

## **“State of the Church”**

### **Presented on Transfiguration 2009**

*“He is not here. He has risen!”* These are Easter words – words about resurrection and new life. We believe, teach and confess that Jesus Christ bodily rose from the dead; and that as he was raised to new life by the power of God, so also will all who believe in him be bodily raised. This is our Easter hope and conviction. How much more than do we who believe in a bodily resurrection also believe in a spiritual one! I am persuaded that out of the death and ashes of our broken and fractured congregation God is raising a new congregation – a community of faith centered on Christ, grounded in Word and Sacrament, and expressing itself in works of mercy and love in Christ’s name. I want to hold up to you the symbol of the Phoenix – an ancient Christian symbol of the resurrection. The Phoenix is a mythical bird of great beauty. At the end of its life-cycle the phoenix builds itself a nest that it then ignites; both nest and bird burn fiercely and are reduced to ashes, from which a new, young phoenix arises. Out of the ashes comes new life. I recall from my days of active military service that one unit had as its motto, *“Out of the ashes, excellence!”* More than one person has expressed the sentiment that we are heading in the right direction now – moving toward a new health and wholeness. Easter is the time for us to remember that God can bring life out of death, and can bring hope out of despair. During this year, our focus is on experiencing God’s healing for our community. One way is in finding healing *within the community* through mutual encouragement and building one another up. Another way is through *deepening our connections to God and to each other*. We have a long way to journey in becoming a healthy, caring, Christ-centered congregation. It takes all of us working together and it takes sacrifice. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for us brings us new life. The sacrificial life we live in response to what God in Christ has done for us is our faithful response to his act of love. Let’s make this Easter a time to celebrate our new beginning. In February, we celebrated the gift of twenty years as a congregation. Now in March, let’s turn our attention to the present and the future, as we begin in earnest to more fully become the welcoming, reconciling people of peace that God has called us to be. In that spirit, there are three things I pray each of you will do before Easter. First, tell someone about God’s love in Jesus Christ. Is this person living under the shadow of death? Tell him how Christ is life. Is this person living with the belief that she is not, and never will be, good enough? Tell her how Jesus makes us right with God. Is this person in spiritual upset, searching for true contentment? Tell him how Jesus brings peace with God, and how that peace passes all our understanding. Second, read the five year plan and decide how you will be part of it. Third, dig deep and make a sacrificial financial contribution to get the material foundation of our life together back upright. With God all things are possible, because with God there is new life in Christ. Alleluia! Amen.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Buono

# “State of the Church”

## Presented on Transfiguration 2009



*“... Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone.”*

(Mark 9:2)

# Outline of Presentation

- My Sense of Where We Are
  - The First Year
  - Our Location Now
- The Next Year
  - Overview
  - Vision, Leadership and Staffing
- Towards A Shared Vision
- A Closing Word

# The Congregational Five Year Plan

- The First Year – a focus on healing and rebuilding/renewing community
- The Second and Third Years – a focus on developing a shared vision for mission and ministry.
- The Fourth and Fifth years – a focus on witness and service beyond our walls
- The capstone – breaking ground for a new sanctuary

# Year One

## A Time to Heal

*“Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as in fact you are doing.”*

(1 Thess. 5:11)

**The goal of year one is renewing our sense of community and living more fully our congregation’s vision statement of being a *“healthy, caring, Christ-centered congregation.”***

# The Numbers at the Close of Year One

- 200 in worship
  - 240 November 08
  - Peak of 375 in 2000
- Financially, we finished the year in the black!
- The picture is of a smaller and healthier community – one attending to the basics of living together in Christ.

Where are We Now?

***We are ready to begin in earnest the ascent that lies before us!***

# The Ascent

- We have addressed the relational and material elements of our life together, and now it is time to focus more fully on the **spiritual elements**. This will be our 2009 Lenten Journey.
- We have in place the worship services that we can grow with, and now it is up to us to attend and **to invite others to attend**.

# Worship Survey Highlights

- Right number and mix of services
- Next Steps
  - Explore use of *print and screen* at blended
  - Use *LSB for traditional service* on a regular basis
- Start a *worship “committee”* to work with BOSL and pastor on a regular basis to keep worship fresh, relevant and distinctively Lutheran

# The Ascent (Cont'd)

- We have in place a core of Christ Care groups, and now we must **participate** and begin training the next class of leaders.
- We passed an 09 budget that is within reach and **it will require us to stretch.**
- We have worked well together in our healing, and now it is time **to work together in moving beyond ourselves** into a shared vision for our mission and ministry .

# Years Two and Three

## A Time to Plant

“Without vision, the people will perish”

The goal of years two and three is to *cast a new vision* for mission and ministry that is *consistent with and expresses our core values* and *positions us and guides us* for witness and service into the next decade.

# Years Two and Three

- ***Appreciative Inquiry*** as process for vision development – a focus on what we do well and doing more of it!
- Leader development
- A Constitution and governance structure that reflects our theology and core values

# Casting a New Vision

- Monthly town hall meetings
- Focused around three narratives:
  - Personal: what were your best experiences at POP?
  - Congregational: when was our community of faith most enacting the calling to be “church”?
  - Spiritual: When have you most experienced the living Christ at POP?

# Casting a New Vision (Cont'd)

- Leaders facilitate the sharing of narratives
- Goal of each session: *identify themes that we can weave together into a congregational vision for who we want to be based on the best of who we are.*
- What do we do well? Enlarge these areas!
- The end game is an **energized** congregation **empowered** for meaningful and substantive ministry within the larger Topeka community.

# Casting a New Vision (Cont'd)

- Begin after Lent with the training of leaders.
- Conduct one or more town hall meetings per month, from June through October.
- The goal is to have a proposed vision for mission and ministry by one year from now.
- ***The outcome is less critical than the process that gets US there together.***

# Leader Development

- Christ Care Group for Board of Directors already happening – envision continuing this process.
- Continued focus on congregational and leader health and wholeness.
- Recruiting leaders a top priority – fellowship is a must fill now!

# Staffing

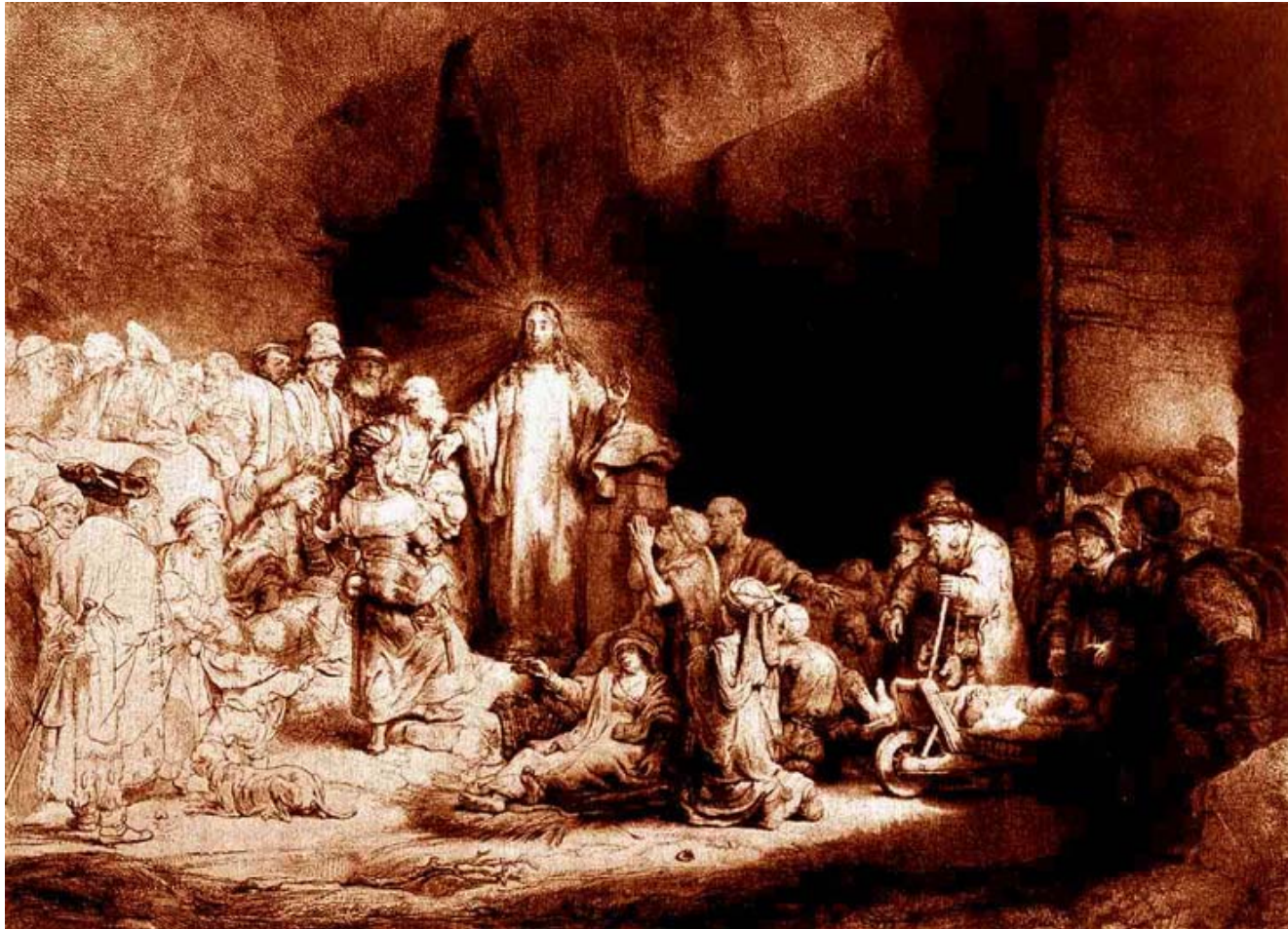
- In order for us to ramp up our ministry with children and youth, we believe we need to move to a **full time DCE** by the beginning of school year 2010 -2011.
- To make that happen 18 months from now, we must begin the process today.

# Years Two and Three (cont'd)

- Stewardship, business practices, and accountability all part of a “strategic business plan” developed side by side with our mission and ministry vision.
  - Dreams with substance
  - Evaluation processes that keep us focused on the Gospel ministry of reconciliation
  - ***Time now for a team to move us forward in this area.***

# Towards a Shared Vision

*A picture is worth a thousand words*



# And Now Some Words

- A place where **members and staff work together** in support of the overall ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5)
- A “missional” congregation that **welcomes** ALL God’s children
- A **healing community** for the journey – not necessarily a destination

- A place where we do children and family ministry well – an **intergenerational community.**
- A supportive, integrated relationship with the **preschool.**
- Taken together, here's my picture: **a community of hope reaching out with the peace of Christ to all people.**

# It's Already Happening

- Lambs of God
- Christian Service - Doorstep

# Pastoral Ministry Focus

- Continue to balance the leading and counseling roles.
- Begin twice monthly clinical supervision of my pastoral counseling, as the practice grows.
- Work with deacons to enlarge their role in pastoral care and worship leadership.
- Balance care for congregation with care for family and self.

# A Closing Word about the Ascent

- We want to remember that Jesus is leading the way.
- The purpose of the ascent was to be readied for the work ahead. The ascent is the beginning, not the end.
- The summit experience awaits us! It can provide energy for the longer journey of life.