



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast! *January 26, 2020*

Upcoming local community events . . .

We seem to be in a pattern of warm, sunny weekdays and snowy weekends!

- Feb. 3, 2020: Saranac Lake Winter Carnival Service, St. Luke's (Saranac Lake NY), 7:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. SL Winter Carnival is Jan. 31 – Feb. 9.
- Feb. 15-16, 2020: Raquette Lake Winter Carnival (Raquette Lake NY)

Events in the nation . . .

The historic impeachment proceedings are proceeding. It's unknown how they will go forward or for how long. It could just be me, but I think the seriousness has set in, and I'm hearing a little less vitriolic noise in the news, one political party against another.

The coronavirus, a pneumonia-like virus, has infected over a thousand people in China, though because of news blackouts, it is impossible to tell how many people are infected in that country. We know of four cases in the United States as of this morning. I hope that our country continues to keep the public informed about this: "no news is NOT good news!" We pray for all those who are infected, those who have died from this disease, and those who live in fear of it:

God, your love is as wide as the oceans, as deep as the sea, and as tall as the heavens. May your spirit rise like a mighty wave and come and restore those who are ill. You are the water of life; you are a fresh spring; you are healing rain to all those who are in need. Come Lord! Amen.

(prayer source: https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/topics/prayer_for_the_sick.html)

Scripture Readings for the 3rd Sunday After the Epiphany . . .

Isaiah 9:1-4 -- Isaiah tells of a future time when those in the northern regions of Israel, whom God subjugated to Assyrian rule, will not only be free but will also reflect God's power. This is Scripture often read around Christmas: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light..."

Psalms 27:1, 5-13 – The Psalm continues the image of light we see in the Isaiah reading: "The Lord is my light and my salvation." It also reminds us of God's goodness and protection, available in the past, now, and into the future. Finally, it reminds us that prayer and praise as a community are essential in the lives of God's people.

I Cor. 1:10-18 – Paul tackles the problem of divisions in the community. Our loyalty should be to Christ and not to particular leaders.

Matthew 4:12-23 -- Jesus has been tempted by the devil in the wilderness. His responses show his complete dedication to the will and purpose of God. He has refused to use his divine power to his own human ends. Now he moves to Capernaum to launch his public ministry.



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Not a Sermon . . .

"... all of you [should] be in agreement and that there [should] be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:10-13)

It's easy for us to sit back and see what a ridiculous situation this is in the church of Corinth: people claiming to follow one teacher or another. But if we are not careful, we fall into the trap of not seeing similar behavior in ourselves, in our churches, and in our communities, as we condemn and distance ourselves from the Corinthian Christians.

The irony of this scripture is that we often fail to see the extent to which we ourselves participate in, even encourage, similar behavior. Whether in our own churches or at the denominational level, there is a temptation to identify with a leader or a cause that may seem important, but, in fact, is not the message of the Gospel itself. Do we see ourselves as aligned with, for example, social activists, evangelicals, traditionalists, denominational leaders, or local figures?

As we read through Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we see many examples of Paul's admonition to unity, unity under God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." While we, just like the Corinthians, have differences, we have a common, unified purpose.

Paul's call for unity may be heard by some as a threat to diversity of viewpoints and opinions, but that is only because we confuse unity with uniformity. As we from the example of spiritual gifts, Paul acknowledges the diversity of gifts, but only as they are unified under one Lord, Jesus Christ. We don't all have to have the same gifts, but we are called to be in agreement as to the purpose of our gifts. We are unified but not uniform. Unity in faith does not mean uniformity in thought and practice.

The February newsletter . . . I hope to complete next week will introduce the famous Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5:1-7:29. *Blessings, Vance.*

Prayers for . . .

The mourning family of Mugsy Fuge.

Jim (friend from Saranac Lake) who is undergoing cancer treatment.
