



Growing in Grace

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen — 2 Peter 3:18

Case Statement

September 27, 2013

There is a pressing need for a confessional Lutheran church and classical school in the nation's Capital. God has richly blessed Immanuel with faithful Scriptural teaching, an overflowing communion rail, and school classrooms bursting at the seams. We need to seize this moment. Now is the time to cement Immanuel's place in Alexandria for generations to come. This capital campaign will raise funds to do just that - enhance the sanctuary, build more classrooms, and improve our aging facility. **We ask God's help to grow in grace.**

Into the Wilderness

By now, you have seen the Case Statement for our capital campaign many times. The central theme — Growing in Grace — is enthusiastically posted all over our building and on Kick-off Sunday, September 22, members of Immanuel spelled out the theme in front of the congregation.

The beautiful logo for the campaign, shown at the top of this newsletter, serves as a wonderful visual representation of the theme.

The Case Statement is printed above. We are now focused on the purpose of our capital campaign: we



want to raise funds to upgrade our sanctuary, build more classrooms and improve our bathrooms and kitchen.

Before we start thinking about fundraising, though, we want each of our members to make sure that they are spiritually ready to move forward, just as Christ spent time in the wilderness before He began His ministry.

That's why we chose to have three weeks of Spiritual Renewal at the beginning of our campaign.

Everything in this mailing packet is geared to help you in your spiritual life. Please take as much time as possible out of your schedule to ponder quietly on your spiritual life and all of the materials in the mailing. Then emerge, refreshed and renewed, for the second phase of the campaign!

STEP BY STEP FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS:

Now

- Look over materials in this packet
- Put Prayer Tent together and determine where to place it
- Continue "90 Days" of Prayers

October 6

- Attend Wilderness First Steps Sunday; listen to Spiritual Testimonies at end of service
- Begin Wilderness Journey by reading and digesting materials in packet

October 13

- Attend worship; listen to Spiritual Testimonies at end of service
- Continue reading materials; begin to determine which spiritual exercise will be most helpful to your spiritual health
- Sign up for an hour or more of the Prayer Vigil
- Consider whether a fast will give you better focus as your "time in the wilderness" comes to an end

October 19-20

- Complete your Spiritual Renewal Pledge Sheet to bring to church
- Participate in Prayer Vigil
- Begin fast, if appropriate
- Attend Spiritual Commitment Sunday; listen to Spiritual Testimonies

October 22

- Make Sure to RSVP to your Home Gathering Host

What Are You Doing at 2 a.m. on October 19?

Our guess is you are available at 2 a.m. on October 9, or 3 a.m., or 4 a.m. and so forth. We need your heart, your mind and your folded hands for prayer at the



"Growing in Grace" Prayer Vigil on Saturday, October 19 into the morning of Sunday, October 20.

The Vigil will start at 8 p.m. on Saturday evening and go until 8 a.m. on Sunday morning.

If you have never been to a vigil, do not worry - there will be a host there to guide you. There will also be suggested prayers provided along with some resources from the hymnal. Everyone will also be provided with prayer requests from fellow members.

Those of you who have been to a vigil before know how meaningful it is and we hope you will join us. As always, we need some devoted people to come join us for the late night and early morning hours.

If you would like to conclude your "time in the wilderness" with a special time of reflection, consider fasting for all or part of the time of the Vigil—from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

Think of how joyful it will be to "break" your fast with the Lord's Supper during worship on Sunday, October 20.

Please bring your completed prayer cards to the church anytime before or during the Prayer Vigil. A box has been placed in the Narthex to gather the completed prayer request cards.

Immanuel at Prayer

The more people we have attending this moving event, the more we will be able to cast pleas for mercy before the throne of God in heaven for an effective capital campaign. God has told us that He is a our dear father who wants to hear requests from the heart of His beloved children.

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:11-13

When It's All Finished...

- Our sanctuary will be bright and welcoming.
- Our communion rail will be more accessible.
- Our kitchen will be large, modern and functional.
- Our bathrooms will be the best bathrooms in the history of the world (or at least in the history of Immanuel).
- Our school will have additional classrooms to serve our growing student population.



Strengthening Our Spiritual Muscles

Many people have a physical exercise routine and those who don't wish they did. We have been reminded over and over again in our culture about the importance of good physical health. What we don't hear about is the need for spiritual exercises that lead to good spiritual health. Our "Growing in Grace" program has a helpful prescription to that end.

Ultimately "Growing in Grace" is about raising funds to build and renovate our church and school, but the Bible teaches that good stewardship grows out of spiritual renewal and so the first phase of the campaign is all about assessing and addressing our spiritual health.

This newsletter is a part of the campaign Wilderness Preparation Packet. For the next three Sundays, we are going out "into the wilderness," so to speak, as Jesus did when He began His ministry.

The purpose is to take a few quiet moments out of the craziness of modern life and assess where we are in our personal spiritual exercise

program and then build up the weak muscles and further strengthen the strong ones. Where are your spiritual strengths and weaknesses?

- Do you attend church regularly? If so, that is a strength.
- Does your mind wander when you listen to the sermon? That is a weakness that needs to be addressed.
- Do you own a devotional book? If so, that is great.
- Do you use it everyday? If not, that is another weakness that could be addressed.

The enclosed Spiritual Renewal inventory sheet will help you assess these and other spiritual strengths and weaknesses.

Here is how it works and the steps that each member is asked to take:

- Read through the enclosed one-page Spiritual Renewal inventory sheet. (There are two sheets in each mailing. If you need more for your family, they are available in the church office.)
- Use the Wilderness Period (the next three Sundays: October 6, October 13, October 20) to assess



your current spiritual exercise routine and pray for strength and commitment to increase it.

- Sometime before October 20, check one or more areas of spiritual exercise on the Spiritual Renewal pledge sheet that you will re-commit yourself to or that you will increase.
- Seal your Spiritual Renewal pledge sheet in the enclosed pledge return envelope.



On October 20, bring your sealed pledge envelope to church. All members will bring their spiritual pledges forward in

dedication to the Lord. (There will be copies of the inventory sheet available at church that weekend.)

If you cannot be in church on October 20, please mail your spiritual pledge to church or bring it to the church office.

These pledges of increased spiritual exercise will bring more of God's word and sacraments into our lives, which will give us the spiritual strength to make meaningful financial pledges later in the campaign.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ JESUS,

Many of you have kindly noted that I have lost a lot of weight, along with my wife Kassie. Most of you noticed it when we came back from Sabbatical last December, although in truth we had started our effort the previous March. I'm really happy to have lost the weight, but I'm not proud of it. I never should have gained it all in the first place.

"How did you do it?" is a question I've been asked a lot. The answer is pretty simple: exercise more, eat less. But one thing I discovered about myself was that I was very, very good at fooling myself. Previous attempts to lose weight ended in failure for me, because I didn't have a good sense of what damage I was doing to myself with food and drink that was unplanned, or consumed simply as stress relief.

What did the trick for us was Weight Watchers. Not the meetings; just tracking points with the computer or iPhone. (Stick with me, this will be about something spiritual soon enough.) The plan is well-designed. When you start out, you get a lot of points. But you have to track what you eat. Everything.

In the middle of September, I finally reached my goal weight: I wanted to get back to what I weighed as a senior in high school. (Some of the weight is still in the wrong place, though!) But there is still work to be done. I can't go back to eating like I did before or not-exercising like before. I've come to see that eating and exercise is not a "diet" or program, but a radical change.

Kassie has had a mantra throughout this process. "We're not on a diet. We're making life-changes." She changed the way she cooked. We changed how we snacked, shopped, and where we ate out (a lot less!).

Sometimes we slipped. But we held each other accountable, and I'm sure I would have given up many times if we weren't in it together. I said we didn't go to any meetings, but I suppose the meetings were going on every day as we made and executed the food-plan.

The spiritual life is very much like this. We know that we are supposed to go to Divine Service, pray regularly, read our Bibles, and generally take our spiritual health seriously. But like diet and exercise, it's easy to develop some bad habits. Over time, they accumulate.

But good habits can also gain momentum. And it's better if we do them together. We can talk about them, not to boast, but to encourage each other. The best things to talk about are the failures: What went wrong? Why did I eat all those Cheetos? Why did I skip my prayers? What did I learn about myself? What should we do next time?

The *Spiritual Exercises* booklet (you should have received one in the packet along with this newsletter) is

encouragement to attend to the health of your life as a disciple of Jesus. I strongly encourage you to think of these not as temporary measures, but, as my wife would say, "making life-changes." And let's do them together. As a family. As the church of Jesus in this place.

I very much want this capital campaign to be a serious time of renewal for our congregation. This is no ploy just to raise money. To be sure, the church needs money if we're going to meet our goals. But there's something much deeper at stake: our life as disciples of Jesus, dying in the faith, attaining unto the resurrection. That's what the Church is for. And that's what the three weeks of spiritual renewal will focus on. So take a good look at these *Spiritual Exercises* and make a commitment on October 20 at Divine Service to make some life-changes. And what we'll find, I pray, is that it is God who does the changing in us as He works on us through the means of grace to **grow in grace**.



Your unworthy undershepherd,

Pastor Esget

