Teddy's mother would have sat. She deserved to sit there; she had done something for Teddy that he could never forget.

[Editor's Note: The photograph on the cover is used to illustrate this story. The photo does not reflect actual people or names. Frequently the author of "The Gift That Lives On" is listed as unknown. The story was written by Elizabeth Silance Ballard in 1974 and first published in "Homelife" magazine. There are several reports on the web as well as in my source, "A Second Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul," stating that the author is unknown.

This is a work of fiction, and Elizabeth Ballard has been dismayed that some publications have implied it is a true story.]

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"If you're ever headed the wrong way in life, remember the road to Heaven allows U-turns."

**from *The Joyful Noiseletter*
Reprinted with permission of Bil Keane**

Synod Assembly Representatives Chosen

Synod Assembly Representative Chosen – At the January 25 congregational meeting, Marty Richards was elected as the female synod assembly representative and the Grace Lutheran Church Council was authorized to appoint a male representative. At its February meeting, the council appointed Jim Hladecek as the male representative. Jim, Marty and Pastor Coe will be representing Grace Lutheran at Synod Assembly in Vancouver, Washington, on May 15 and 16, 2015.



Mineral Rights Update

Mineral Rights Update – At the January 25 congregational meeting, the attendees considered five options for the future of the North Dakota mineral rights owned by Grace Lutheran. After significant discussion, 10% voted to sell the mineral rights, 37% voted to donate the mineral rights to an organization working for environmental protection, and 53% voted to lease the mineral rights to Land 4 Energy. Pursuant to this vote the lease was signed during the last week of January. Grace should receive the \$36,000 upfront lease payment in early April. The council has accepted applications from congregation members interested in serving on the committee to develop recommendations on how to use the \$36,000. The committee will make recommendations to the council, and the council will respond to the congregation at the June congregational meeting (if not earlier) with proposals for the use of the funds.

Easter Service Seaport Landing



Easter Afternoon Service at Seaport Landing – Grace Lutheran will offer an Easter Sunday worship service in the activity room of Seaport Landing at 1:15 p.m on Easter Sunday, April 5. Many congregation members live at Seaport Landing; this is an opportunity to serve those members as well as to reach out to the rest of the Seaport Landing community. Everyone is invited to come and join in worship.



This message is adapted from “Experiencing God” written by Megan Torgerson in the September 2012 issue of “Gather” magazine. It is submitted to the “Voice of Grace” by Roberta Bymers.

“Where is God in this?” This question used in spiritual reflection makes us look at the world around us, with all its chaos, frustration, joys, and happy accidents, and claim the places that God’s presence is truly manifest. As people of faith, we claim a God that creates, loves, redeems, and dwells in and through the fullness of this world and our lives.

Our claims and our experiences might not always line up, however. All too easily, we assume a lack of God’s presence and find ourselves feeling distant and attention-starved. If we never look for God, we’ll never learn to recognize God’s presence even as we’re surrounded by it. With blinders on, we shut out the awareness of what God might be doing in our lives, leaving us less attuned to God’s presence.

The more we ask ourselves where God is in every event, experience, and person, the more we see the richness of God’s presence in our lives. But we have to start somewhere, training ourselves to name and claim God’s presence when we see it.

“I’ve read the last
page of the Bible,
it’s all going to
turn out all right.”
— Billy Graham

A Letter from Saynozim Nurov

Saynozim Nurov, better known to our congregation as Sai, communicated with his past sponsors, Sharon and Mark Dembro. Sai shared wonderful news. He is a father. Sai, who is well known to the congregation, shared a bit of his life while he attended school here in the Pacific Northwest and lived for much of the time with the Dembros. Below is a portion of his letter to the Dembros.

“I brought Mavzuna and our little baby daughter to our house in Dahana (Tajikistan) after they were released from the maternity house. They are both doing well. As is the tradition here, the grandpa and grandma are usually asked to name their grandkids, so I have followed this tradition and asked them to find a name. They have been busy looking for a name, but still have not chosen one yet.

I came back to Dushanbe yesterday to continue my work,



since limited electricity and Internet access makes it hard to do it from Dahana. While in Dahana, we bought some more firewood to keep the house warm for the little one. Relatives and



neighbors keep coming to visit.

Things are going well overall while the parents continue to look for a suitable candidate for my brother, Jobir. The current

plan is, once he gets married, I will be off the hook and, at that time, could move to Dushanbe with my two girls — as long as the parents don't change their mind, which they seem to be doing quite often recently.

Our small business in Korvon is going well. My third brother, Yusuf, is currently on his winter break and will start his spring semester on Monday 9 February at the Medical University. My two youngest siblings, going to public school, started their spring semester last week. There is no activity on the farm, as we all are waiting for the spring.

I also recently accepted a part time job offer at the US Embassy here in Dushanbe to do synchronic translation for their meetings here and possibly some of their training projects around the country. It works great with my current schedule and my other job.

Please extend my greetings to everyone.”



Let's All Go
to the
Theater!

Ludlow Village Players presentation of *Night of January 16th* by Ayn Rand, is at the Port Ludlow Bay Club on Sunday, March 29, 2:00 p.m. We'll meet at church and carpool. Then, after the play, we'll go to Mary Ronen's home for discussion and ice cream.

Night of January 16th is a courtroom drama based on the true-life suicide of Ivar Kreuger, known as the Swedish Match King, in March 1932. His death resulted in the crash of a vast financial empire later found to be a gigantic fraud.

About the play: Karen Andre is personal secretary and mistress of Swedish business magnate Bjorn Faulkner and on trial for his murder. There are two endings to the play: one for the verdict of guilty and another for the verdict of not guilty. The play was written to be so balanced that either verdict is possible. The jury will be selected from the audience. To register for the jury drawing, be at the Bay Club when doors open one-half hour before show time. Names will be drawn for the jury at 1:45 p.m., and jury members will have front-row seating.

Tickets are \$15; contact Mary Ronen for more information and to purchase your ticket.

Women's Prison Worship



Grace Lutheran Church will be leading worship at the women's prison in Purdy on Sunday evening, March 29 (Palm Sunday). There will be two worship services involving a potential total of around 165 women. Grace will be providing music and worship leadership. Worship will take place roughly between 6:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Musicians needed! If you would be willing to help with music leadership, guitars, harmonicas, vocalists, tambourine, piano or anything else, we really need you! Music will be mostly contemporary or gospel since that will be more familiar to the inmates than traditional Lutheran hymns. We would love to have lots of people attend to support these women in their worship. It promises to be a powerful and moving experience. Please come and join us. We will figure out car pools as we get closer to the date. Your participation is important and makes a difference! This would be a wonderful Lenten discipline to step out and do something that might stretch us a little bit. Watch for a sign-up list in the fellowship hall.

[Editor's note: In researching a photo to illustrate this notice, I found that photos of the prison are a bit grim; high walls and barb wire are in evidence, yet, there was a building of magnificent beauty. It is pictured above complete with murals by Eric Grohe. For a closer look at his work, go to ericgrohemurals.com.]

Christmas Worship Survey Results

A Christmas Worship Survey was distributed to the congregation during January. Three questions were asked. Here are the results.

1. *If we decide to have one Christmas Eve service rather than two, what would your preferred time be for the single service?*

- 4:00 p.m. - 1
- 5:00 p.m. - 6
- 6:00 p.m. - 1
- 7:00 p.m. - 7

- 8:00 p.m. - 2
- 9:00 p.m. - 2
- 10:00 p.m. - 5
- 10:30 p.m. - 1

2. *How important is it to you that we continue to have two Christmas Eve services?*

- Very Important - 2
- Important - 2
- Neutral - 5
- Not Important - 17

3. *Do you want us to continue to offer a Christmas Day service?*

- Yes - 9
- No - 17

The worship committee is continuing to consider these results. This will likely be a topic of discussion at our June congregational meeting. Thank you for your survey responses. We would welcome your continuing feedback on the best way to structure Christmas services.

News from the ELCA

CHICAGO (ELCA) – The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), expressed her condolences and offered support and prayer to the "Coptic Church family" following the news of the martyrdom of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya at the hands of ISIS terrorists.

"May they find eternal rest, and may their loved ones experience God's comfort and peace in this time of mourning," wrote Eaton in a Feb. 19 letter to His Grace Bishop Serapion of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles.

"Even in the brutality of their tragic deaths, they remained steadfast witnesses to Jesus Christ in a world consumed with hatred and violence," she said. "It is important that we remember the powerful sacrifices our brothers and sisters in the faith make daily for the sake of the gospel."

"Pope Francis has described the challenge before us as 'the ecumenism of blood.' Twenty-one new brothers have been added to this great cloud of witnesses, and we mourn," wrote Eaton, who recently returned from a two-week ecumenical pilgrimage, which included a visit to Rome.

"The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will continue to hold these martyrs in our prayers, even as we ask God to redeem those who have fallen prey to the evils of terrorism. We will also pray for those in your community in the United States and worldwide who live in fear and despair. We will lift you up to God, asking for your continued strength and wisdom, as you lead God's people in this time of turmoil," Eaton wrote.



Pastor's Message: "An Invitation to a Holy Lent"

Lent is the 40-day liturgical season preceding Easter. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends in the middle of the Easter Vigil. The forty days brings to mind Jesus' forty days fasting in the wilderness and the Israelites forty years of wandering in the desert. The

liturgical color for Lent is purple, the royal color, because we are preparing for the King.

Originally, the word "lent" was simply the name for the season between winter and summer. The German and Dutch languages have similar words for this season. The church's observance of preparation for Easter occurred during this season and gradually took on the name.

Traditionally, Lent is a time of fasting, repentance and worship. Fasting can be the sacrifice of giving up anything (food, television, Starbucks or almost anything else) and, instead, dedicating the time, money, or energy that is saved to God or God's work. An example might be to give up 30 minutes of television, instead spending that time in prayer and Bible reading. Or one might skip a meal and give the money saved to the food bank.

At our Ash Wednesday service, we were invited to the discipline of a holy Lent. Henri Nouwen in his book, *Bread for the Journey*, describes discipline as follows: "Discipline is the creation of boundaries that keep time and space open for God—a time and place where God's gracious presence can be acknowledged and responded to." I like that definition, and I think it is something we can actually try to do during Lent. Carve out some time and space that is reserved for just God and us. That isn't a dreary burden, that is a gift!

We want to help you carve out that time to renew your relationship with the God who loves you more than you can imagine. Here are some Lenten resources that you might consider:

- **Lenten Prayer Resources booklet** – available in fellowship hall
- **Additional Prayer Resources** single page sheet – available in fellowship hall
- **Lenten Prayer Retreat** – Saturday, March 7, 9:00 a.m. – Noon.
- **Soup Suppers and Holden Evening Prayer** – Wednesdays beginning Feb. 25 and continuing through March 25. Soup Supper at 6:00 p.m., Holden Evening Prayer at 7:00 p.m.
- **Worship at women's prison in Purdy** – Come and help lead and participate in worship at the women's correctional center on Palm Sunday evening, March 29. More information available in the fellowship hall.

Lent is a gift! It is a gift of time and a gift of encouragement to try out a new spiritual discipline for six weeks. If it turns out you don't like what you've tried, you can drop it at the end of Lent. But if you find it life-giving and fulfilling, what a wonderful gift you will have received. Receive this gift. Take a chance, be bold, try something you have never tried before. Go for it! God wants nothing more than for you to know Him more closely, and this is an opportunity to do just that. May God bless you with a holy Lent.

*God Bless,
Pastor Coe*

President's Message: *"Building the Sanctuary"*



The story is a dramatic one, starting in slavery in Egypt, then, moving on through miracle after miracle in a 40-year pilgrimage toward the Promised Land. It is a story of faith but also the folly of man. In Exodus, we read how God liberates his chosen people from slavery through the leadership of Moses. God establishes a covenant with his people; the pilgrimage pauses in the Sinai desert as God summons Moses to Mount Sinai to receive and deliver the Ten Commandments to his people. After Moses' absence of 40 days, though, the impatient Israelites, having abandoned their faith in the lapse of time, disobeyed God, broke God's covenant, reverted to wild paganism and replaced the one True God with idol worship of a golden calf.

God's wrath burned hot against his stiff-necked people, but Moses implores God, "Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people," (Ex32:12) and he persuades God to change his mind. God reestablishes his Covenant with his people who repent, change their behavior, embrace God's covenant and obey His instructions. God provides, through Moses, very specific, detailed instructions on how the people are to live within their new Covenant. One task of utmost importance for the Israelites is the preparation of the portable holy tabernacle (sanctuary) so that the God of Heaven may reside on earth among them.

While rereading Exodus and noting the specificity of God's instructions to Moses, I was impressed with the level of detail and the precise measurements that Moses was to implement in the Tabernacle's creation: the Ark (which would hold the Covenant) tapestries and framing for the Sanctuary. Then, further reading about the chest, table, lampstand, altars, washbasin and even the courtyard became overwhelming.

God's instructions continued, chapter after chapter, with detailed instructions for the vestments, the Ephod, Breastpiece, Robe and even the undergarments, Moses had an enormous amount of information to absorb. I am just covering the surface of God's instructions. God even described how the cloth should be woven, what colors and how jewels should be attached and how the artwork should look. The total amount of gold used in the construction of the sanctuary was 6,437 pounds. There were three and one-quarter tons of silver and 4,522 pounds of bronze. All of this was eagerly contributed by the Israelites in free-will offerings. The offerings came so freely that Moses had to tell the Israelites to stop giving because there was more than enough.

The work was completed and God was pleased. What Moses and the Israelites accomplished out in the desert with only the tools and equipment they took with them (too early for power tools!) on their hastily assembled pilgrimage was surely a miracle. It makes me wonder how all the people with the right skills, with the right equipment, were in the right place at the right time.

As I think about that, it becomes apparent that the answer is in community. Look around us...at our community. Grace Lutheran Church is composed of a congregation that did something similar as that which took place in Exodus (not the disobedience element!) Our Grace forebears did not have to part the waters or flee the Egyptians, but they did accomplish some amazing things. Our original congregation members rolled up their sleeves, provided free-will offerings and built our church to some rather exacting standards. Ours is a church built with the sweat labor of the members of our congregation. The right people at the right time within our community responded to God's will. Over the years, changes and modifications resulted in the addition of the youth annex, parsonage and other enhancements. We have enjoyed the benefit of the finest musicians, artists, writers and members with other skills that have provided great benefit to our congregational community. God did not stop with the Israelites, God is continuing his work with us all.

Thanks Be to God!

Voice of Grace: World Tour

Vacation time is beginning...or some of us simply wanted to find some sun. Featured below are Pastor Coe Hutchison and Janet enjoying themselves with their copy of the *Voice of Grace*



while spending time in Hawaii.

"What," one may ask, "happens at church when the pastor is away?" The council knew immediately what to do. You can see that in the upper right photo; it's Party Time!

Below, left, Mark and Linda

Hinkie are shown in Mexico, while Jim and Jeni Little are in Hawaii soaking up the rays.



The council enjoys Party time!

A New Beginning

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him.

The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost."

God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this?"

Let's say we have a man-making contest. To which the scientist replied, "Okay, great!" But God added, "Now, we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam."

The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt.

God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt!"

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