

The VENUE

Latah Valley's monthly newsletter

January/February
Issue no. 8

Dream Theories...

"I have a dream," said Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And ever since that infamous speech, we've been wondering and working for that dream-society, where people are "judged... by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, this year celebrated on January 21, is supposed to be a national holiday which honors the civil rights leader's legacy. In the spirit of idealism, it may also summon us to collective action. So, around the country, inner-city neighborhoods are cleaned up. Gardens are planted. Consciousness regarding race-relations is raised. The virtues of affirmative action are praised... And yet, for the vast majority of United States citizens, the third Monday in January may have become another day to sleep in. Blah. Blah. Blah. This is an unfortunate development, but still something we could have (and should have) foreseen. If there's one sure-fire way to kill a awe-inspiring movement or to put the kibosh on social activism, simply ask the legislators and the bureaucrats to make it the official law of the land. Sanction the prophetic word as the status quo and things will revert to nothing very special. Just another day to do laundry.

Dreams, you see, work much better when they are dreamed (and acted upon) beneath the radar of official politics. The best biblical dreams, for example, take place as obscure and seemingly minor characters are just trying to keep their heads down. The fiancée of Mary, you recall, had been reluctant to marry the pregnant teen until "the Lord appeared to him in a dream" (Matthew 1:20). Joseph is likewise warned "in a dream" (2:12) about the ebb and flow of King Herod's pathological obsession. God apparently makes use of an individual's sleep time simply because it's not usually

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See You At The Threshold!

202 East Meadowlane Road Spokane, WA 99224 509.481.8119
website: www.LatahValley.org e-mail: info@latahvalley.org

monitored or censored by the powers that be. Moreover, whenever highfalutin despots have dreams about regime change, subversive interpreters are called in to clarify. (See another Joseph in Genesis 41 and Daniel in Daniel 2 and 4).

With these observations in mind, there are essentially two theories about dreams both of which may encourage us to hit the spiritual "snooze" button. And by "snooze" here I don't mean to suggest that we lose out, or that we're lazy and therefore undeserving of God's blessing. I mean that in spite of the world's frenzied alarms, there's always a way of trusting... resting... in God's version of events.

So, here goes. Jeremiah 23:28 says "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully." The theory here, of course, is that dreams which are truly formative and from God will stand the test of time and engage the risk of public scrutiny over the course of events. In the case of Dr. King, a wish about his own personal longevity had to be distinguished from his dream of dynamic social change. "Like anyone, I'd like to live a long life," mused the Baptist preacher before he would soar with the dream of what had to be proclaimed from every mountain and mole hill in the state of Mississippi. King died in April of 1968 while advocating for the wellbeing of striking garbage workers. And that's what it means to hit the "snooze." It means to trust God with the dream of just relationships even when we don't get the day off from school or work.

Another dream theory that we might glean from Psalm 126 describes the people who returned to Jerusalem centuries after that city's devastation. Verse one says, "we were like those who dream." They were like their poetic predecessors, like their parents' parents, who could only have imagined "the restored fortunes of Zion." But then, there it is! In living color! Dream fulfilled! A little bit of heaven! Restoration that people could see, hear, touch, taste and smell! Yes, in theory, this kind of dream seems strange to us because we typically only dream dreams that may occur in our own specific span of life. The dream of a trip to Hawaii may happen if we plan ahead or if we hit the lottery. God's dreams, however, often breach those categories. And if we hit the snooze—imagining a cure to cancer or a dramatic reduction in poverty—there's no telling how a wild glimpse of wonderful might someday become completely and irrevocably true. ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

February 6—7 p.m. ASH WEDNESDAY—joint service of worship with Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church at Hamblen Park Presbyterian.

ASH WEDNESDAY marks the symbolic journey of Jesus toward Jerusalem, a journey that culminated with his death upon a cross. Christian believers around the world will set February 6 apart as a day of reflection. By allowing ashes to be smeared upon our foreheads we contemplate our own mortality and recall the way Jesus wrestled in the wilderness prior to embarking on his ministry.

March 21—7 p.m. GOOD FRIDAY—joint service of worship with Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church at Moran Prairie Elementary School.

GOOD FRIDAY does not seem very "good" at all. Jesus' crucifixion--the Roman Empire's form of capital punishment--makes us wonder about God's presence in the midst of human suffering. What possible significance could there be in such a brutal historic happening? Why should we care more about this tragedy than we do Pearl Harbor or 9/11? By asking these and other questions, we open ourselves to the possibility of hope--Easter hope!



Children's Education

I am very excited to be part of a team launching the new Latah Valley Presbyterian Church. My name is Pat Gulick and I am currently helping by organizing the Gather 'Round Children's Education program.

What a terrific group of sweet children! Ever since hearing about the new church, I have been unexplainable drawn to serve in some capacity in this venture. Being a teacher, both in the public school system for many years this seemed like the perfect way to become involved. Each week I thank God for the glimpses of God that I see in the eyes of the children and for all I learn while teaching them.

Please feel free to join in the excitement. Sign up for a Sunday by contacting me at patsdragon@gmail.com



Congregation

Our First Service!

December 9 at Moran Prairie Elementary School



Worship Leaders

Cake that proclaims: Welcome to the Threshold

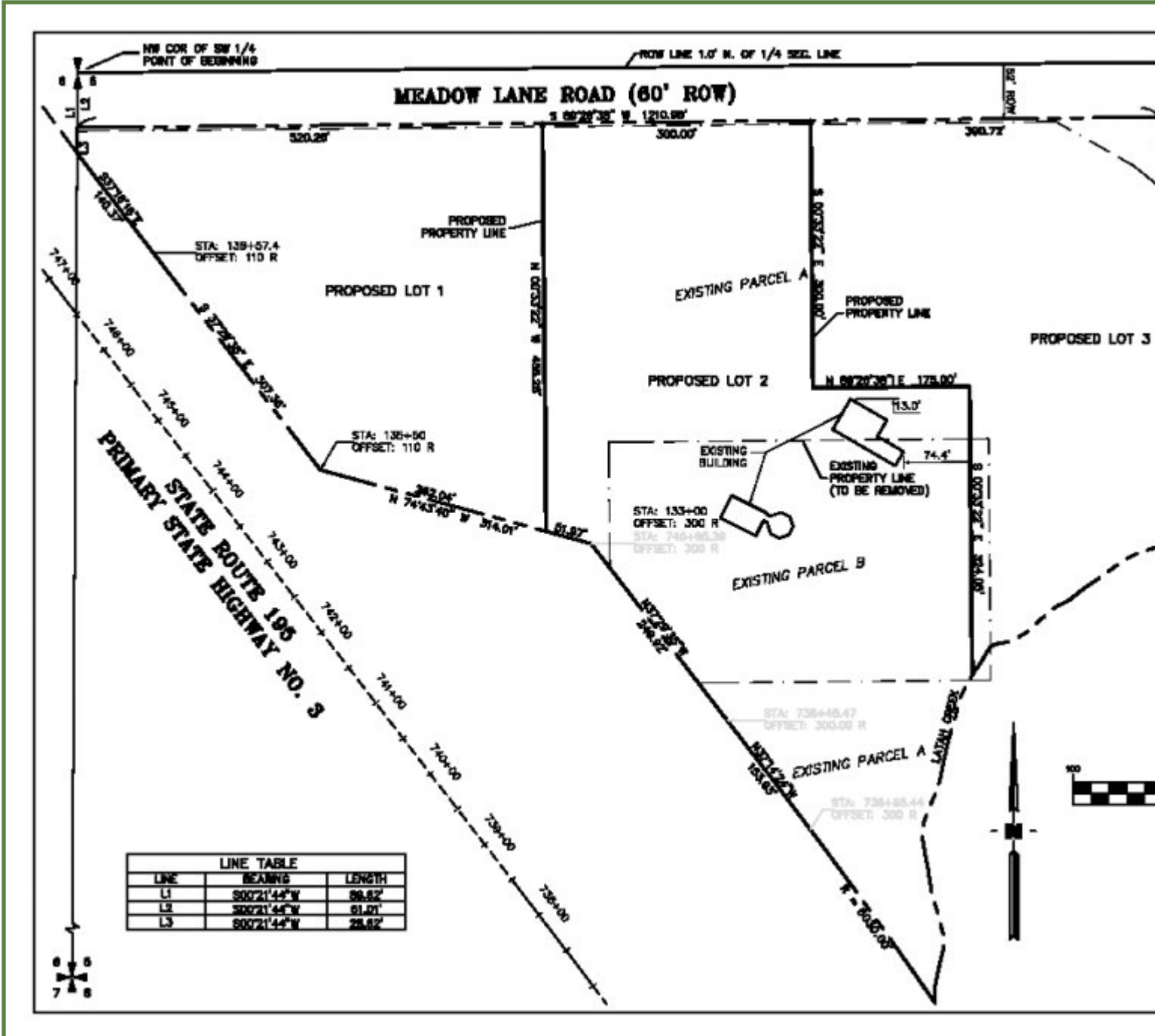


Beneath the Survey Lines:

Church buildings, as you may know, are a mixed blessing. Not only do construction materials break down and require continual maintenance—the energy it takes to address building-related issues often distracts the community of faith. From what you may ask might people like

us be distracted?

Well, the Missio Dei of course! God has sent and continues to send ambassadors of his Coming Kingdom into the world. Latah Valley Presbyterian Church counts itself among those commissioned disciples of Jesus. And so, when it comes



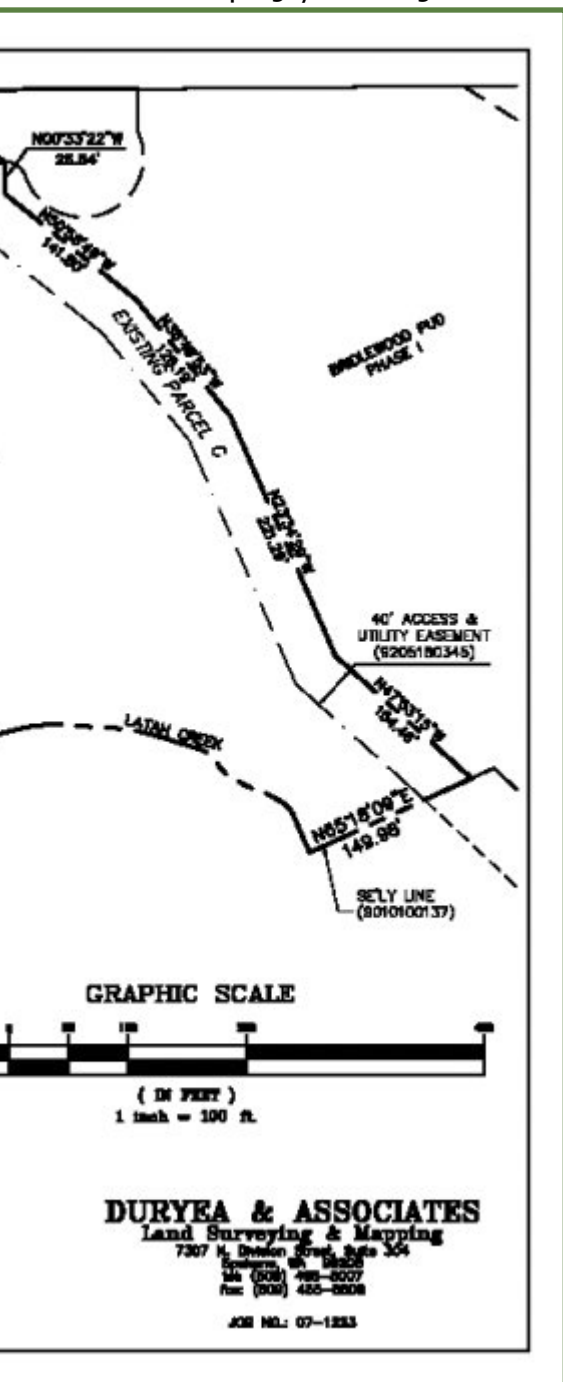
Grassroots

to our property (202 East Meadowlane Road; Spokane, WA 99224), it behooves us to be prayerful and wise as well as generous.

In the coming weeks and months, Latah Valley will host a variety of events, encouraging already existing congregations to donate time and money to the cause. On Sunday, April 20th, for example, the First Presbyterian Church of Spokane will provide the setting for a Capital Campaign banquet. We call this campaign, Crossing The Threshold, and at the dinner itself we will ask for pledges to help pay off the

mortgage on the property. Latah Valley and its supporters remain very confident this will go well. But you might see how the administration of such an event can get sticky... Securing the property, hitting a certain numerical sum and taking care of our financial commitments are not the end-goals in the least. On the contrary, we take care of this parcel of land because of the ministry that God would like to do upon it. We dream about building a beautiful sanctuary at this location because of the beauty that we see in the light of Christ.

With this in mind, note the survey lines below. When all is said and done, ours will be the middle L-shaped segment of terra firma—“proposed lot 2”—which includes the house and the barn/garage. Yes, these are pretty impressive lines, which mark out approximately six and a half wild and wonderful acres. Praise God! And yet, even more worthy of praise and thanksgiving are the grassroots and the seeds which lay beneath the survey lines. You, the reader of these very words, may be one of many interlocking shoots of growth which will sink deeply into this place. You may almost feel the germination of hope with every fertile footstep. Consider the verdant possibilities. With the change in the weather, allow the Spirit of God to extend your reach into relationships that you didn’t know were possible. Beneath the lines drawn here are the grassroots. And beyond the building of a new church facility, made of stone, steel and wood, is the formation of a faith community, made of blood, sweat and tears.



Sliding Into Missy's Car: A Metaphor For A Faithful Future

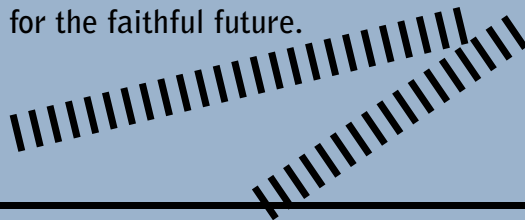
* Leaving worship on Sunday, January 6th, my Honda CRV slid into Missy Majnarich's car. Missy takes care of the coffee and the baked goods that we serve at the conclusion of our service each week; so when my vehicle's brakes failed to grab onto the icy surface of the road I could anticipate exchanging insurance information with someone I knew. Bang! Smash! Crunch! [Please call out the onomatopoeia of your choice.] * The right rear side of my automobile demonstrated the principle of inertia perfectly: the tendency of a body at rest is to stay at rest, and the tendency of a body in motion is to stay in motion unless disturbed by an external force...

* It's that last part of the phrase that gets to me every time I've suffered some kind of scrap, injury or mishap. An external force—namely Missy's car—disturbed my gliding glissade down 57th Avenue. And that, my fellow travelers, is a compelling metaphor for a faithful future!

* Consider, if you dare, the accidents that now await all of us in 2008. We may wish to remain at rest. We may wish to continue our smooth ride toward the comforts of home. But what if the Creator of the Cosmos intends for us to collide? What if that Sovereign and Mysterious Lord has crafted space and time in order that we will not be able to avoid one another? What if there is an isolated neighbor just waiting for that jarring jolt of communion?

* I can illustrate. Just prior to my fateful fender bender, I put my foot on the gas pedal and accelerated past another person, who with his Toyota Camry, had skidded off the road. I called attention to the unfortunate commuter as my 16 year old son, Ian, glanced at him out the passenger window. I said, "That guy is going to need a tow." And then, lo! And behold! As the intersection with the Palouse Highway came into view, I could not slow down. In fact, my flippant comment about that anonymous man, requiring a tow, would turn out to be my future. With the damage to my wheel well, the Honda CRV could no longer maneuver. Missy's husband, Mike, helped me to pull it to the side of the frozen road and together we then contemplated what to do next.

* One thing, of course, became very clear. Even as other drivers had their difficulties, I realized how amazing it is to know and to be known by the person into whom you have crashed. Missy is someone with whom I share faith in Jesus Christ. And Jesus himself collided with the powers and principalities of this slick world long, long ago. It's the way he handled that terrible incident in Jerusalem that still mystifies us today and gives us hope for the faithful future.



Solace in the Psalms

A review of Marva Dawn's book, My Soul Waits

Why does my soul seem silent, waiting for something or someone? A sadness just out of reach disturbs my peace. Have you sometimes felt like this?

Marva J. Dawn, a writer, theologian and sufferer, long ago published a book about waiting. The book was subtitled "Solace for the Lonely in the Psalms". It was reprinted in 2001 after Marva made some additions and revisions. Life has been hard for Marva. However, she knows how to make lemons into lemonade with God's help. I heartily recommend My Soul Waits to you since most of us have had some hard spots in our lives that are difficult to deal with.

One Psalm studied in this book is the 94th and its 19th verse is more than mere solace. It speaks of God's consolation bringing a deep joy to the soul. What does that phrase mean: "joy to the soul?"

This is what supports us best in our moments of pain and panic: the assurance that we are loved even though we are doubtful and disagreeable people. If we can know we are cared about when we feel rotten about ourselves and our fears, then we can have the courage to change and not be afraid. The loving kindness of Jehovah is what we need to hold us when we feel we are slipping. Then we can discover that the sense of falling is a false one, for we are really being sustained tenderly by our Lord.

The last verse(19) of our text contains the surprise. Not only does the deep, deep love of Jehovah support us, but furthermore it actually brings us past the point of panic into a sense of well-being that can even issue in delight."

How does the reader know the strength and truth behind the words? Marva Dawn writes about what she knows and what she has seen and experienced. These are a few chapter titles:

Our God Records Our Tears
The Right Kind of Fear
Joy When Nothing Seems Good
Tasting The Lord's Goodness
Finding The Strength To Go On
Help To Resist Temptation

Pick up a copy of My Soul Waits by Marva Dawn and find solace for the lonely in the Psalms.

- Hazel Newkirk