

MEN'S BREAKFAST ~ Saturday July 26 at 9:00 a.m.
Speaker Bwalya Melu, World Vision Program Specialist

Looking for a few good men! We are going down to the Presbyterian Church of New Providence, for a Men's Breakfast on Saturday July 26, 9:00 a.m. Meet at Trinity at 8:15. The topic is the AIDS crisis, the speaker is Bwalya Melu, talking about his first-hand experience with the crisis in his home country of Zambia.

LEARNING GROUP UPDATE

Several members of the council have been gathering Sundays at 8:15 a.m. to study God's Word in relation to our congregation's leadership and governance.

Following are the passages of Scripture we have examined in depth

- ⇒ **Matthew 28, The Great Commission, "Go and make disciples"**
 - "What is a disciple?"
 - "How does the Great Commission get carried out specifically here?"
 - What is the connecting point between the dreams, desires, goals, and objectives we may have as a church and the Great Commission?

- ⇒ **Mark 7:7 "You are good at following laws made by men."**
 - What are our obstacles in the way of our mission?
 - When do rules and bylaws start to function as obstacles?
 - Understanding the history of our constitution as a church

- ⇒ **1 Corinthians 9:19-27, "Run the race in such a way to get the prize."**
 - What does it mean for a church to "win"?
 - How can we be more intentional about winning at our mission?
 - Tangibly connecting the Great Commission to a "win"
 - Secular models of governance verses spiritual models

- ⇒ **Acts 6, "Brothers, choose seven from among you."**
 - Relationship of apostles to the congregation in appointing leaders
 - Systems of governance in the new testament church
 - Relationship of spiritual to the temporal
 - Calling, electing, appointing, or voting?
 - Problems with hierarchy, democracy, autocracy in church governance

- ⇒ **1 Timothy 5 "The office of overseer is a noble task"**
 - Qualifications, nature and role of the pastor

- Possible misunderstandings of the role
- What is the relationship between the governing board, the pastor, the staff, and volunteer leaders?
- Walther's *Church and Ministry* in light of Walther's view of constitution and bylaws
- Leadership as an aspect of serving God

As a companion volume we have been consulting *Winning on Purpose* by John Kaiser, a resource recommend by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's church revitalization effort. Thank you to all those committed leaders gathering early in the morning to study this critical topic!

DEVOTION

Do not merely listen the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.
-- James 1:22

“Boom! Crackle! Hiss!” As I sat at the park this year for the town fireworks, I marveled again at all the families gathered, children awestruck, tired parents glad to sit down after an evening of chasing the kids through playgrounds and blow-up climbing stations. It was another one of those long summer twilights, the weather pleasant, not too hot, and full of eager voices. Finally the show began, and we were thrilled by the spectacle of it all.

Fireworks are fun, and we enjoy just sitting back and taking it all in, and perhaps reflecting about the meaning of the explosions, that a war was fought and won on our behalf. We may recall that the actions of some very wise and brave people brought our country into existence.

Too often church becomes like the fireworks show. We come to sit back and take it all in. We are exhausted just trying to manage the kids, and we hope that we can at least hear some of the Word of God. We are convinced that we have no role to play in God's kingdom except as a listener to his Word. But James reminds us, “Do not merely listen to the Word...do what it says.”

Listening to the word without doing what it says is, in effect, not listening! The Hebrews knew this well—their vocabulary word for “hear” was closely associated with the concept “obey.” To hear was to obey. To listen was to do. A common sermon theme of Moses: “*Hear*, O Israel, all the words of the Lord your God to *keep* them.”

Jesus also taught this. He said on multiple occasions while teaching the crowds, “You who have ears to hear, let him hear.” In other words, not everyone present was going to *really hear* his teaching. Some would merely listen and not do.

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July/August Newsletter
June 30, 2008

We must take great care not to make church into merely listening to the Word, without really hearing it. If we just come to “take it all in,” we are deceiving ourselves. God does not want spectators at a football game, He wants players down on the field! God does not want museum-goers, merely admiring the artwork from a distance. God wants artists to produce! God does not want armchair-critiquers of the story, he wants *characters* to become part of the story. God does not want mere listeners, he wants doers.

Become a doer of the Word. Let us become a church of *doing* the Word together. That is how you fulfill the purpose for which you were called, to be ambassadors for God! That is how the gift of faith in Jesus Christ becomes real for those you know and love. And that is how the kingdom of God comes down to earth among us, God willing, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

--*Pastor Obermueller*