



“The Vine”

Growing Together in Christ

Newsletter for New Hope Christian Fellowship



***Monrovia Canyon Park Conference Center
The Site for New Hope's Reclamation Retreat***

***A Retreat With
Something For Everyone***

From Pastor Dennis

Touched by His Grace

A sacrament is a ceremony instituted or recognized by Jesus. Our church, as most Protestant churches, observes two gospel sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these two ceremonies, Jesus touches us with his grace. Through them we come into union and fellowship with him. Baptism initiates a new believer into the Christian faith and the Christian community - the church. The Lord's Supper is a ceremony for believers to renew their commitment to Christ regularly and to commune and fellowship with him often.

Jesus told his followers to go and baptize all believers and to share the Lord's Supper on a regular basis until his Second Coming. As physical beings with five senses - see, hear, feel, taste, smell - we often need more than a preacher's words to bring us to a relationship with Christ. We need things; we're mortal human beings.

From Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper by Leonard Vander Zee, IVP, c. 2004: "The blessing of sacramental worship is the thrill and comfort of knowing that God meets us where we are, washing us feeding us, quenching our thirst for grace. We not only believe it, we sense it, see it, taste it, feel it, smell it and swallow it. What my mind doubts, my mouth tastes as the Lord's goodness. When my faith falters, my fingers can touch the truth."

Baptism brings us into a new society, the church. It not only defines our personal identity by uniting us with Jesus, it also defines our social identity. We become part of a new community, the body of Christ, which sets aside all human divisions and hierarchies. Paul said in baptism we put off the old self like dirty clothes and put on a new self. We dress ourselves up as Christ; we are now identified with him - Galatians 3:27-28 ...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Jesus asks us to remember him in the Lord's Supper by not just using our minds, but by doing something - eating and drinking, smelling, touching and tasting. Each of these occasions is not just a funeral ceremony, with overtones of grief and pain, but a meal with our risen Lord, who promises to be present with us by his Spirit



and unites us with his glorious new humanity. A meal is one of the most common, yet significant acts of human life. Eating and drinking are joyful times that we spend with family and friends.

Why do we take the Lord's Supper? We need it. We need the sacrament of the Lord's Supper alongside the Word because we are human. We need more than talk, more than words on a page - we need a touch, a smell, a taste.

Two lovers need more than just the words, "I love you" but also a kiss and an embrace. The Lord's Supper is God's action of blessing us and expressing his love to us.

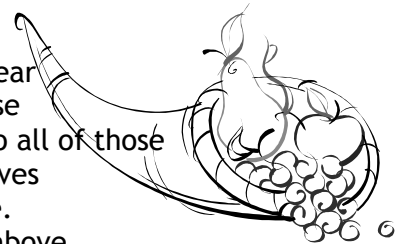
Let us give thanks that our God came to be with us always. He expresses his love to us through his word and through the sacraments that he gave us to experience him more fully through our five senses. He touches us with his grace and love.

- Dennis Pelley

Thanking You

As Thanksgiving draws near
And a year comes to close
We express our thanks to all of those
Who have touched our lives
Through poem and prose.
We also thank our Lord above
Who inspires us with His amazing love.

- Diane Siston



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Reclamation Retreat

Following are reflections on the just concluded Reclamation retreat

Listening To God

Last Saturday I had the privilege of attending the reclamation retreat with about 30 other children of God. It was



held in a beautiful little canyon above Monrovia. We convened in a nice meeting hall that was clean, cabin-like and had lots of windows.

I was glad there were so many windows so we could enjoy grass, beautiful trees, and hillsides while we were learning. The gray sky was a backdrop for the fall leaves drifting gently to the ground like snow. A mother deer and fawn came next to the meeting house and peacefully grazed for over two hours. These were not tame deer, but wild ones from up in the mountains. I took this as a sign from God that he was blessing our time we had devoted to learning more about him and how to reclaim lost sheep.

I was a little surprised about what we spent the bulk of our time learning about. I thought it would mainly be about *how* to talk to the lost, but the focus was *what* we should talk to them about -- the real gospel. The good news that we are saved entirely by faith in God's Son and that our works can't save us or cause us to lose salvation.

A very helpful tool in understanding this deeper was a diagram developed in the Thursday night Bible classes. We also had some periods of time where we all prayed silently or just reflected on what we were learning together as a group. That was really powerful. God's Spirit can really speak to us when we all stop talking. We also had a really nice lunch and fellowship time.

On the way home the traffic on the 210 freeway was very heavy and slow moving at first. I was quite frustrated about that. But then I realized that God was putting the icing on the cake of a very special day. You see, there was a gorgeous sunset taking place and the freeway proved to be a fantastic place to see the whole sky full of changing clouds, colors and lights as we crept along towards home.

God really blessed us that day. He showed us his saving love, his beautiful creation and the peace that comes from listening to Him.

If you can make it to the next retreat, I would highly recommend it. You can't outgive

God, as they say. And if you give God a day, He'll give you one right back. That's way more fulfilling than anything you could do for yourself.
- Jeff Eisen

Soothing And Serene

Reclamation day was a reflection of what the Holy Spirit has planned for New Hope Christian Fellowship. The seminar taught us how to be equipped to teach the good news of freedom from condemnation through justification, sanctification, to glorification by faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We talked about old and new shackles that we still need healing from. We had a lot of fun. We laughed, and we cried and through it all we really enjoyed one another.

Celestine Olive and Phillip Olive gave information on grief recovery. Pastor Pelley encouraged us; Diane and John stirred us to action. Our teachers were there to punt when necessary. Those who served the food were radiant and kind. The soulful songs of Diane's harp playing were soothing, titillating and serene. It was as if Gods presence moved inside of us and the stress lifted its ugly head.

At the end of the day I bummed a ride with John and Diane. On the way home, driving down and around twisted curves, we ran dead into one of the most beautiful sunsets that I have ever seen! What a confirmation! That was worth the trip alone. Inflamed in a blood-red circle was the sun going down into the horizon. It was as if in that moment that was a precursor - new hope today for tomorrow. - Willie Edwards



Hope To Continue On

Usually, about once a week or so, I go for a bite to eat at the Burger Continental with my friend Bill on South Lake, near California Blvd. This area of town has special significance to me, as it was just around the corner, that I had my first "home away from home", when I moved to Pasadena from DeWitt, NY in May 1978.

Actually, at first, there were seven of us, all Worldwide Church of God members, living on the upper level of a two-story house. Although there were the usual chafed feelings and irritations among roommates, especially living in such close quarters, for a brief period of time, there were a few moments of special closeness

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Living Water

Pond Or River?



When I was small, I spent time with my cousins on Grandma's farm. We went looking for excitement down at the pond & discovered some slimy inhabitants. What fun we had catching frogs and wading in the mud. The adults weren't too happy when we made it back to the house much worse than when we left.

Ponds are messy places, with mud, algae, critters and cattails. With a source of fresh water, ponds can support life, but they can become a little stagnant. The water is still and lacks oxygen. Algae and invasive plants can take over. By contrast, the fresh water in a flowing river can support many different fish and doesn't stay still long enough to get stale. If I needed a drink, I'd certainly choose a river over a pond!

Our spiritual lives can be compared to ponds and rivers. We can be stagnant like a pond—not moving, stale and choked of life. Or we can be fresh and lively like a river.

To stay fresh, a river has to have a strong source. If the source dries up, the river will die. Spiritually and physically, God is our source, giving us life and strength, and constantly renewing us. We don't have to worry about God ever losing strength. He is a river that will flow, strong and fresh, forever.

In the book of John, Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:38, NIV).

"This invitation to come and drink is the climax of a series of references to water in this Gospel: the water turned to wine (chapter 2), the water of the new birth (3), the living water (4), the cleansing water of Bethesda (5) and the calming of the waters (6). All of these have revealed Jesus as the agent of God who brings God's gracious offer of life" (The InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary).

Isn't it marvelous how God provides for the thirsty in this dry and weary land where there is no water (Psalm 63)? All he requires of us is to come and drink. Anyone and everyone can drink the water of life. Why then do so many thirsty people stand before the well and refuse to drink?

Are you thirsty, maybe even dehydrated? Are you like a stale, stagnant pond? Refreshment and renewal are as close as your Bible and as instant as a prayer.

So come to Jesus every day and take a nice long drink from the Source of all life, and don't forget to share it with other thirsty souls.

- By Tammy Tkach

Hope from page 3 among us cramped brethren. What made it all so special, was the sense that somehow, with all of our humanity and infirmities, by being in the church together, we were all part of something bigger than ourselves, and that, like the Harry Chapin song played for us said, we were all "On the Road to Kingdom Come".

Even so, "cracks" between us began to appear. I would move on the Ambassador College campus for my first semester. In time, some moved back east, at least one has passed on, and others have settled here and about, getting married, having families, and moving on with their lives. Even later, a little more than a decade ago, changes began in our church, no doubt leaving even more breaches, both within and without the church as a whole.

And so sometimes, as I look down South Lake I wonder, what did all of it mean? We all have our own personal stories. Was it all special for no good reason? I believe that whatever the answer is, whatever flaws the church may have had and whatever mistakes we have made, personally, doctrinally, or administratively, that God had begun a work in our lives back then that continues to this day. And that applies to those who have fallen by the wayside somewhere, as the song says, "with no direction home."

I made a special point to go to the Reclamation meeting last Saturday because I believe that these meetings address this and offer hope to continue on past whatever wreckage or damage may have occurred to cause us to stray from our path to whatever greater or lesser degree. And that it was not all for nothing, and that now, we need to help each other up, and to continue on.

If any of this has any significance to you, or you know someone to whom it might, please consider attending one of our monthly, or special meetings. All would be welcome. We offer our support, and covet yours.

- Al Doshna

