

The New Olympian

April 2009

The Monthly Newsletter of the Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren
tel. 206-525-8900 • www.olympicchurch.org e-mail: info@olympicchurch.org

The forecast:

a strong likelihood of liminality

By Pastor Ken Miller Rieman

If I had a nickel for every time in Seminary that I heard the word 'liminality', I could have gone into the free ministry instead of searching for a full-time paid position. But as overused as that word was, I find it returning to me in a powerful way. It describes, so well, my personal, and if you'll allow, our collective, state of being.

Blessings to the great Wiki who offers a definition for liminality: *(from the Latin word 'limen,' meaning "a threshold") is a psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective, conscious state of being on the "threshold" of or between two different existential planes, as defined in neurological psychology (a "liminal state") and in the anthropological theories of ritual...*

OK, maybe that's of limited use to us. Bottom line, we're standing on the threshold of great change.

One year ago, I was emotionally recovering from the shock of my father's near death. His cerebral hemorrhage left him on the threshold of life itself. I was forced to contemplate a life without him—a life with just one parent.

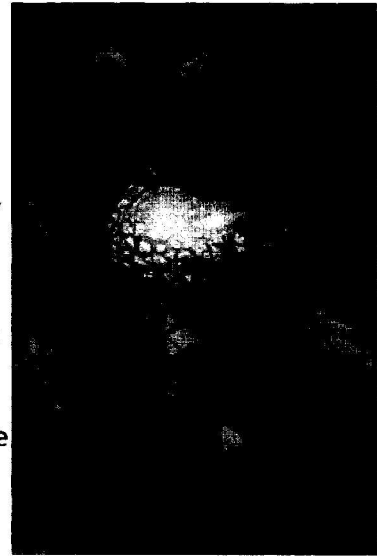
With the love and prayers of so many, and a Herculean will to recover, my father fought his way through intensive care, the rehab hospital, and completed his physical therapy goals ahead of schedule. By Memorial Day, he and Mama were

visiting me and Kate in Seattle.

Prior to that, I'd taken my parents' health, largely for granted. After that, there was a feeling that our time together was 'bonus' time. It was a great gift, and not to be squandered. Last summer, there were people at the Rieman reunion who hadn't been there for years. They shared my sense of this being gifted time. None of us imagined we'd all be back together so soon, holding each other through the loss of both of my folks.

But the changes continue. As my sisters and I sorted through my parents' things in Indianapolis, we watched the inauguration of a historic presidency. Politics aside, it was a moment of great pride, the realization of a dream my parents had pursued from the beginning of their life together.

Last month, my sisters and I re-united with the wider Rieman clan again to mourn the loss of my cousin Cooper. At age 16, he succumbed to the Muscular Dystrophy which had so forcibly



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shaped his life, and the daily reality of his family. They are crossing the threshold.

This week, I was grieved to learn of a different kind of passing. Our denomination has closed its Washington Office. In High School, I'd attended two seminars, organized by the office, to help youth consider what it means to be citizens of both this nation, and God's kingdom. It helped me to see the folly of practicing a faith which disregarded the important connection between our faith and how we live with each other.

In college, I'd spent a summer there as an intern, helping to keep the national church abreast of major policy concerns, and helping our legislators to hear the voice of our church as they wrote new laws. I saw, firsthand, what a difference Christians could make by bringing their conscience to the national conversation table.

Through the years, I've seen that very few institutions have the kind of witness that we have had. Our character and values as a church made our voice unique, not so much on any single issue, as on the whole of our witness. I could not imagine us being who we are as a church without having a voice in Washington.

There's been no bonus time, no warning. On my birthday, the just shut it down, a budget necessity. It turns out the denomination is really hurting. The Washington office was closed in a move which has terminated a number of staff positions, totaling over \$500,000 in annual expenses.

We stand on the threshold of a new age. Ministries which were funded by endowments are shutting down, or are draining resources from those which aren't. Church membership is down, and the younger members who join don't tend to share the traditional commitment to denominational, let alone, congregational ministries. Some of these ministries have been cut loose, left to find their own revenue. The ones which have been able to connect with people's hearts have adapted well to the new reality.

It is hard to 'spin off' an official church office. You could make it independent, but then it's not really speaking for the church. You could try to join our office to those of other churches, strug-

gling to keep theirs open, but it's hard enough to get Annual Conference delegates to find common ground on the issues which the office represents, let alone the delegates from multiple church offices.

As I write, we're still in the Lenten part of this journey. Our existential state is in crisis, and in many ways decline. I can feel it personally, in the life of our denomination, and in the economic crisis that roils our nation and planet. We know the journey to the cross because we are living it.

But our reality is also changing. The things which once were are being replaced by new things. We stand in the doorway of this changing reality, still unclear about the possibilities. At the very least, we are learning the lesson of impermanence. Our world doesn't stay the same. The question is, will we?

Will we so defiantly cling to the old reality that we don't even try to understand what is changing? Will we deny the change, and the grieving it requires, and become emotionally unequipped to face our need to adapt? Will we find it too cumbersome to honor our legacy and abandon it altogether. Will we lose who we have been as we uncritically embrace the popular conceptions and temptations of our new reality?

Between the cross and the open tomb, the friends of Jesus live in liminality. They live between what they have learned and known, and what they are called to become. They live between the kingdom come, and the kingdom still coming. The friends of Jesus are those with the courage to see both realities and know that they are in between.

I give thanks that I am not here on the threshold alone. It can be a pretty shaky place, and I'm glad for those who are helping to hold me up, for those who help me imagine new ways to be in relationship with each other and with our legacy, and for those who deepen their commitment to our common life in the body of Christ's love. With hearts open and faces lifted may we face the new day.



Lighten UP, Brethren

'Prayer and journal entry' by Kathy Fuller Guisewite
Submitted by Stephanie Herkelrath

This year, God, why not be the God of sparkling joy? Why not? Why not overwhelm your Earthly children with delights unimagined and even delights imagined? Not to teach us anything except to rest us from the struggle, to affirm in us that dreaming is purposeful and possibilities are more than mere thoughts. Especially for the hopeless, God... come on...you know You want to...crash through the barriers and toss some pretty confetti and burst out in song and laughter... so that feet that have long walked heavy will begin to dance.



If You can create a whole world in seven days...in seven days You created all of this amazing wonder...then just imagine what you can do with this whole year!

Yep... it's time, God. You know it is. Just take out Your paints and Your fun, funky threads, take out Your guitar and flute, find Your sweet scented band-aids, and Your sturdy tool box...and have at us.

We all need new haircuts and new hearts. We need our souls to be jump-started. We need You to massage our little clay bodies into Your image once again. Oh, God...have some fun so that we might come to know what fun is. Shake loose the clouds that fill our minds, the hovering of worries, and let us return to Eden where our choices this time do not squelch our freedoms nor Yours.

Let's be reunited this year, God. Let's stretch Earth a bit closer to Heaven and bend Heaven a bit closer to Earth...so that when we lovingly gaze out of the window between the two...we will find the breath of angels still warm and moist.

Don't You hesitate, now, Sweet God. It's okay to bend the rules. You just go ahead and put on Your most comfortable shoes, and stroll on over to Your favorite garden. We'll meet you there. We'll be the ones who look like You...watching and waiting for You from the top of the slide.

Shared Prayer Requests

In Our Community:

Congratulations to **Tiara Walker**, just married!
Congratulations to **Alice Dalrymple**
on her 90th Birthday!

For **Jerry Bowers** seeking treatment for
an atrial arrhythmic event.

For **Ed Enzi**, hospitalized last week.

For the family of **Myrtle Perriott**, Sharon Haley's
aunt from Belize, who died recently,
and for Sharon's brother **Paul**
in need of a hip replacement.

For healing and strength
for Sharon Haley's sister **Ruth**.

For **Dorothy Johnson**, recovering at home from
heart-valve replacement surgery last month.

For **Alice Hanson**, recovering from brain surgery to
prevent future hemorrhages.

Ongoing prayer requests:

Rieman Family; Jimmy Barnes;

Geraldine Campbell; Chris Pride;

Gene & Donna Harnden;

Bill Case's daughter, **Carol Kamada;**

Lew Fortin's nephew, **Michael Rogers;**

Richard Shoemaker, Bill Shoemaker's brother;

Peggy Cochran; Jean Ulery;

Sharon Haley's brothers, **Mark and Paul Andrews;**

Lowell Geiver; Patti Berg;

Eileen Birky's mother; **Vera Gastfield Wolfe;**

Lois Thomsen; Evelyn Merritt; Elsie Clayton

Our Nation, State, and World:

- For all who have been affected by rising unemployment and economic challenges, including all of our locally situated family and friends impacted by layoffs.
- For peace in Iraq and all countries.
- For people throughout the world coping with the death or imminent loss of a loved one.
- For democratic reform and the protection of civil rights in Pakistan, Kenya, Sudan, Chad, Burma, Zimbabwe, and Tibet.
- For protection from violence and banditry in Moundou, Chad, where Smith-Derksens work.

Devotional Reading:

"Fulfilled"

By James L. Benedict
Fresh from the Word
March 23

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you - that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled" Luke 24:44-49

When was the last time life left you speechless? In the case of the stunned disciples gathered in the upper room, it was the appearance of the risen Christ that robbed them of their words. It is easy to imagine their bewildered expressions and their racing thoughts. Can it be? What does it mean?

Jesus does all the talking in this text from Luke's Gospel, and what he says is aimed at answering their questions. First, he offers his wounded hands and feet as proof that it is indeed he. Then he moves on to the much more important question: What does it all mean?

What it means, Jesus explains, is that God is faithful. The plan and the promises of God are being fulfilled. The crucifixion may have been a terrible tragedy, but it was no accident. It was a way to show the depth of God's love and the strength of God's commitment to humanity. Not even death can defeat our God.

When we grasp what Easter means, we recover our voices and join with Christians everywhere to sing, "Christ the Lord is risen today - Alleluia!"

Request: Ham Radio Operators

King/Snohomish County is looking for volunteer licensed radio ham operators to assist in disasters in our areas. If you or someone you know is willing to help assist with communications during a disaster please let the Wilkinsons or Shoemakers know, or if additional information is needed, leave a message at the church.

Thank you. JoAnn Shoemaker, 206.242.3427

For everything that lives is holy, life delights in life. William Blake

Olympic View Graduate Breakfast

If you or a family member will be graduating from High School, College, or another stage of your education, please call the church office or Goldie Barnes so that we can honor you at our June 2009 Olympic View Graduation Breakfast.

Contact Info:

Goldie Barnes 360.659.4703
Olympic View Office 206.525.8900

Another (the 7th) successful Game Day and Green Potluck Dinner

About 20 members of the congregation gathered on the afternoon of March 14 for a couple of hours of game playing followed by a "green" potluck dinner. We enjoyed pinocle, Mexican train dominoes, Take Off, and other games with lots of laughter and Irish music playing in the background. Dinner was fun, also, with corned beef and cabbage as well as many other green dishes. Again, lots of fellowship around the tables as we shared. Thanks to all who attended, brought food to share, and helped clean up. (Clean up was even fun, with everyone helping!)

G.U.I.L.D Updates

G.U.I.L.D. Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at Northaven for breakfast (\$3.00) and a program.

Attendees put \$1.00 per meeting into a donation basket. This is what this money has done in the in the past three-plus years!

2006 : \$150 to repair Silver Coffee Pot

2007 : \$100.00 to Camp Koinonia
\$ 25.00 to "One Great Hour of Sharing"
\$ 90.00 to Silver Teapot Repair

2008 : \$ 50.00 to Northaven Foundation
\$ 25.00 to "One Great Hour of Sharing"
\$ 40.00 to Koinonia 50th Anniversary
\$ 30.00 for locks on Showcase
\$ 25.00 to Bethany Seminary
\$ 50.00 to Heifer Project

2009 : \$ 20.00 to Audrey Taylor Memorial
\$ 20.00 to Rieman Memorial
\$625.00

GUILD wants to know what the Men's Breakfast Group has been up to.

OVCCB Board Meets

Nine members of the OVCCB Board of Administration met on March 11th to discuss church business.

Pastor Ken continued a discussion about "Exemplary Leadership Behaviors," this month focusing on "Encourage the heart." We discussed the ministries and activities of our church that encourage our hearts, and focused on the area of worship.

We set dates for TWO Church Work Days (there are a lot of jobs to do!). Please put April 4th and June 6th on your calendars now (9 am to 2 pm) and plan to help spruce up the church building and grounds. Everyone is welcome and luckily, not all jobs involve tall ladders!

We heard updates on the carpet selection process and the new church website.

We discussed the financial situation of the church. The months of January and February hit us hard financially, with giving down, and large bills -- the copier maintenance contract, gutter repair and replacement, and large gas and electric bills (all that cold weather). We appreciate that everyone continues to give faithfully to the church.

We prayed for the church family, especially those with special needs at this time.

Submitted by Stephanie Herkelrath, Church Clerk



2009 Deacon Training Meetings

Wednesdays, May 27 & September 30
Meetings begin at 6:30 PM.

Hopefully Humorous:

*Sometimes details
make all the difference!*

Friends, from time to time pieces of humor cross my desk, usually coming from one of you. I thought I'd pass this gem along. If you find it in poor taste, you can send me something which conforms to yours, and I'll share the blame for this one with the donor who dared send it to their pastor, and whose identity I will, for now, protect. Cheers, Ken

The pastor asked if any one in the congregation would like to express Praise for answered prayers. A lady stood and walked to the podium. She said, "I have a praise. Two months ago, my husband, Jim, had a terrible bicycle wreck and his scrotum was smashed. The pain was excruciating and the doctors didn't know if they could help him."

You could hear an audible gasp from the men in the congregation as they imagined the pain that poor Jim experienced. She continued, "Jim was unable to hold me or the children and every move caused him terrible pain. We prayed as the doctors performed a delicate operation. They were able to piece together the crushed remnants of Jim's scrotum and wrap wire around it to hold it in place."

Again, the men in the congregation squirmed uncomfortably as they imagined the horrible surgery performed on Jim and the wire wrapping he has. She continued, "Now, Jim is out of the hospital and the doctors say, with time, his scrotum should recover completely." All the men sighed with relief.

The pastor rose and tentatively asked if any one else had anything to say. A man rose and walked to the podium. He said, "Good morning, I'm Jim and I want to tell my wife, ONCE AGAIN, the word is STERNUM."

Upcoming Choir Dates

Practices

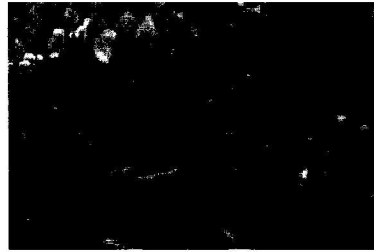
Wednesdays, April 8 and 22 at 7:00 PM

The choir will sing during Worship on:
Sundays, April 12 and 26

Transformational Moments

By Student Pastor, Cabe Matthews

I'm taking a class right now that is supposed to be about preaching, but my school, which for better or worse always seems to feel the need to push the envelope and do things a bit differently, doesn't have the word "preaching" in the title of the class. Instead *this* course is called "Crafting Transformational Moments," an ambitious and ambiguous but nonetheless lovely title that leaves the content of the course open to be just about anything.



I wonder if crafting moments to transform people is what preaching is about. I suspect transformation typically happens in a somewhat bigger context than just preaching, or leading bible studies, or really anything that a pastor *does*. I think preaching and pastors are an important part of a bigger picture of what transforms people, but it is the whole picture together and not just the parts that has the power to transform each of us (and, just maybe, the world).

I had to write a paper for this same class about the different times I've encountered God in a sermon. Now, I'm pretty sure that I've had plenty of experiences that I could describe in that way, but my paper ended up being extraordinarily boring because I couldn't remember any specifics. All that I could recall were the churches I've been a part of and some particularly influential people who I met there.

Yet, transformation never seemed contained in a particular sermon that I heard, nor was it in a particular conversation I had had. Instead, I think I encountered God through church communities of which I've been a part and the character of the people I met there. Sermons and Bible studies have been important parts of those experiences because those are important parts of what churches do; furthermore, I think that's where we as a church learn language to help us name what we believe and why we believe it. These activities also help us to articulate the kind of people we're trying to

become. So sermons and Bible studies are an important part of the kind of transformation that we're about, but they aren't identical to it.

Instead, I think the actual transformation, the meat-and-potatoes of the Christian life, happens as we actually try to be the kind of people who see the world through the eyes of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. This, I think, highlights two important things: the first is that all of this is not something that any of us can do alone, and it is also something that we can't think of as the pastor's job or leave only within the walls of our church. This is something that we all have to do together, seven days a week; otherwise we aren't really doing it at all.

The second thing that I'd like to point out is what a 'transformational moment' is for us as church. As far as I can tell, there has only been one that is really necessary, and it ought to shape everything we do when we gather. It is why we baptize, it is why we break bread together, and it is why we wash feet. All of these are very strange practices we do in order to remember and continue to be transformed by one particular moment in the history of the universe. And we look to be transformed in the light of *that* moment because we believe that it has changed the course and the meaning of history, even though sometimes this change from death to life seems very far away. The moment I'm talking about is, of course, the moment we are moving towards in the church calendar right now, the 'moment' that we call Easter, and in whose light we seek to continually structure and re-structure our lives. Easter is why we gather and Easter is why we "go in peace to love and serve the Lord." And Easter is why we can have the courage to do such strange things as repent, or love our enemies.

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We welcome you to our services.