

Community of Christ

Fairbanks Branch Happenings

October 19, 2005

The theme for this Sunday is "Love One, Love All"

**All
Living in
Love**

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Matthew 7:1-3

"My commandment is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one like this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." (I John 4:7-9)

THE POWER OF LOVE

In his novel *The Brothers Karamazov* the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky relates a moving story of a Russian village and the daily lives of those who live there. In one moving scene a woman goes to talk with a holy man about her problems with faith. "What if I've been believing all my life, and when I come to die there is nothing but Burdocks growing over my grave? ... How can I prove it? How can I convince myself?"

The holy man answer thinks – then responds:

"By the experience of active love. Insofar as you advance in active love, you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of the soul."

The power of active love- That is what our faith is all about – the power of God's active love in our lives – and the power of God's call to each of us to have active love for all people. The power of active love- The 10 Commandments we heard again moments ago have become "hot potatoes" lately – with groups forming to bring them back into the public life – and other groups against such public show of religion. From courthouses in Alabama to Washington state there are battles over the public display of the 10 Commandments.

What should we make of – and how should we consider – the 10 Commandments? As laws written in stone by God -- who will strike us down if we attempt to break them? As 10 laws meant to do away with any fun we might have -- or think about having -- handed down to us by a God who is a killjoy - - continually spouting forth a litany of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"? As 10 laws that restrict what we do -- handed down to us by a God who is only interested in limiting our actions? Or -- as 10 rules to closely follow - - to keep track of our obedience to - - and to take great pride in our ability to follow - - while at the same time looking down on those we do not feel keep the Commandments as well as we think we do? Or – as a litmus test for political candidates – be for our side on the issue of the public display of the 10 Commandments – or we will not vote for you.

All these ways of interpreting the 10 Commandments are fairly prevalent - - as rules that restrict

us or rules that cause us great pride when we feel we follow them better than others or as political litmus tests.

But - - wait a minute.

Are there other options for interpreting the 10 Commandments - - and other options for visualizing God? Surely there must be.

Let's take another look at God giving the 10 Commandments to the Israelites and see if we can come up with another way to interpret them -- and another way to visualize God. God had just freed the people of Israel from slavery. Through Moses God had worked miracles and mighty deeds that made clear God's will for freedom for God's people. They had been freed by God - but now what? Should their freedom change how they live? Are they to live any differently because they have been freed from slavery by God? Certainly.

The glorious fact that they had been freed from slavery by the power of God was to be the deciding factor in how they lived. They were to live differently from others -- because God had blessed them with their freedom. But - - how were they to live differently? At Mt. Siani they found out. In the fire and the smoke and the quaking of that holy mountain they found out how God wanted them to live. They had been freed from slavery by their freeing - - life-giving God -- and now they were to have undivided loyalty to God - - a loyalty that would not allow them to try to manipulate God by carving idols -- or to take God's Holy name lightly - - and that would require them to take a Sabbath day of rest out of every 7 days to remember and worship God. But -- because God had freed them - - they were also to live in a special relationship with others - - honoring their parents -- refraining from murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting -- or doing anything else that might keep them from living in this special relationship with God and others.

The 10 Commandments were indeed commandments - - but they were not Commandments that restricted what the people could and could not do as much as it freed them to love - - to love God and to love others -- to honor and respect and worship God and to treat others with love and honor and respect.

The 10 Commandments are commandments to love God and to love others. They are not commandments to restrict us or make us feel proud -- they are instead commandments to love.

We are commanded to love.

We can feel the power of God's love in our lives -- and share God's love with others in powerful, active ways.

The 10 Commandments are all about the power of God's love. Jesus understood what the 10 Commandments were all about. When he confronted the Jewish leaders who for centuries had thought that they were better than all others -- and who used the Commandments as a measuring stick to see how much better they were than others -- he made it plain that just having the Commandments -- just being in the vineyard -- is not enough for the Kingdom of God. Unless you let the Commandments lead you to be open to God -- loving and respecting God and loving and respecting all people -- you are not living in the ways God calls you to live -- no matter how good a person you are if you do not let God lead you to love for Him and others -- you are not living in the ways of God. If you do not realize the power of God's love -- let the power of God's love change your life -- and share the power of God's love with others -- you are not living in God's ways.

Living in God's ways is not so much about strict obedience as much as it is about the power of love. The tenants in Jesus' parable thought they had it made there in the vineyard -- so much so they did not care about the landlord servants or his son. They didn't let the power of having the vineyard change them and their attitudes towards the landlord. Having the love of God -- having salvation -- should change us -- the powerful love of God should change us -- and it should bring about a change in our attitudes -- in our devotion to God -- in the love we have and share with others.

That's the power of God's love It can change who we are It can change how we relate to God and others

That's what the 10 Commandments are all about -- the power of love

Paul finally understood this. He thought his life was perfect until he met Jesus -- and saw just how imperfect he was. Then he began striving to live in love -- the power of love -- love for God -- and love for others. He finally discovered that his life was not meant to be spent feeling superior to others -- but loving others. Those 10 Commandments he had taken such great pride in were actually commandments to love God -- and to love others. He finally experienced -- and committed himself to sharing -- the power of God's love.

I can experience and share God's active, powerful love with the world. So can you
We can experience and share God's active, powerful love with others. This is not easy. Paul understood how difficult it was -- and yet he let God strengthen him as he strove to share God's love with others. It is only when we let God's love take root in us that we can truly love others. Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart -- soul -- mind -- and strength -- and to love others as yourself.

There is an ancient monastic saying which is printed on your bulletin cover for today:
We have thrown down a light burden, which is the reprehending of our own selves, and we have chosen instead to bear a heavy burden, by justifying our own selves and condemning others.

When we choose to follow the power of God's great love -- sharing His love with each other and others -- God strengthens us to live by the power of His love. When we choose to try to justify ourselves -- feel superior to others -- and judge others instead of loving them as God does and as God calls on us to do -- we are weakened by our own feelings of hatred and jealousy.

So -- the question for us is:
How much do we love?
How much do we love God?
How much do we love others?
Do we let the active, life changing love of God work in your lives?
Do our actions show God's active, life changing love to others?
The real question, though, is for you:
How much do you love?
How much do you love God?
How much do you love others?
Do you let the active, life changing love of God work in your life?
Do your actions show God's active, life changing love to others?

Friends – as you partake of the Sacrament in a few moments, learn once again what it means to love.

As you partake of the bread and cup, remember the love of God – let that love touch you in a new way – and commit yourself to sharing the active, powerful love of God with others. Learn again what it means to be open to God in your life and to be open to others. Learn again what it means to be loved by a gracious God -- who can lead us to love Him and the world.

Use this time in this place - - around this table with these people -- to reflect on how well you show a love for God and others in your life -- and use this Sacrament to strengthen your love for God and for the world.

Learn to not take up the burden of feeling superior to others or judging others – but to take on the actions of love and joy and peace.

Learn again to let God’s love move in you and change your life.

Learn again the power of God’s active love and how to share that with others.

Learn again the power of love.

AMEN

Excerpted from revbillsermons.blogspot.com - Saturday, October 01, 2005

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Many **thanks go** out to those that participated in the dinner for the **HOT volunteers** held last Saturday. A good time was had as all participated in the fellowship and in cheering the Astros on to a victory.

Ruth Chatburn presented the quiet bags to the children of the congregation last Sunday. Thank you; Ruth and Gary for doing such a great job in assembling these bags. The quiet bags will be kept in the back of the sanctuary so that the children can pick one up on their way into the service.

Vibrant Witness Workshop sign up is underway. Please sign up as soon as possible so that we can order sufficient materials for the class. Sign up sheet will be on bulletin board. As a congregation we are trying to focus on outreach, this seminar should be a great opportunity to obtain or hone outreach skills. Please plan on attending and listening to John Wight – President of the Seventy. This is a Temple School class. Please bring a dessert to share.

Just a reminder that ongoing volunteer, cleanup and repair work is needed in the Beaumont area. And soon it will be needed in Lake Charles as well. The first of the Rita evacuees are returning home to Lake Charles. **Joanne Chapman is still taking names for volunteer work.** Contact Joanne directly if you are interested. This is a good outreach opportunity for Fairbanks.

As a congregation, we have **committed to** being intentional about including prayer for **Outreach** as an element of each service. We would like to give everyone an opportunity to participate. The Outreach Prayer could be one that asks God to open the hearts of the Congregation so that their hearts and minds can be filled with a desire to bring others into a relationship with the Divine. It could express a desire to become aware of the people in our every day lives who do not now have a relationship with the God. The Outreach Prayer might express a desire to discern the Holy Spirit to help each member of the Congregation grow in the desire to bring Fairbanks Happenings

October 19, 2005

others to the Christ. It could also contain a request that God would convict the Congregation of where they fall short in their Spiritual walk so that they can be better witnesses for Jesus Christ. It could also ask God to call to mind the correct words to use in witness so as to touch the life of another. If you would like to offer a prayer for Outreach please contact those listed on the Worship Schedule as presider. The Worship Schedule is posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.

Psalty's Funtastic Praise Party- Is still scheduled to take place on January 14 if all goes as planned. We still need children and some adults to help chaperone, build sets, and etc. We need one person from our congregation (one person from each congregation in the Mission Center) who would be willing to go over the music and the words with the youth at their congregation in-between meetings and rehearsals. Sherry will be hosting meetings one time a month or every 6 weeks to rehearse as a group and of course this would be more often the closer the program gets. Please contact Sherry Caesar at 281-345-8344 or 281-300-1225 if you have any questions. This should be a fun and great youth event that you will want to make sure that your youth participates in. Parent volunteers are always appreciated.

Saturday, October 22nd - 3rd Annual HOT Golf Classic at Clear Creek Golf Club 3902 Fellows Rd., Houston, TX 77047-6702 Who to Contact For More Information About: HOT – Carole Caesar (713)812-1741, The Tournament – Diane Wilson (281)337-7411, Clear Creek Golf Course – Pro Shop (713) 738-8000

October 22-23rd- Pasadena will be hosting its 50th Anniversary Celebration on October 22-23. The schedule is as follows:

Saturday

4:30 pm - Gather at the Church

5:00 pm - Dinner

6:30 pm - Sharing about the past

8:00 pm - Service of Reminiscing

Sunday

10:00 am - Worship Service (President Dave Schaal sharing the message)

12 Noon - light lunch (to eat there or on the road)

If you plan on coming or if you need housing, please notify us by one of the methods below. We are looking forward to a joyful time with all our church family through the years! Contact: Sarah Davis (281-426-4646 or peaceduck@ev1.net), Joyce Conrad (713-944-4020), Bea Diamond (713-477-9411), Karen Coit (281-458-0381) or rkcoit@hotmail.com).

October 23rd – 5:00 – Congregational Planning Meeting - Pizza will be served. Please bring drinks to share. Come join and participate in planning future events and direction of your congregation.

November 5th - 6:00 – Turkey Fry at the Church. Plan to attend this evening of fun. Please RSVP to Margie White and plan on bringing a side dish to share.

November 12th 9:00-5:00 and November 13th 9:00 - 11:00 - John Wight, President of the Seventy and assigned to our Mission Center, will present a workshop on a “Vibrant Witness” at Fairbanks. There will be a small supply fee – approximately \$15 - \$20 payable on the day of the workshop. The Bauman Road Congregation will be serving a meal at lunch time as a fundraiser.

Please plan on staying and sharing a meal with John and support the Bauman Road Congregation. We will need an approximate count of attendees so that there will be sufficient supplies. This is a Temple School class. Please bring a dessert to share.

November 13th – John Wight will deliver the Message at Fairbanks during the 11:00 worship service.

November 13th – Potluck after the worship service.

See the calendar on bulletin board in the fellowship hall for upcoming events at Fairbanks and Mission Center events. September has been posted.

The worship and nursery schedules have been posted in the family center for October through December, 2005. Please check these.

Nursery Schedule:

October 23rd- Paul and Angela Baird

October 30th – Andrea Watson and Alex Turner

November 6th – Steve and Beth Herold

November 13th – Gary & Ruth Chatburn

November 20th- Sherry & Christy Caesar

November 27th – Jeff and Rena Whitehall

December 4th – Sue and Alex Turner

December 11th – Paul and Angela Baird

December 18th – Dave and Andrea Watson

December 25th – No Nursery

We need volunteers for the nursery. Please see Andrea Watson.

Please review the prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. If you have added someone to the list please update Leo Caesar with any new information and current status of the prayer concern. Please contact Leo Caesar if you wish to add/remove someone from the list.

Calendar & Mission Center News:

The Coastal Bend Mission Center is proud to announce that the Coastal Bend web site is up and running! You can visit the site at www.coastalbendmc.org

October 23rd – Planning Meeting – Fairbanks – Pizza Provided – 5:00 Bring drinks

Oct 21 – 23rd – Sionito Work Party - Direct questions to Tim Everett-Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com

Oct 22nd – HOT Golf Tournament

Oct 23rd – HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY – PASADENA CONGREGATION

Oct 28 -30th – World Religions Retreat with J.W. Winland – Pasadena Congregation

Nov 5th – 6:00 - Turkey Fry dinner at Fairbanks

Nov 11 – 13th – Sionito Work Party -Direct questions to Tim Everett- Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com

Nov 12 – 13th – Vibrant Witness Workshop- Fairbanks Congregation- John Wight

Dec 9 – 11th Sionito Work Party- Direct questions to Tim Everett- Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com

Feb 10-12th 2006- Silent Retreat at Cenacle House

The following is a schedule of those that are currently scheduled to deliver the message for the 4th quarter. This is not the “official list” and is for informational purposes only. Please refer to the worship schedule in the fellowship hall for changes.

October 23rd – Ruth Chatburn

October 30th – Leo & Carole Caesar

November 6th – David Romig
November 13th – John Reimer
November 20th- Gary Chatburn
November 27th – David Watson
December 4th- Doug White
December 11th- Sue Turner
December 18th – Leo & Carole Caesar
December 25th- John Reimer

Encounter World Religions Retreat - Friday, **October 28** – Sunday, **October 30**- 7p Friday, 9-6 Saturday, 9 – noon Sunday- **Pasadena** Community of Christ (713) 473-0608 - 1118 Pasadena Blvd - Pasadena, TX 77506 - Contact: Mark Euritt - 512-567-1581, meuritt@austin.rr.com

Through varied, thought-provoking presentations and activities this retreat introduces you to the values, stories and traditions of the diverse religious-cultural groups that comprise the North American mosaic. You will experience world religions in a way that textbooks cannot convey and which will allow fear and misunderstanding to melt away.

JW Windland, Toronto, Canada JW is a comparative mythologist and founder of the ENCOUNTER WORLD RELIGIONS CENTRE. For the past thirty years, JW has been passionately involved in experiencing the world religions first hand. In addition to his academic background in religious studies, JW attends mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras, churches and temples on a regular basis as a testimony to his interest and love for the world religions. This background gives JW a perspective that is unique and tangible. He has established genuine friendships in these religious-cultural groups, has joined in their rituals and has introduced thousands of people to these diverse communities. He is an expert in interreligious dialogue and in creating comfort across religious and cultural barriers. He brings a familiarity and a deep knowledge of the diverse communities and traditions that make up the North American mosaic. (<http://www.worldreligions.ca/>)

As noted in the Coastal Bend Calendar President of Seventy John Wight will be in our Mission Center **November 12-13** to facilitate a Workshop. The Workshop is "**Vibrant Witness: Who Me?**" The **Fairbanks** Congregation in Houston has graciously agreed to host this event. Please plan on attending!

February 10-12, 2006 - Annual Silent Retreat at The Cenacle Retreat House

420 N. Kirkwood, Houston, TX 77079 Sponsored by Live Oak –Marlene Krueger - Retreat Spiritual Director. Those interested are invited to participate in this opportunity to experience the Spirit of God in new ways. This will be a silent retreat except for discussion of experiences during a Saturday evening activity. Some direction will be given on how to direct your thoughts, but the most important thing is that you allow the Holy Spirit to direct you. You may bring inspirational reading materials, Bibles, journals, or other materials that you feel will help you to be in a deeper relationship with God as you meditate during the day. There is an outdoor labyrinth for meditation. Spiritual Directors from the Cenacle will be on hand for individual spiritual counseling to those desiring and administration will also be available. A free yoga class and/or massage therapy (\$35/half hour) may be provided based on advanced interest. Silence is sometimes a difficult thing for us to do in this busy world of ours and it can be a little scary. The reward can be a quiet reflective time between you and God. You can use the silence to listen for that still small voice or to rest in the Lord. The weekend will be what you make of it and can be a

powerful tool for healing and restoring the spirit, if that is what you seek. Check-in will be at 7:15 PM on Friday, February 10th and the retreat will conclude with a Sunday morning service followed by lunch.

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The cost of \$130 per person includes a private bedroom with lavatory, community toilets and showers, and all meals, beginning Saturday breakfast. Towels and bedding are provided.

Number included in this registration: Female ____ Male ____

Interests: Yoga ____ Massage Therapy ____ (\$35/half hour; paid separately to therapist)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State and zip: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Please complete the lower portion of this form and send it by January 6, 2006 to:

Community of Christ, P.O. Box 16685, Sugar Land, TX 77496-6685.

Payment should be by check payable to Community of Christ. Please send payment with the registration form. If you have any questions, please contact Marlene by phone at 970-577-0657 or email: markru_99@yahoo.com

I will be sending out periodic e-mails letting everyone know what is “HAPPENING” at Fairbanks. Please let me know if your e-mail or other contact information changes.

Mark your calendars and **participate, enjoy, reach out!!!!!!**I pray that everyone have a safe and happy week.

Martha Romig