



INLAND STREAM

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“Expecting with Hope” By John VanDerWalker



I grew up watching “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” I probably have heard the Christmas story from Luke read by Linus as many times as I have heard it read in a pulpit, maybe more. Linus read the King James version of the scripture and for me listening to those words arouses the memories of Christmas that include family, trees, treats, and various activities; like the year my high school madrigal group sang carols on the streets of Buhl Idaho for shoppers who were swarming around town. That was back in the day when you could buy everything you need in Buhl.

I do not read, nor do I encourage anyone to read the King James version of the Bible for anything other than comparative purposes, but that language at Christmas and

Easter from King James English stirs something in me.

In Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus, Mary arrives in Bethlehem ready to deliver her baby, or as the old English language of King James expresses “she was great with child.” Most of us know what this means, not only visually but the physical ramification for the mother. I remember clearly my slender wife when she was great with child and the hope that was associated with that time in our lives. Luke’s telling of the story is full of hope, there is the hope granted Zachariah and Elizabeth who were childless in their “old age” and then the hope expressed by the angel Gabriel in his announcement to Mary and then Mary’s exclamation of joy and hope that we call the Magnificat.

In his translation of the Luke story Eugene Peterson starts the Magnificat with “I’m bursting with God-news; I’m dancing the song of my Savior God.” This is the beginning of a proclamation of hope for Mary and her people, and for us.

To be “expecting” is a turbulent experience for a woman and those who walk beside her in this time of dramatic change. Along with all of the hormonal issues there are the other physical aspects, insatiable appetite, strange cravings, digestive issues, physical discomfort, fatigue and the list goes on and on. I am even reluctant to write about it since I have no firsthand experiences, and I am sure that some mothers reading this will retort, “You have no idea!” and that is true. But I do know what it is like to walk beside someone you love who is experiencing this. We experienced great hope in our family expansion plan and yet there was some fear and a great deal of wonder. And an overarching question: “I wonder how this will turn out?”

I feel like Christianity, right now, is great with child. For all my life, or at least since I was in Junior High School, I have thought that something wasn’t quite right with the Church. Somehow the church with all

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A Congregation's Purpose....

By Carla Long

A couple of years ago, I read that everyone needs to have a life's purpose. Everyone. It is, of course, up to each individual person to figure out what that is. The book also said that the way you "get to" your life's purpose can (and should!) change every few years. This means, of course, that the way you live your life's purpose now won't be how you're living your life's purpose in 5 years...and that's a good thing!!

We need to continue to change so that we can grow! We need to continue to change so that we can learn more about ourselves! We need to continue to change so that we can learn more about our friends, family, and the community around us!

I believe that congregations have a "life's purpose," too, and once the congregation figures out what that is (which is not always easy!), the congregation has to then figure out how to live out that purpose. For me, the Enduring Principles are the key to living that purpose.



You'll get a myriad of answers if you ask someone in the Salt Lake congregation what their favorite Enduring Principle is, but two that almost everyone will get to eventually are "The Worth of All Persons" and "Blessings of Community."

When the Pastor Leadership Team declared that 2019 would be the "Year of Relationships" for the Salt Lake congregation, we did it with this in mind. We recognized that in a climate like the Salt Lake Valley, our people need a safe haven to come and just be. So, we began to give opportunity after opportunity for members and friends to get together to form and re-establish relationships. I could tell you all about the dinners that we have had together, the "check-ins" during our Sunday School time, the congregational outings and the monthly spiritual practices Sunday worship services that we have incorporated, but what I most want to tell you about is the changes that I've seen in the congregation since we've started.

Every congregation believes, I think, that we just KNOW each other. I've heard it all before, "We've been together for years, decades really, and I already know all that I need to know about so and so." Or "I don't really need to ask questions of so and so, I already know what the answer will be." Or "That might sound nice for a congregation like in Salt Lake City, but surely OUR congregation doesn't need to get together outside of church on Sunday morning." I would counter ALL of these statements with the two Enduring Principles that I mentioned above. None of these statements represent "The Worth of All Persons" or the "Blessings of Community."

The first descriptor of "The Worth of All Persons" is that God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth. When we speak to each other as neighbor, we are speaking to the worth that individual has. When we ask questions and REALLY listen to the answer, people feel heard, they feel loved, and they understand, I believe, on a deeper level what that worth really means. Sunday morning worships are wonderful together, but they can also be deeply



isolating. We come, we sit, we sing, we listen, and we leave. Being listened to is a powerful tool to show love.

Under “Blessings of Community,” it says, “The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God’s grace and each other.” In that vulnerability, in saying that we might not know EVERYTHING there is to know about someone, we are saying that we are willing to risk learning something new about someone and risk sharing something new about ourselves. This can be extraordinarily scary. It’s much easier to just exchange pleasantries and get on with our day, but that is not what this Enduring Principle is calling us to. It is certainly not, I believe, what God is calling us to, either.

So, that congregational life’s purpose calls us into a deeper place. It’s a place that one might think they don’t even need to go, it’s a place that is scary, it’s a place where one might feel rejection, but it is also a place where God lives. It’s a place of sacred vulnerability, where hearts touch and meet, perhaps for the first time. It’s a place of real relationship that goes deeper than a “Hi, how are you?” It’s a place the Enduring Principles are more than just words on a paper, they are a way of life.

**Save the dates
for 2020 Reunions!**

**Samish Island
June 20 — June 26**

**Red Cliffe
July 10 — July 15**

**Combined Reunion
August 7 —
August 11**



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of its emphasis on different things was not really being what God imagined. We did not step up to the great issues of our times, we were being drug along by society to confront the reality of our world.

Right now I have a sense that God has planted something in the Church that is growing to a point that any moment it will burst forth, who knows how. I am doubtful that it will be as dramatic as someone nailing 95 Thesis to a church door. Or maybe it will. However it is birthed, we have much to have hope in. Community of Christ is equipped to move into the future, our Enduring Principles assure that we will have a strong voice that can bring the God-news to our neighbors, family and friends. The centrality of Jesus in our faith, not as some personally warm and fuzzy savior but as the supreme example of human life AND the mind and will of God is a much stronger basis of faith than it was 50 years ago. A commitment to peace dependent on justice, no matter how short we fall in its exercise, will be our example of Christ in our communities.

As we celebrate the Hope birthed in Bethlehem many years past, let us too look to the future of our community of faith with hope. Just as a baby is not a replica of its parents, what comes from this time of travail will not be a replica of the past church. It will be dramatically different in appearance and function, however it will have the DNA of its parents. Our devotion to practice, scripture and principles will assure that the church of the future will have good genetics and will continue to work for the cause of Zion. Emmanuel, God is with us

Spectacular (SPEC) 2019



My experience at SPEC was truly spectacular, it was also very motivational and truly life-changing for me. I was very scared that I wouldn't make friends at SPEC but I was wrong, I did make friends and even grew closer to some friends I already knew! When we first arrived at the campus I was very overwhelmed and thought it was going to be a long week but as days went on I loved it more and more and by the end of the week I didn't want to leave. I can't wait to go back in July and reconnect with all the friends I made and have another wonderful time on the campus. The speakers that were there truly did motivate me and make me want to help others more and more, they also helped me realize that there is so much more in life and that it is okay to be sad but don't let it overpower you and that there is always someone there to help you when you need them. The bonds you make with people on the campus are amazing, you never know how many things you have in common with people from across the country. I am so beyond ecstatic that SPEC 2020 is right around the corner, I can't wait!

By Ciara Mielke



The first time I attended Spectacular (SPEC) was in 2019 as a delegation staff member. I was very impressed by this very well organized, activity filled event. The varied selection of activities provided something for everyone. From softball and soccer to yoga and pottery making to knowledge bowl and worship planning, to list but a few; if the campers couldn't find something they would enjoy doing then they weren't looking very hard. It was great as a staff member to watch the campers and the change in them from the beginning of SPEC until the end. They bonded with each other and learned how to





work together on their different team sports. They built connections and friendships grew. Our Northwest Delegation were a wonderful group of youth!

I was also very impressed that all elements of SPEC were built around what would be meaningful and important to the campers. The SPEC planners did a wonderful job providing quality experiences through the week.

In our delegation we had five youth baptized. The baptism services were very spiritual and meaningful to each of the baptism candidates but they were not what you would normally expect. At one of the services the song “Dancing Queen” was played at the end and there was a dance party. I bet that is a baptism that those present will never forget!

SPEC is really an unique and wonderful experience for both the campers and the staff. I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to participate in it.

Youth and parents start planning now, SPEC 2020 is just around the corner. **SPEC 2020 will be from July 15 to July 25, 2020.** More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Sandy Decker



Camping Program Mission & Vision Team

At Mission Center Conference the Camping Program Mission & Vision Team was sustained. Here are the goals for that team:



TEAM PURPOSE

Community of Christ camping tradition is important to our journey as we seek to birth, nurture, and multiply communities of disciples and seekers engaged in spiritual formation

and compassionate ministry and action.

This team will work to promote and facilitate conversation, dialogue, discernment, and mutual exploration of the Inland West Mission Center camping program in the context of a changing world through the lens of mission, vision, and responsible stewardship of resources

SHORT TERM GOALS

1. Facilitate conversations with membership across the mission center to explore needs, capacity, vision and missional opportunities resident in a continued camping program exploring a variety of campground options.
2. Implement survey methods to collect and record input and feedback from membership throughout the process of discernment and experimentation.
3. Pilot a combines camping event at a neutral rented facility in 2020.
4. Conduct research and provide report regarding the feasibility and cost analysis for a potential future of sponsoring camping programs at neutral rented facilities.

From around the Mission Center in 2019

Blessings:

- Lia Brudskyi, Salt Lake City, UT
- Arya Izaguirre, Hagerman, ID
- Elianna Soldeirwolf, Billings, MT
- Kaienna Tse, Salt Lake City, UT

Baptism/Confirmations:

- Leslie Dalton, Salt Lake City, UT
- Brian Mullin, Salt Lake City, UT
- Eli Roland, Hagerman, ID
- Adam Shaffer, Richland, WA
- Janet Shockley, New Plymouth (November, 2018)
- Melinda Smith, Coeur d'Alene, ID
- Brian Whitney, Ogden, UT

Ordinations:

- Jessie Clifford, Priest, Hagerman, ID (November, 2018)
- Meggan Molgard, Teacher, Salt Lake City, UT
- Granville Roy Schmidt, High Priest, Evangelist, Salt Lake City, UT
- Denise White, Bishop, Salt Lake City, UT
-

Robin Windes, Elder, Hagerman, ID (November, 2018)

Deaths:

- Burton Baughman, Buhl, ID
- Jim Beaton, Boise, ID, (December, 2018)
- Ray Carter, Orem, UT
- Glen Bruch, Ogden, UT
- Frederick Carpenter, Lewis-Clark, WA
- Glenda Chapman, Richland, WA (December, 2018)
- Betty Dylina, Spokane Valley, WA (December, 2018)
- Veda Hentz, Billings, MT
- Lois Jones, Deer Lodge, MT
- Alme Vergene Mumper, Coeur d'Alene, ID (December, 2018)
- Loretta Payton, Lewis-Clark, WA
- Patty Seibert, Spokane Valley, WA
- Erna Stecher, Spokane Valley, WA
- Janice Townsend, Spokane Valley, WA
- Albert Worthington, Walla Walla, WA

If there are life events or transitions happening in your congregation please send them to Sandy Decker at sdecker@cofchrist-iwest.org.



Community Elevated is an on-line ministry for young adults who reside in, or are connected to, Inland West Mission Center. On-line ministry is an area of rapid growth and missional opportunity. Community Elevated is one of several such ministries developed by and for young adults across the church. Community Elevated meets on-line for monthly fellowship and worship. The services average 6-8 participants. A guest, topic or question for each meeting is posted on the Community Elevated Facebook page which leads into discussion and sharing between participants.

The Community Elevated Steering Team also plans face-to-face gatherings to build and deepen relationships among young adults. The steering team is actively pursuing avenues of growth as they find new ways to connect with young adults and share the invitation to participate. Young adults can find Community Elevated on Facebook or contact a member of the steering team.

Small Group Ministry in Idaho Falls

In Southeast Idaho the number of participants in the Idaho Falls house church has doubled as more and more individuals find this expression of the church to be a safe and sacred space. Several of the participants are inviting friends to the monthly gatherings and others are finding the ministry through social media. Seventy Kuzma Brudsky has been instrumental in this growth by assisting in the improvement of house church social media skills.

Idaho Falls house church uses the small group worship materials found on the church website next to Sermon Helps. Ex: <https://www.cofchrist.org/worship-resources-29-september-2019>.

The members also meet once a month for coffee and chats which has become a meaningful way to share together in a relaxed setting. Idaho Falls house church is led by Mary Smith and supported by the JoAnn Fisher and Karin Peter of the Invitation Support Ministry Team.

Blessings from the Blog

By Lavera Wade

From "Following the Spirit" Herald Publishing House 2019, "The word of calling, hope, and possibility emerges from the reality that great change is happening in the world. And the rate of change is accelerating. This change includes how we view God, culture, finances, technology, politics and religious institutions... The word of calling, hope and possibility is the new way of understanding, communicating, and living the gospel in response to changing circumstances that are already happening in Community of Christ. The church's future is related directly to our willingness to go where the Spirit calling us to go".



is

The Blog began for me in 2015, as a one-year service project, a part of the Discipleship Now program I had just completed. Mission Center President at the time John Chatburn, sent out a request for a Digital Pastor. The goal, was to reach out to people via the internet, who were not close to a congregation.

My role was to seek out members who were willing to share ministry in the form of a short article published once a month. As the Blog evolved when I was asked by potential witnesses, "What should I write about?" my answer was, "How has God touched your life." Some stories are answered prayer like the one of a member who said to God in prayer, "I have to sell this boat this weekend." only to return from Easter services to find her voice mail filled with messages, "I want the boat, I have the cash". Or the story of a hug shared by two noncommunicative developmentally challenged children, that assured me that my mother who could no longer speak or knew my name due to Alzheimer's, clearly showed me with her smile she knew me in her heart. All of the stories shared on the Blog are testimonies of our faith adventure, inviting others to open their hearts to the message of Jesus Christ.

*Check out December's
blog by David Brock!*

I love to travel and I love being in community, so God uses that to guide me all over our large mission center, participating in reunions, women's retreats, conferences, and as a visiting minister. As our Mission Center consists of many states, with a wide and very diverse membership, I am always deeply touched by the welcome that is always given to me a stranger, evidence that without exception our congregations live our enduring principle "Grace and Generosity" which shows us that all are welcome and we share unconditionally. Many offer to provide ministry. Others say that they do not know what they could share, and then I hear them share a beautiful story of how they have been blessed as members of Community of Christ. We all have many stories of how God has blessed us. Many of us can share of times when we look to the heavens, and say "I know that was you".

There is a sign, in Latin, posted over my desk that reminds me that that "Bidden or unbidden God is always present." I believe, from experience and study, that God is always present, and we can feel the call to draw closer, to be vulnerable to God's grace and each other. Several years have passed since I began the Blog and God continues to speak to me through the ministry provided, and the friendships I have made in my own search for a better understanding of God's call. The number of hits on the blog continues to grow. I am grateful for all who have provided ministry, and for all who seek to hear more of how God is working in our lives. It is an honor and a blessing to serve you as your Mission Center Digital Pastor.

Mission Center Blog

Check out the Mission
'Center blog at: [cofchrist-
inlandwest.blogspot.com](http://cofchrist-inlandwest.blogspot.com)

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