

The New Olympian

January 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

Salvation: How We're Different from Protestants

By Student Pastor, Cabe Matthews

A lot of Protestants have heated arguments around the particular nature of salvation. Is it something God does, or is it more about what we do as individuals in response to what God has done? Some of you may have strong opinions on the topic, and others of you might roll your eyes when you see the debate I'm going to briefly interact with (I would!). But in the end I'm going to claim that as Brethren we actually think about salvation differently than either of these groups, and that I actually think our answer is superior. But I'll let you decide for yourself.

The group we know today as Calvinists claim that God alone is responsible for salvation. We are completely powerless to do anything about it because God is really big and we are really small. God picks who is in and he picks who is out. When we do 'good works' it shows that our faith is genuine. But we are completely powerless to do these good works by our own power. In fact, according to this viewpoint, we can't even have faith at all without God giving it to us. Anything good we do is from God, and only the bad stuff we do is genuinely ours.

The main groups today that would more or less claim this viewpoint (or at least a toned-down version of it) are the Presbyterians, Reformed, a lot of Southern Baptists, and most of the evan-



Sam Edmark takes a flying ride at Snow Camp, 2008

gelicals. One of the benefits of this viewpoint is that it is a very tight system that makes good logical sense, at least when viewed from a certain angle. That's probably why this view was so persuasive to me when I was in high school: I was looking for answers, and Calvinism supplies very neat and clear cut ones that don't demand as much from me in response. According to this standpoint, I'm a completely passive vessel; God will take care of me as God wills it, and if I live rightly it is only because God willed it.

One downside of this tradition is that it makes God seem cruel sometimes, and it makes it difficult for humans to take any responsibility for bad things that we do. If someone gets cancer, hit by a drunk driver, or murdered in the Holocaust, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this was God's will. As you can see, this creates some pretty big problems, and so I find it less than

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convincing at this point.

The other traditional side of the debate is called Arminianism. These people tend to place the emphasis on us and on our responsibility to respond to God's actions with faith and good works of our own. The main groups that would hold this view are Methodists, Nazarenes, 'free will' Baptists and some evangelicals. It also might seem a lot closer to us as Brethren, especially with regards to its view of humanity and the idea that we have a responsibility to live a certain way in response to what God has done.

The view of God here has a much smaller tendency toward cruelty as it opens up the fact that we as humans often do bad things that we can't blame on God. But one big problem with this view is that we as humans are very aware that salvation is something we can't do on our own. We fail all the time, and this creates a bit of difficulty for Arminianism, and the potential for fear and shame in those who follow it.

Luckily, I'd like to argue, these two positions don't apply to us at all. The earliest Brethren were influenced by Pietism and Anabaptism, neither of which has a dog in this fight. I'm only introducing this debate because I know that these two viewpoints have a way of creeping into places they don't belong. For instance, I mentioned earlier that I was a pretty convinced Calvinist in high school, which was incredibly ironic because I was going to an (officially) Arminian Methodist church. As another example, a friend of mine at Seattle Mennonite Church grew up in a Calvinist Mennonite church, which is really weird.

So I'm going to propose that when we think of salvation as Brethren, we don't think of it in terms of this debate between Calvinists and Arminians. As far as I'm concerned they are both right in some ways and wrong in others. Maybe they are just asking the wrong questions. The idea that salvation must *either* be something God does *or* something that we do should be foreign to us. Rather, I think we view salvation as something that we *participate* in – it is something God has done and is doing, but it is also something we are called to get involved in. God's saving activity is much more holistic in our tradition than the Calvinist/Arminian debate, and so I think we should politely disagree with

Happy New Year!

both groups. For us, salvation definitely involves individuals, but it also involves communities, all the world's peoples, and the physical world/universe itself.

Last month I wrote about how in Advent we wait for God to come and save the world, but we can't forget the salvation God has already begun in his son Jesus. It is *that* salvation that we are called to participate in. Not some disembodied, abstract, individual version of salvation, but the kind of salvation that is for the whole world. Paradoxically, it has already come, but it has not yet reached its fullness. As the church we are called to live into the "already" of God's salvation while longing for the "not yet." That's why we care for the poor, love one another, and yearn for peace: because we believe God has brought and is bringing forth a new creation, and we're just trying to live in the same key as that reality.



Young Adults turn Snow Camp 2008 into a crochet party.

Friends January Event

We had great fun introducing your young grandchildren to theater in November. Let's do it again: Come see ***The Wizard of Oz***, as adapted by Broadway Bound Children's Theater, on opening night Friday, January 9, 7:00 PM. Tickets are \$12. Performance held at the Broadway Performance Hall on Capital Hill. Amy Helmuth plays Dorothy. Meet at the church at 6:00 PM to carpool. Refreshments will be served afterwards at the Helmuth's house, 8237 2nd Ave NE.

Please call Jana for tickets. 930-9608. Note: our home phone number is 206-607-9575.

Snow Camp at Camp Koinonia:

"There's Snow Love Like God's Love"

(Romans 12.9-21)

This year come to Camp Koinonia with your Olympic View family and friends to have fun, get exercise, and enjoy the spiritual warmth of an invigorating weekend surrounded by the beauty of Camp Koinonia's natural setting.

Suggested donation is \$40.00 per person / \$120.00 per family (max). Pay what you can;

Ahna Bisterfeldt bundled up for a winter trek at Snow Camp last year.



scholarship funds are available. Cost should not be an issue that prevents you from attending!

Please call Kathy and Roger Edmark at (425) 743-5725 or the OV Church office at (206) 525-8900 if you are interested in attending Snow Camp.

The Edmarks can answer all questions on what to bring and how to get to Koinonia; or call the church office for information.



Carmen Lau on a flying saucer.



When you visit, check out the beautiful new cabins that were built with your support.

Olympic View's Snow Camp begins Friday, January 30 and continues through Sunday, February 1, 2009

What to bring: Sleeping Bag, Pillow, Snow & Cold weather clothes (boots, gloves, hats), Bible, flashlight, Sleds, Games, Toothbrush, Soap, Towels, etc.

Leave all electronic devices at home!!! Snow Camp is a great time to get away and relax. We offer fun in the snow, food, fellowship and exciting activities.

Jerry Rodeffer Called to Serve as Brethren Benefit Trust's CFO

Jerry Rodeffer, Olympic View member and father of Board Chair Jeanesse Miller, has relocated to Elgin, Illinois to serve as CFO of Brethren Benefit Trust. Mr. Rodeffer has worked in banking and business for the past 14 years, and prior to that he served in the roles of CFO and treasurer for BBT. In returning to the role of CFO, Mr. Rodeffer will direct BBT's finance department and oversee management of eight national investment managers and the company's investment system.

During his tenure as Brethren Foundation director, the organization grew to service 75 participating Church of the Brethren affiliated members with assets of \$26 million. Today, the foundation's assets exceed \$120 million.

Congratulations on your new position in Elgin, Jerry!

Peacefully. Simply. Together.

God Finds a Way,

by Daniel M. Petry
Fresh From the Word (December 15)



Reading: Isaiah 46:8-13

...I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfill my intention" (Isa. 46:9c-10)

Human beings can't see the End, and we can only guess at the Beginning. The chaos of daily life renders clear, long-range vision difficult. Wars and rumors of war, poverty and famine, school shootings and domestic violence all cloud our eyes with the gritty dust of despair. Our optimism rises and falls with the tide of history and the circumstances of daily life. Yet Christians hope. We hope not in what we may yet accomplish, for it seems that on the heels of every human success is a humiliating failure. Rather, we hope in God, the One and Only who sees and declares the End from the Beginning.

On the island of "Jurassic Park," one of the characters kneels beside a nest of broken dinosaur eggs from which scores of tiny, three-toed footprints lead. Since all the adult dinosaurs were created sterile, this is an amazing discovery. With a look of wonder in his eyes, he says, "Life finds a way!"

Devotional Reading

Christian hope is based on the historically-proven premise that *God finds a way*. Whether we are with God, against God, or completely unmindful of God, God finds a way to complete his purpose and fulfill his intention. Isaiah offered to help, though he felt like a voice crying in the wilderness. Jonah ran away but ended up saving a city. Cyrus ("the bird of prey") unknowingly freed God's people for a spell. But in Christ God freed us forever! God finds a way.



Happy New Year!

Shared Prayer Requests

In Our Community:

Gene Harnden shares thanks for everyone's prayers and support as he adjusts to living apart from Donna, who is now at Foss Home:
**13023 Greenwood Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98133,
(206) 364-1300**

Thanks for **Andy Thill's** healing.

For **Jerry Bowers**, recovering from cataract removal surgery in November.

For **Vera Gastfield**, recovering from successful back surgery.

For **Peggy Cochran** who recently underwent angioplasty.

For ongoing healing for **Lois Thomsen** who anticipates returning to Northaven on December 18th or 19th.

For **Jean Ulery** and **Evelyn Merritt**, recovering from knee replacement surgeries.

Ongoing prayer requests:

Jimmy Barnes; Geraldine Campbell; Chris Pride; Gene Harnden;

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

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

Richard Shoemaker, Bill Shoemaker's brother; Kathy Edmark's brother, **Kenn Boulton;**

Sharon Haley's brothers,

Mark and Paul Andrews; Lowell Geiver;

Patti Berg; Eileen Birky's mother

Our Nation, State, and World:

- For all who have been affected by rising unemployment and economic challenges.
- For all people affected by interreligious violence in central Nigeria.
- For the victims of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai.
- For peace in Iraq and all countries.
- For people throughout the world coping with the death or imminent loss of a loved one.
- For an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement and an end to the occupation of the West Bank.
- For protection from violence and banditry in Moundou, Chad, where Smith-Derksons work.

Upcoming Choir Dates

Practices

Wednesday, January 7
Wednesday, January 21

Singing Dates

Sunday, January 11
Sunday, January 25

Request for Wood

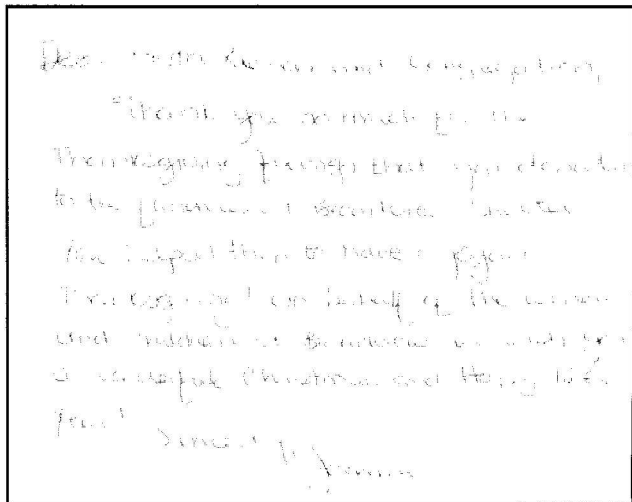
Donna Liberty has alerted the church office that she needs firewood. If anyone has extra firewood for a wood burning stove, please call the church office (or email kim@olympicchurch.org) at (206) 525-8900. Or, you can speak with Donna directly before or after Sunday Worship.

Book Club

Book Club reads *Housekeeping*, by Marilynne Robinson on Friday, January 23 at 10:00 AM. Book club meets in the church kitchen for discussions.



Nancy and Haile Bedada wear traditional Ethiopian attire at the International Potluck. Don't forget this year's International Potluck is on Sunday, January 11.



Thank You card from The Broadview Women's Shelter

Thanks to Carolers, from Northaven & Northgate Chamber of Commerce

Thank you so much for coordinating and singing at the caroling at the Breakfast with Santa event! It was such a success! Can you please pass on our gratitude to all those in the caroling group?

Thanks again,

Annette Adler
NORTHAVEN
Northgate Chamber of Commerce,
Board Member Elect

The Job Description

by Jim Barnes (with God's help)



Once upon a time in heaven, more than 2,000 years ago, God announced a job description that probably went something like this:

The souls on earth are not doing well. My creations have been stubborn and contentious and have forgotten their purpose, and I miss them. I want our original fellowship to be restored and I have a plan.

The mission I have in mind is to reach out and touch every one of the souls I have ever created. Since I am God, I could just require them to change their ways and worship Me, but I would rather have each soul decide to restore their relationship with Me and become My son or daughter of their own free will and to desire to be with Me and to appreciate the good things I want to give them (you know, like all human parents want for their children).

I will need someone to lead this mission on earth who has the knowledge of My purpose and the love of My creations. It will be necessary to experience the human condition from the ground up and to love and care for each soul like a shepherd does for his flock. It will also be necessary to travel extensively, mostly on foot, under sometimes harsh and uncomfortable conditions (no corporate jets or cars), and have the ability and power to remind people of My existence, and to convince human souls of My love and purpose, even when they do not want to listen.

As My CEO of this mission, you will be given many titles, including The Messiah, Prince of Peace, and the only begotten Son of God. You will, for My sake, forgo all earthly possessions (no iPod) and even friends and family.

I will provide My own Spirit and will recruit many helpers to support you in completing this mission. You will find that most or all of these helpers are untrained and you will despair of their ever getting it and it will not be quick or easy. Don't worry: I will teach them and fill them with My Spirit as needed. Oh yes, it will also require the ultimate sacrifice on your part (even unto

death on a cross) to complete the transformation from sinful existence to a full and abundant life, as I have always wanted for all of My children. I will raise you up to the honored place at My throne and you will be the savior of all who believe.

Would you apply for this job? Well, probably not, but thank God, Jesus the Christ did; and through his life and love all are invited to become daughters or sons of our God.



Important Approaching Dates

- January 4—10:00 AM Communion Service
- January 9—7:00 PM Wizard of Oz Friends Event
- January 11—International Potluck
- January 14—7:00 PM Board Meeting
- January 27—6:30 PM—8:00 PM Deacon Mtg.
- January 29 thru February 1—Snow Camp

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We welcome you to our services.

Happy New Year!