

Pastor's Monday -- February 4, 2008

Epiphany and Carnival Time! Transfiguration and Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday - then Lent. But today is the day in between two Supers! Super Bowl XLII and Super Tuesday in which 24 states will be holding primaries for the presidential election. And actually today is not unique, as every day is that day between our past and the future. That is what makes living so exciting – or so very depressing.

I've spent most of my morning reading. It was -42 (or – 34, or – 32, or -30 depending on which source) this morning so I did my morning exercise inside on the elliptical machine – which gives me the opportunity to read! I read my devotions...and then read editorials about the elections, about Evangelical Christianity and how it has changed, about the Super Bowl, and then Judy and I read Portals of Prayer at breakfast (excellent – don't miss). Then after I got to church this morning, I spend an hour reading a book by Shane Claiborne, Irresistible Revolution – living as an ordinary radical. The book is a compelling witness to how Jesus has changed him. He is writing the stuff I have known for a long time, but have seldom had the courage to speak, much less live. The call to be a follower of Jesus, which is the call of Lent, is a radical call and questions much of what we do as a church and how we spend our resources of time and energy. Interestingly enough, in the Introduction of the book, he refers to I Corinthians 1 again and again –

*“Wouldn't we all go to a church that believes in ordinary food and ragamuffins and whose gospel is actually good news? I've grown to admire the humor of a God who uses foolish things to share the wisdom of this world, and weaklings to remind the strong that they may not be as mighty as they think they are (I Cor 1:27).”* I will be teaching this chapter as the core understanding of the Because Therefore classes this coming weekend (Friday and Saturday weekend edition) and Sunday morning at 9:45 in the Volunteer Room.

And foolish as it seems, our meditations this Lent will be focused on listening to the animals mentioned in scripture – On Ash Wednesday – the fox. Again from Shane Claiborne –

*“Now, don't get me wrong. Even though people around the country thirst for something new, the elephant and the donkey are the largest and the most stubborn of animals. And though the masses cry out for a safe, more sustainable world, the bear and the bull of Wall Street are aggressive and are ready to tear apart anything that stands in their way. The truth is that much stands in the way of God's will for our world, beasts like what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the giant triplets of evil: racism, militarism, and materialism...”*

The book was recommended by Dr. Dean Nadasdy who will be our guest the weekend of February 29 and March 1-2. He recommended Irresistible Revolution along with two other titles, Simple Church, Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples by Thom S. Rainer and The Present Future, Six Tough Questions for the Church by Reggie McNeal. As I spoke with Dr Nadasdy last week and told him where we were as a congregation, what our ministry objectives were and the struggles that we were experiencing, he came alive to our needs saying how they reflect so much of what is going on in among Christians who are trying to be faithful to their calling.

I am well aware of the hardship that rising costs for gasoline and fuel is placing on many of our families. With just under 33,000 square feet under our roof, our utility bills have also risen significantly. I asked Kathy Gappert, our business manager, to put together a few figures that would inform you of our increased costs. The challenge of this for me is that these are dollars that support ministry; they do not do ministry. The challenge is to make sure that our space is being used for ministry as much as possible. According to the careful analysis of costs, Open Arms pays 50% + [19% of 50%] of our electric bill and 19% of our natural gas bill. Thank you for your continued and generous support for our ministry through your tithes and offerings!

Rising Utility Costs

Winter utility costs

	<u>January 2007</u>	<u>January 2008</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Electric</b>	\$4,116.76	\$5,239.47	\$1,122.71	same kwh usage
<b>Natural gas</b>	\$3,544.30 (\$1.40/ccf)	\$5,224.17 (\$2.083/ccf)	\$1,679.87	1/08 is not actual bill but based on 1/07 usage

new rate eff. 2/08 is \$2.291 which would = \$5,745.83 in January 2008

Water & sewer has not increased significantly; hope that remains true. .

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Please begin your Lenten observance with Ash Wednesday - Supper at 5:30... classes, etc, then Worship with Holy Communion at 7:30.

Then this weekend, Because Therefore Class Friday evening 7 – 9 and Saturday 8:30 – 2:30.

At 3:00 next Saturday, February 9, we will hold the memorial service for Peter Meticgaruk who passed away a couple of weeks ago in Arizona. A native Alaskan, Peter joined our church a couple of years ago and has worshipped regularly at the early Sunday service.

Blessings.

Pastor Kuehnert