

# THE CHALLENGE

A newsletter of Mt Carmel Lutheran Church  
515 SW Maplecrest Drive, Portland, OR 97219

Ronald E. Nitz, Pastor

April 2009

“And [the angel] said to them, ‘Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’ And [the women] went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” [Mark 16:6-8]

“AND NOW, THE REST OF THE STORY...”

Dear Sisters & Brothers In Christ,

With the words in the title, noted radio personality, Paul Harvey, used to introduce the details of some bizarre story he had just reported on, which explained how such an unusual event happened. It seems to me that the Easter Gospel from St. Mark, which closes with the verses above, is a story that begs for just such a comment from the story-teller. We, who are provided lengthy conclusions to the Easter story from the other Gospel-writers, want to hear what happened next. Indeed, there are a number of “alternate endings” to the Gospel of Mark that attempt to “tie up the loose ends” in this story, which is precisely why most Biblical scholars think they are later additions by people who were uncomfortable with the unfinished nature of this ending. One of my favorite Easter sermons is an explanation of *why* Mark didn’t want or need to write *the rest of the story*.

First of all, the women obviously ended up telling *someone*, or I wouldn’t be writing this and you wouldn’t be reading it! If the last word anyone had uttered about Jesus was that he died, and his body was missing, who would even care nearly 2,000 years later? Mark didn’t *need* to write about what happened after this, because everyone for whom he wrote his Gospel already knew *the rest of the story*. It didn’t need to be told. The purpose of his Gospel was to fill in the blanks of what happened *before* Jesus rose from the dead; the Christians in Rome knew what happened after that. They were *living* that part of the story!

But secondly, there is no formal ending for the Easter story, because *the Easter story is not done yet!* We are still living what happened after the women ran

away from the empty tomb in terror and amazement. In fact, some would say that Lutherans in particular understand this better than anyone! We, too, know that the tomb is empty; that Jesus has risen. And just like the women, we are terrified to tell this Good News to anyone, lest they think we’re crazy! In fact, we seem to be stuck at verse 8, while other Christians who know and *live* the Easter story have gone on to tell others the Good News that Life is not about death, but about living through and beyond the grave.

Now, lest you think that I am somehow *wasting* my last newsletter article to you all on some “standard Easter message” (as if that were possible!), let me tell you *the rest of the story!* For some of you, my impending departure will seem more like Good Friday than Easter, more like “death” than “resurrection.” And of course, the end of our working relationship *does* have some elements of “death” about it (although, since I don’t anticipate actually *dying*, the use of the term “death” for this is a little strong!). But just like with Jesus and the disciples, “life PRN” (Post-Ron-Nitz) not only *does* exist, but in fact will have many wonderful qualities about it that I’m sure are largely unappreciated by most of you at the moment.

But, just like the resurrected, eternal life we will all experience one day, it is largely unknown and therefore somewhat scary! And, of course, the only way to get to that new life is by dying. Even for me, who knows a bit about what lies ahead in my “Resurrection life” (it’s a pun, folks - the church in Seward is Resurrection Lutheran), it can be a bit scary. But just as I have learned to believe and trust that eternal life beyond the grave will be so wonderful for me and all the faithful, that I no longer fear death, so I believe God will make this change good, both for me and for all of you!

I trust God to do what’s best for *all* of us, and that gives me peace in the midst of the present turmoil and uncertainty. Indeed, I have already seen many signs in both congregations that people are growing in faith, and the transition has only just begun. Think of

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## April 2009 Events:

Passion Sunday, April 5

Maundy Thursday, April 9, Seder at  
Mt. Carmel

Good Friday, April 10 at Capitol Hill  
United Methodist

Easter, April 12

Creative Spirituality: Lutheranism in  
the Twenty-first Century  
— Dead or Alive?, A  
Presentation and Dialog,  
Saturday, April 18, 2009,  
8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Music At The Mount: Sunday, April  
19, 3:00 p.m. - Corral  
Creek Connection, Blue  
Grass Band

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### *The Challenge*

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Mount Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church,  
515 SW Maplecrest Dr.  
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Editors: Susan Doyle, Pastor Ronald Nitz and Lisa Frenz.

### What's new on the Website:

We have a new look!  
Check it out. Also, we  
will be posting a PDF  
version of THE CHAL-  
LENGE newsletter on  
the website  
([www.mtcarmellutheran.com](http://www.mtcarmellutheran.com)). The link will be  
on the *Home Page*.  
Don't forget you can  
also check out the calen-  
dar for events, meetings,  
etc. at  
[www.mtcarmellutheran.com/calendar.html](http://www.mtcarmellutheran.com/calendar.html)

**Join us for Sunday  
Morning Centering  
Prayer.** Join the *Prayer  
Circle* at 10:30 a.m. and  
prepare yourself for  
worship. We pray spe-  
cifically for Mt. Car-  
mel's future and other  
prayer concerns.

**Prayer Box:** If you  
have a prayer concern  
please write it out on  
paper and place it in the  
"prayer box", a wooden  
chest, at the back of the  
sanctuary. These are  
not taken out of the box  
but kept completely  
confidential. The  
*Prayer Circle* prays for  
those concerns at their  
Sunday meeting.

# APRIL 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<b>1</b> Lenten Soup Supper - Study - Service	<b>2</b> Choir 7:00pm	<b>3</b> Burnside Meals 5:30pm	<b>4</b> Work Day 8:30am
<b>5</b> Service 11am	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Outreach 7pm Growth 8pm	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Seder Dinner 6:30 pm	<b>10</b> Good Friday 7:00 pm @ Capitol Hill UMC	<b>11</b> Easter Preparations 10:00am
<b>12</b> EASTER Breakfast 9:30 Worship 11:00am	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Resource 7pm Council 8pm	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Choir 7:00pm	<b>17</b> Jean's Meals 12:30pm Pastor Leaves for Alaska	<b>18</b> None Zone Workshop @ 8:30am
<b>19</b> Service 11am	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Choir 7:00pm	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> Service 11am	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>		

## Worship Assistants Schedule for April 2009

Date	Assistant	Child Care	Reader	Usher/ Greeter	Cleaner	Counter
4/5/09	Bob Brandt	Jackie Nitz	David Brandt	Doyles	Vermillion	*CP-H.Owsley *OC-p. Norseth
4/12/09	Grieg Anderson	Thelma Froude	Sharon Brice	Vermillions	Doyles	
4/19/09	Kathy Raihala	_____	Courtney Hermann	Brices	Brices	
4/26/09	Kelly Doyle	Thelma Froude	Susan Doyle	Hemphill- Raihala	Andersons	
5/03/09	Herb Funk	_____	Teri Gerlt	Andersons	Brandt	

### Creative Spirituality: Lutheranism in the Twenty-first Century — Dead or Alive?

A Presentation and Dialog

**Saturday, April 18, 2009**, Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church

8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

There is much talk about “mainline” churches dying, particularly in the Pacific Northwest. Lutherans are in that category. This makes us ask: who are we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How do we communicate our beliefs to a culture that is increasingly skeptical of religion? Where is Christ in this uncertainty? And where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

The Rev. Samuel Torvend will get us started with a presentation asking “*What strength exists within Lutheran spirituality which may be helpful to people who live in our cultural region?*”. Following this he will take questions from the audience. We will then follow up with a panel discussion on several related topics, closing the session with another question and answer time

The Faithful Journey Web site at [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney) provides a number of resources, including frequently asked questions and executive summaries, to aid in understanding the proposed social statement, implementing resolutions, and the ministry policy recommendation. Additional material will be published there in mid to late April. If you as a leader find there are questions that have not been addressed in the additional resources, please email the Church in Society studies staff at [faithfuljourney@elca.org](mailto:faithfuljourney@elca.org).

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## South Africa: Daily Bread

Eleven years ago, gifts to ELCA World Hunger directed through Lutheran Church in Southern Africa Development Services, an associate program of The Lutheran World Federation served as the yeast that helped give rise to a successful small business: a bakery. s a success story filled with the aroma of baked bread.

Sarah has been a baker with the Tshixwadza Bakery Project for its 11 year history. Sarah and the nine other project members work in two teams, with each team working alternating weeks. It's hard work. The day begins at 3 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. There is no running water at the bakery. Since water is rationed in the community, the bakers are only allowed to fill their water buckets at the community tap on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Although the bakery has electric lights, they still cook and bake using firewood.

The women can make 86 to 102 loaves of bread a day, which they sell by the whole loaf, half loaf, and quarter loaf. They also make fried dough balls as a special treat for the children who stop by the bakery on the way to school.

ELCSA-DS did a lot for us, said Sarah. "They helped us get a roof, our first supplies, electricity, and ovens." Each of the 10 project members invested about \$300 in the business. Over the years they have re-invested earnings to make improvements in the bakery.

Today, the bakery is self-sustaining. And the 10 bakers have used the profits to build sustainable livelihoods for their families. Sarah asks us to remember the bakery and continue to pray for us. She goes on to promise, we will pray for you.

Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support sustainable solutions to fight hunger and poverty like the Tshixwadza Bakery Project and many other ministries around the world and close to home.

# He is Risen ! He is Risen Indeed ! Hallelujah!

OFFICIAL ACTS (02/18 - 03/24/09)

HOLY TRINITY - *NONE*

MT. CARMEL - *NONE*

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## Birthdays and Anniversaries

APRIL -

Birthdays:

7 - Nathan Owsley

9 - Tony Hepner

10 - Palmer "Paul"  
Norseth

12 - Jarod Gerlt

14 - Lilly Stoehr

24 - Kelly Doyle

Anniversaries:

11 - Robyn & Greg  
Lentz ('83)

12 - Gwen & Bill Mad-  
dalena ('96)

### Do you have the faith of Daniel?

[Daniel said,] "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty."

*Daniel 3:17 NLT*

In 1989, Lazlo Tokes was the pastor of a fast-growing reformed church in the city of Timisoara, Romania. His powerful preaching had caught the attention of communist officials, and they began a strategy of suppression. Just before Christmas, they decided to send him into exile.

But when the police arrived to hustle Pastor Tokes away, they were stopped cold. Around the church stood a wall of humanity. Christians from around the city—Baptist, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Catholic—had joined together to protest.

All through the day they held their post. As it grew dark, a Baptist student named Daniel Gavra pulled out a packet of candles, lit one, and passed it on to his neighbor.

Then he lit another. One by one the burning candles were passed out among the crowd. Soon the darkness of the December night was pierced by the light of hundreds of candles. When Pastor Tokes looked out his window, he saw a sea of faces lit up by a warm glow.

Two days later, police finally broke through the crowd and dragged Pastor Tokes away. But that was not the end. People streamed to the city square. Hundreds were shot, Young Daniel's leg was blown off. Yet the brave example set in Timisoara inspired the rest of the nation. Within days the entire population of Romania had risen up and the bloody dictator Ceausescu was gone. From God's Daily Promise, Saturday, April 4, 2009

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL  
DO NOT DELAY

A RECONCILING IN CHRIST CHURCH

503-244-5143  
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Mount Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**Oregon Synod—E.T.C.A.**

**THE CHALLENGE APRIL 2009**

the time ahead as an “adventure safari”, with God leading us all into new places and challenges. If we grow faint of heart and lose faith in God’s direction, we will surely fall by the way and get lost. *The rest of the story* for all of us is in God’s hands, but we may have to go through a few “graves” to get there!

I wish I could say I was able to accomplish everything I wanted to do when I first arrived here. I was full of optimism and hope and energy for the task. But, the challenges turned out to be different and greater than I had expected, and required more time and effort than I was able to give, and the directions in which to channel my energy kept changing the longer I was here. Nevertheless, many good things have been accomplished, and I am sure God will give us new energy for the tasks that lie ahead of us in the months and years to come, if we “do not grow weary in doing well!” May God richly bless our ministries, wherever we do them, in Jesus’ name!

*Pr. Ron*