

# Good News



Community Presbyterian Church

February, 2009

## **From the Pastor**

Our adult Sunday school class is having a good time with Bible 101. People who previously hadn't studied the Bible very much are learning to find their way around and to put what they read into context. It is a great joy for me when people actually start reading and studying the Scriptures.

So this article is an encouragement to each of you to read the Bible. But it starts from an unusual place: President Obama's Inaugural Address.

About halfway into his address President Obama said, "What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply." He then gave three examples of those stale political arguments: "whether our government is too big or too small," "whether the market is a force for good or ill," and "We reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals."

I believe that what our president said about politics also applies to religion. Let me change just one word in the above sentence, "What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale theological arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply."

Let me give you an example of one of those arguments: The Sunday before last, while Nancy was at her conference in Indian Wells, I went to Sunday school at Palm Desert Presbyterian Church. The teacher, a messianic Jewish rabbi, began the lesson with a clever and entertaining defense of Calvinism, while at the same time poking fun at those of the Arminian persuasion. Although the presentation was fresh, the argument is

stale. (If you don't know the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism you are probably a good example of how irrelevant this distinction has become.)

A few years ago, a devout Christian friend of mine asked me the difference between Presbyterians and Methodists and I brought up Calvin and Arminius. Although she had been reading and studying her Bible daily and had been going to church every Sunday for years, she had no clue what I was talking about. Neither did she have any interest in what I was trying to explain.

I am convinced that Christianity has been consumed by as many stale arguments as American politics. And I think that the time and energy we have spent defending our positions and attacking the positions of others has kept us from the important work of introducing others to Jesus Christ and working together for a better world.

In religion, as in politics, the ground has shifted beneath our feet. So what are we to do?

As for me, I'm going to listen to Jesus:

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

It's time to let go of our stale theological arguments and get back to the Bible, big time!

*Pastor Mark*

Ash  
Wednesday

February 25

World Famous Potato Bar — 6:00 PM

Service of Ashes — 7:00 PM

**Birthdays**

- 1 Madeleine & Jacqueline  
Linville
- 4 P.J. Hetland
- 9 David Todd
- 27 Jim Conrad  
Heather McDonald



**Anniversaries**

- 13 Blair & Jessica Wallace
- 14 Dottie & LeRoy Gray
- 20 John & Alice Schlak
- 24 Aaron & Magali Hollingsworth

**Financial Report**

December income	\$ 4,381.54
December expenses	\$ 5,809.61
Checking acct. balance	(\$ 1051.68)



**A Note of Thanks**

from Pastor Mark & Nancy

We want to thank the congregation for the monetary gift we received at the Christmas Dinner. We used it to help install a new sink in our kitchen. It is easier to use and looks great.

Thank you!



***“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Hebrews 11:1***

Generally this column is dedicated to a health topic from the national observances listing. This month I feel a nudge to address a real-time concern, the anxiety of our time.

You already know the bad news: millions of Americans losing their jobs; (Merced County’s unemployment rate is highest in our area, over 15%), the worst drought in California’s history; unprecedented national and state government budget deficits, all affecting us locally. We are in 2 wars and we see films of other areas of violence and genocide and famine in our world. Global warming is a huge and real crisis (see drought listed above).

In our Church family many of us are facing crises of illness and grief and financial stress. Gustine’s downtown, as well as our residential streets, reflects empty businesses and houses. Just this morning a neighbor family packed up a moving truck for their third time; the husband laid off, and huge medical bills for their son causing them to lose their home. The uncertainty surrounding us is real and palpable. The cumulative weight of all this anxiety can weigh down our spirits as well as affect our health. It’s tempting to pull up the covers and hide on these foggy days!!

One friend at work who is a Mormon keeps warning the rest of us to save up food supplies. On the radio today I heard a man who took money from his bank and put it in an undisclosed place-(under his mattress??)

As Christians, how are we to respond? Faith is our solid ground. Knowing for sure in our heart of hearts that God will never leave us or forsake us, come good or bad, life or even death, is a real life-line we can cling to through all of the storms, come what may. That is what I am sure and certain of,

through the gift of faith in and from Jesus and from surviving tough times in the past.

Having a grateful heart is like opening up a stale room to a clean breeze and sunshine. Starting the day with thanks sweeps the fear and anxiety out the door. No matter what our circumstance we can thank God for being there with us. That’s a good start!

Sure, it matters how we live our lives. We’re not to squander the blessings of our health or finances nor waste personal or natural resources. We can be less greedy in what we hoard and more willing to share with those in real need. We can be frugal in order to be generous. We can learn to be more responsible and less self-centered as individuals and as a nation. We can plant a garden and share its bounty. We can cook a meal and call someone to eat with us. And we can continue to contribute to Agape as it provides food to more local people in dire straits.

I have once more begun to embrace the concepts in the book Simple Abundance by Sarah Ban Breathnach. She quotes an article published in a women’s magazine in 1932 during the Great Depression, stating: “Where we were specialists in spending, we are becoming specialists in living”.

That sums it up so well. We can demonstrate calm to those around us by accepting the gift of each new day and **living** this day for all we’re worth! The troubles of this day are enough for this day. We don’t need to fret about those of tomorrow. The opportunities of this day are also enough. If we are open to the Holy Spirit’s leading, there is more than enough to do for our Lord and more than enough to share in any given day!!

Happy New Day! May we renew our faith and find peace in God’s abundance-

with love, Nancy

# COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

399 Sixth Street  
Gustine, CA 95322  
Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 12  
Gustine, CA 95322

Sunday School, 9:00 AM — Worship, 10:30 AM

Pastor — Mark Hollingsworth

Treasurer — Patricia Brown; Choir Director — Jim Conrad

Secretary — Med Hoover; Parish Nurse — Nancy Hollingsworth

Office Hours — 9:00-Noon, Wednesday, Thursday and by appointment

Telephone: (209) 854-6772; email: [pastormark@wefollowjesusingustine.org](mailto:pastormark@wefollowjesusingustine.org)

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**Sunday, February 1**

Special offering — All donations will help support the Agape food ministry.