

Do not be afraid: Our hope is in Jesus

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop



A quick check of my concordance suggests that the phrase “Do not be afraid” occurs 17 times in the Gospels. It

is a common greeting that Jesus or angels use when encountering people in stressful times. It is a good message for today.

As I listen to the news, I am increasingly aware that fear is the dominant basis for communication today. Our political speech is based not on what we are going to do together but rather on the fear of what others may be trying to do to “me.”

Our economic speech is concerned that there is little confidence in the

economy, which produces even less confidence in it. I fall victim to this in my conversations about our care of creation—it’s easier to get attention telling the dangers of climate change as opposed to talking about God’s mandate that we be good stewards of God’s good creation.

Often God’s first message to anxious people is “Do not be afraid.” This is still God’s world. God is not manipulating the events of the day to fit some grand diabolical plan. God is present with us in Jesus who carries the sin and pain of the world. This is not a pie in the sky kind of happiness. This is the real presence of Christ in our violence-torn, fragile world.

It strikes me that we are called to be the people of hope in this time of fear. Our hope is in Jesus. It is in his death and resurrection that you and I have been united in baptism. We do not need to fear the future. It

is Christ’s future and we are called to live into it. We also can stand with those who have good reason to be afraid. The widow, orphan and stranger are the ones to whom the love of God is primarily directed in the Scriptures.

Professor Robert Bertram taught me that we can only know how bad our situation is when we know how good the gospel is. We look at the world not with fear but with the promise of the crucified Savior. We face death with the promise of Easter. We can risk hope in the face of fear.

So the risen Jesus goes even further in John’s telling of the story of Easter. He appears in the upper room among fearful disciples and says, “Peace be with you.” This is not a message of fear—it is a message of hope. Now go, forgive sins and bring hope in the face of fear. That is still our calling. □

Welcoming our guests

By Kasey Potzler

The Bellingham Community Meal Program (BCMP) began in 1983 thanks to dedicated people who wanted to serve nutritious meals on a predictable schedule and in a pleasant environment.

The meals are served at Assumption Roman Catholic Church. We place no restrictions on our guests, but strive to create a welcoming

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Potzler is a member Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Bellingham.

environment for them to enjoy a good meal and friendly people.

BCMP serves meals once a month on Sundays from January to October. At each meal we have between 50 and 60 volunteers who work two- to three-hour shifts between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. These volunteers do everything from preparing, cooking and serving the food to final cleanup of the dining room and kitchen.

Volunteers come from a variety of places. Three congregations have a time slot every month: Bethel

Reformed Church in Lynden, Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Bellingham and First Congregational Church, Bellingham. Volunteers also come from Assumption and congregational youth groups.

The meal is held in the school gymnasium at Assumption. This congregation generously donates the space and use of their kitchen.

The number of meals has varied through the years. For the last five

Continued on page C

Northwest Washington

Bob Snyder with his grocery cart full of food he gleaned from a grocery store.



Annie Fortnum of Annie's Kitchen.



Volunteers serve dinner to their guests at Annie's Kitchen, a weekly meal program started by Edmonds Lutheran Church.

A blessing for so many

By Marilyn and Cindy Dauer

While a good sermon may feed your soul, what will feed your stomach?

Hunger is a real issue for many people across the country. In fact, the Department of Agriculture estimates that around 15 percent of the population nationwide struggles with securing enough food to eat on a daily basis.

In light of this, a few faithful parishioners of Edmonds Lutheran Church in a suburb north of Seattle decided to do something about it.

Seven years ago they cooked up a weekly meal program that now contributes to serving more than 57,000 free meals a year to hungry people. These home-cooked meals are offered to community members free of charge, no questions asked.

The meal program has two helpings. The first is Annie's Kitchen, the place where the meals are prepared,

cooked and served at the church. Annie's Kitchen is named for Annie Fortnum, a parishioner who helped found the program in 2004.

At age 80, Annie still plans the menu, cooks and helps direct some 40 volunteers.

The kitchen regularly serves hearty meals of beef stroganoff, stir fry, corned beef and Alaskan cod. Fresh fruits and vegetables are served on the side along with savory desserts.

Every week, more than 120 people come to Annie's Kitchen for a hot Wednesday night meal. The program also offers free clothing to those in need. A children's program featuring homework support and/or listening to religious stories is also offered after they have finished their meal.

For Annie, it's not just about feeding the hungry, it's about building community.

The second helping of the meal program is even heartier still. It involves reaching out and provid-

ing food to hungry people across the state, from Marysville to Wenatchee.

Bob Snyder, a member of Edmonds Lutheran, and some 30 volunteers make this possible. They practice a form of modern-day gleaning, which on average nets more than a ton of food each week.

Unlike traditional gleaning where leftover crops are gathered from the field, Snyder and a crew collect from area grocery stores. Thanks to these generous stores, they pick up food that has been pulled from the shelves, usually because it is about to expire or the packaging is damaged.

The team makes 17 gleaning trips a week to five area grocery stores. This goes on 52 weeks a year/seven days a week.

This food is then distributed to food banks, tent cities and other free community meal programs, including Annie's Kitchen. Food that would otherwise go to waste is put to good use. □

The Dauers are volunteers at Annie's Kitchen, a ministry of Edmonds Lutheran Church.

Continued from page A

years Assumption has granted BCMP 10 meal days. We don't provide meals in November and December because the Lighthouse Mission (our homeless shelter) provides the holiday meals at Assumption.

During the last five years we've served between 5,700 and 6,500 meals per year. Interestingly enough, the lowest number was in 2010 and the highest number was in 2009. Last year when Sunday bus service was canceled in Bellingham the number of guests dropped by about half. In June our Sunday bus service was restored, so we expect our numbers to jump again.

BCMP is not a religious organization, but I see this as an incredible ministry. I've always taken to heart Jesus' parable "whenever you did it to the least of these" (Matthew 25:31-46). My family has always lived with plenty and I've had plenty of opportunities to witness to those who don't know that kind of life.

Rio Thomas, the founder of Small Potatoes Gleaning Project, shared this Frances Moore Lappe quote with me: "Hunger isn't caused by a scarcity of food, but by a scarcity of democracy."

There are many incredible volunteers who have time and energy to

help with providing the meals, and good things happen because of it. It helps those who are hungry by providing a healthy meal and conversation in a safe and welcoming place. It helps those of us who have enough to see a different face to life.

As I've worked with people young and old, I have seen them grow to understand that they can make a difference. That, to me, is hope for the world.

It's been a gift and a privilege to work with such servants from many churches and other groups in our community, including the Whatcom Volunteer Center. □

Feeding God's people

For the past 30 years, St. John United Lutheran Church in Seattle has been home to a feeding program that serves hundreds of hot meals twice a week. Many patrons are regulars, including low-income seniors, the mentally ill and the homeless.

The Wednesday noon meal is prepared and served by a core group of volunteers from the congregation, including 92-year-old Ida Hamilton, who has been dishing up plates for the past 27 years.

Volunteers for the Tuesday evening meal primarily come from the local community and high schools.

The program is administered by the Phinney Neighborhood Association in partnership with the congregation and the city of Seattle, whose funding supports a part-time staff person and some of the program's costs.

A network of organizations supplies provisions, including Food Lifeline that collects fresh food from restaurants, caterers and grocery

stores. The congregation began a community garden eight years ago that grows produce for the meal program as well.

The congregation sees the meal program as a core part of our mission. We feed people upstairs with the

word of God and the body of Christ; then we move downstairs, as Christ's body, to be bread for the world. □

Carol Jensen

Jensen is pastor of St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle.



These volunteers put together the Wednesday lunches at St. John United Lutheran Church, Seattle. Ida Hamilton, longtime volunteer, is second from the left.