



Eastern Washington-Idaho

Synod supplement

Celebrating the past and future

Quincy congregation helps community celebrate its faith

Text by Elizabeth Luiten □ Photos courtesy the *The Quincy Valley Post-Register*

St. Paul Lutheran Church in Quincy, Wash., wanted to do something special to commemorate its centennial this year.

“We were looking for a way as a congregation to not only celebrate 100 years in ministry but give back to the community,” said Virginia Johnson, pastor for the past 10 years. “We don’t just want to celebrate ourselves. We want to celebrate our ministry in the community.”

What the congregation came up with was bigger than anyone ever imagined: Purchase the original 1904 building (they moved to a new building in 1951), move it to another location in town, and give it to the Quincy Historical Society for use as a community faith center.

“The initial reaction of the congregation was, ‘This is impossible!’” Johnson said. “There were people who were dead set against it, but with God it was possible.”

It all started at a centennial planning meeting in spring 2006, when the group was brainstorming ways to give back to the community.

Surprise change

At first the group explored the possibility of building a small replica of the old church for the historical society site. But plans changed after a newspaper article erroneously stated that the congregation was going to buy the old church and move it to the location. The congregation was surprised—but soon discovered how much the community supported the idea.

Saint Paul organized a meeting in May and invited Harriet Weber of the Quincy Historical Society, Philip Lust, a local architect, and Deb Adams, a real-estate agent, to talk about the possibilities.

“The historical society became interested in the building after discovering that the original stamped-tin, barrel-vaulted ceiling was still largely intact, the original flooring had been restored and the original beadboard was still in place,” Johnson said.

“When you stand in the space where the altar would have been, there is a natural acoustic that amplifies one’s voice. The sound is beautiful.”

Soon after that May meeting the congregation voted to reclaim the building and give it to the community.

Kaye Baumgartner, St. Paul council president, was instrumental in the project. “The vote was two shy of anonymous. Something was happening beyond me, and I wasn’t pushing it. It just went. The whole congregation really embraced the project,” she said.

Price of the old church was \$50,000. A German-sausage feed brought in \$20,000, and parishioners will continue to raise funds.

The 1904 church is believed to be the oldest church building in Quincy, Baumgartner said. Started as a community church, it became the German Lutheran church in 1907. After St. Paul moved out in 1951, various other congregations, including Assembly of God, Friends and Pentecostal, made the building their church home.

Now the church belongs to the community again, Baumgartner said.

“The dream, and now the reality, is that it



Virginia Johnson prays and blesses the new site for the old church. The building, in which St. Paul Lutheran started 100 years ago, was purchased and moved by the congregation for use as a community faith center.

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will become a community chapel used for weddings, prayer meetings, confirmations, baptisms, renewal of vows, funerals and youth gatherings,” Baumgartner said.

“It is not a museum but a place of living history in the city, a place to be used,” Johnson said. “We wanted to lift up the history of the community and what life was like and keep this church as a center of the community.”

“This is a symbol of our community heritage of faith,” Weber said.

Fred Schulz, 81, was baptized and confirmed at the church, and his father was one of the 11 charter members. He is one of a handful of members who remember worshiping in the original building.

“The old church never had any insulation and was heated with an old potbelly coal stove,” Schulz said. “It was cold. They always had church though. If we could get into town, we’d have the service.

“We didn’t have a full-time minister, we always shared a ministry with Waterville and Wenatchee later on. If the weather was really bad and the minister couldn’t come, one of the members of the congregation would read out of the Bible and we’d sing some songs. Some of the songs were in German.”

Some things have changed.

Women didn’t have a voice in the church in the early days, Schulz said. “The women sat on one side of the church, and the men sat on another side. The younger kids would sit on the side with their mothers.”

On the other hand, some things have stayed the same.

“People were really dedicated” to the congregation Schulz said. And that still seems to be the case.

The congregation moved in faith when they decided to purchase the

old church building and give it to the community.

“It’s a huge undertaking,” Baumgartner said. “The people in our congregation are paying for the building.”

There is outside support, too, including contributions of more than \$35,000 for moving costs and work on the foundation and new windows.

Community joins work

“Community members are offering to share their gifts to help restore it, and the historical society can seek grants from the Washington State Historical Society,” Johnson said.

In August, the congregation closed the deal and looked toward the next step: moving the church from to Quincy’s historic district.

“The church was moved six blocks. We had to take the building apart by cutting off the steeple, which wasn’t easy,” Baumgartner said. “The original steeple had blown off in the wind in the 1940s, so this one they built to last.” The moving crew had to lay the steeple on its side to avoid hitting power lines during its trek to the new location.

Once the church was on its new foundation, the congregation had a celebration barbecue, and Johnson blessed the site.

“I stood there and looked at [the church] and thought, ‘We went from thinking, ‘No we can’t we do this’ to seeing this church move and being put on its new foundation.’ It was amazing, just amazing,” Johnson said.

“The spirit works in ways you don’t predict,” Baumgartner said. “I truly didn’t believe this would happen. Something beyond any of us was working here.”

“Nothing is too big for God,” Johnson added. “I do not believe that

God is done with this yet. There is something else happening here we can’t fully perceive. This project helped people in our congregation look beyond our doors. It gave them hope that even though they think we’re a small congregation, there is a God still at work here.”

Future plans including building a prayer labyrinth around the church so that even when the building isn’t open, the labyrinth would available to community members.

“We’re still thinking of what could be next. We’re getting beyond ourselves; we’re on a different track now,” Baumgartner said. “We still have a lot to do, but we have time.” □

Luiten is the youth director of First Lutheran in Ellensburg, Wash.

The old church was put on a trailer for the move to its new home.



The steeple is lifted off the so that the church will fit under utility wires on the way to its new location. Central Washington Truss donated the use of the crane and workers to help the congregation move the historic building.



Finding ourselves in the stories of the Bible

As we have committed ourselves to becoming a Great Commission/ Great Commandment church, one critical part of that movement is the reading and study of Scripture. We are a “storied” people, and our understanding of life is shaped by a history and destiny described in the Bible. The stories told there describe the character of God and God’s response to a stiff-necked people who want everything their own way. We find ourselves in the story as we realize we *are* those stiff-necked people, *and* we are the object of God’s searching love.



This month we enter the great stories of the faith as told through the Lenten lessons: The call and promise to Abram; the passionate invitation of (Third) Isaiah; the end of the Exodus and reliance on manna; and the promise of a “way” through the wilderness. In these lessons we know a promise-making God who addresses our ancestors and, now, us with hope. If you look at Gospel texts for the same Sundays, it’s as if God’s hope for us grows even as Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem to make his final offering for us.

How are you *in* these stories? Are they your stories or simply interesting bits of ancient lore? I hope you will take time to read the lessons before attending worship so that you are more fertile ground for the proclamation. I hope you will dwell long enough in each text so that it addresses your life. Perhaps you will have your own moment, like in the story of the prodigal son, when the great promises of God become your own and Holy Week becomes a return to home. That’s where the story takes us: home to God.

Blessed reading!
Bishop Martin Wells

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Reaching out through language ministry

By John Knapp

Bishop Martin Wells has asked that we search our synod for new and effective ministries as we reclaim Christ's Great Commission. For 15 years, my wife and I have found our commission in a ministry to immigrants.

Our synod is blessed with a large number of new Americans. One of the largest stumbling blocks for them as they work to become a part of our communities is the language barrier. This is where language ministry comes in.

You all have a gift – both in spirit and native language. You are already integrated into your communities. You already speak English. And you desire to serve our Lord in a meaningful ministry.

In this ministry you also receive a gift beyond the rewards of a faithful steward: You learn about a new culture, find new friends and a new language.

Being a trained educator might be helpful but isn't necessary. Many agencies exist to help people learn skills for teaching English as a second language.

The most important element of learning a language is hearing it spoken and being with someone who will listen and assist. Then reverse the process, and let them teach you something about their language and culture. Let our neighbors minister to you.

This ministry can be done individually, but most communities have organizations that help people learn English. Sometimes it is a welfare agency that connects new Americans with old or it may even be an employment agency.

At Christ Lutheran Church in Walla Walla, Joel Ley, pastor, has decided to use the resources of our congregation to act as this conduit. Working with the local welfare agency, he is beginning a more formal outreach.

Learning English is vital to the lives of thousands of people, some of whom may live in your neighborhood or even next door. Serving Christ as we respond to his Great Commission may involve something we all have in abundance and sharing that with someone who has so little.

Serving Christ might involve picking up a phone and calling a doctor for a new American who feels uneasy on the phone. Serving Christ may involve helping your language partner resolve an eBay problem or even explaining why someone online in Nigeria really does *not* need your help. Serving Christ may involve some of the best food you will ever eat and the closest friends you will ever have.

I invite you all to join in a language ministry. □

Knapp is a member of Christ Lutheran in Walla Walla.

Synod shorts

We'll leave the lights on for you

At Trinity, Coeur d'Alene, Ida., the congregation is letting their lights shine. The church council decided to leave some of the sanctuary lights on during weeknights. The idea is to remind the community that the church is a place of hope in the darkness, whether that darkness is physical or spiritual, Katy McCallum Sachse, pastor, wrote in the church newsletter. The lights are also a reminder to the congregation of Jesus' call to be "the light of the world."

Flower power

At St. John, Medical Lake, Wash., the Sunday school celebrates spring and the end of the school year with Flowers and Family Day. During the last Sunday school before summer break, there are activities and crafts for all students and their families. Each child is asked to bring a small six-pack of flowers to plant.

Let us break bread together

At Shepherd of the Mountains, Jackson, Wyo., the congregation hosted a block party for the members and the church's neighbors. The congregation provided brats and sauerkraut, with members bringing potluck dishes.

The neighborhood residents were the invited guests. Frisbee and other outdoor activities were also planned.

Lutheran Church of the Master, Pasco, Wash., has a tradition of hosting weekly potlucks during the summer. Every Wednesday night, church members and anyone else are invited to bring a dish and share in the fellowship. It's a great way for congregation members to get to know each other better.

If your newsletter tells of good ideas at work in the congregation, send it to Laura Estes, Box 151, Odessa, WA 99159.