

MESSIAH RALLY SUNDAY 2014

Ecclesiastes 12:1

1 Timothy 4:12

Matthew 19:13-15

Rally Sunday—Messiah Lutheran Church

September 7, 2014

Pastor Nathan Thompson & Charis Bjorklund

On this Rally Sunday I have asked Charis to do a dialogue message with me. It is important as we begin this exciting new school year at Messiah to have you get to know Charis better, and to have you hear from her some of the wonderful ideas and passion that she has for our mission together for Jesus Christ.

You know, it is amazing that well over 3,000 years ago King Solomon, a man known for his great wisdom wrote these words: *“Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come.”* Solomon knew how important and essential it is for young people to learn to know God our creator; to develop lives centered in faith and love; before the challenges of life dim their hope and vision.

The Bible certainly focuses many places on the importance of youth. One major Old Testament story, of course, is how God called David, a young shepherd boy, to be a leader. David, of course, shows his courage in killing the feared Goliath with his sling shot; in outwitting Saul who wants to kill him; in being anointed by Samuel to be King.

In thinking about Samuel we remember how his mother, Hannah, dedicated him to the Lord and how he went to live in the temple with the priest, Eli. One night God calls Samuel in a dream, and Eli instructs him to answer, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” God again chooses to work in and through the life of a young person.

Even in the case of Jesus we have that wonderful story of when he was 12 years old. He and his parents were visiting Jerusalem for the festival and on their way home they realized that Jesus was not with them. Upon returning they found Jesus in the temple listening to rabbis and teachers. He responds, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Jesus himself often lifted up the importance of young people and children. He told his disciples one day, *“Let the children come to me and forbid them not, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* Jesus also said, *“Unless you receive the kingdom of God like a little child you will never enter it.”*

Question: *Charis, I know that you have been nurtured in your faith in Jesus through your childhood and to this day. What were some ways you came to know Jesus as your Savior?*

Charis share:

When the Apostle Paul started his missionary journeys he chose a young evangelist to help him by the name of Timothy. Paul empowered Timothy as an important disciple and leader. Later

Timothy himself, in encouraging other young people in the church said these words, “*Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.*” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Question: *Charis, what has been your experience in being called as a young woman to be a minister and to be a leader at Messiah? What do believe are some gifts you bring here as a young person?*

The wonderful message in the Bible is that God has called each one of us, young and old, to be his children. He has called each of us to use the gifts he has blessed us with to serve him in his mission. Every person, regardless of age, is an equally important part of God’s kingdom.

Question: *Charis, how do you see the children and youth of Messiah fitting into the Kingdom of God?*

Now a very big reason why children and youth are so important is because youth is an important time for learning, for developing good habits, for nurturing, and for excitement about the future. As people get older it is sometimes more difficult to learn certain things; sometimes an older person gets more set in their ways; sometimes an older person feels tired and worn out.

I know that many of you here today remember how it was you learned to know Jesus in your youth; how you learned at home from your parents; how you learned in Sunday School and Confirmation; how you learned through your church youth group and through other youth activities. Many of you are here today because a foundation of faith was established in your heart from the time you were young—Jesus became real to you then and you still know him now.

Question: *Charis, why are young leaders so important in the church today?*

One of the problems, however, is that many young people and children are not learning about Jesus today like they used to. Many families say they are just too busy for regular worship and to get their kids to Sunday School; others say the church is just not relevant to their needs; others have been turned off by the church because some churches are stuffy and stale; some churches are stuck in their old ways and are not very children or youth friendly.

Question: *Charis, what are some ways you have witnessed Messiah being a youth-friendly church? How have you experienced the support of our congregation in doing your ministry and how important is that support?*

Question: *Charis, you have some very exciting plans for Messiah’s Youth Ministry this coming school year. Please explain and share some things about the excellent mentorship program you have put together; about the 8th – 12 Grade Youth Nights; about the National Youth Gathering; about Confirmation; about 4th – 7th grade activities; about Habitudes.*

You know, this truth has often been stated, “Faith in Jesus is more caught than taught.” In other words, faith in Jesus comes into a child’s life best if Mom and Dad are living and practicing their

faith in Jesus each day—if a child and youth experiences their parents worshipping, praying, giving, serving, talking about Jesus, living strong values. The home is essential.

Faith is also caught in a church where the members love Jesus, where people work together in mission, where worship is filled with life, creativity and meaning. It is caught where the church puts children and youth as a priority; where Sunday School volunteers love Jesus and love kids; where the whole church cares deeply about those who are here, and those who are not. I thank, commend and challenge you at Messiah for being, and to continue to be, that kind of community.

Question: *Charis, you also have another big ministry at Messiah as our Worship Minister. Please share some of your plans for the Messiah Choir, the Youth Choir and the Praise Band. How do you see worship and music helping Messiah to be a youth and family friendly church? How can others and new people become part of these groups?*

There is a statement which says, “Youth is not a dress rehearsal.” It is important to remember the challenges our youth are facing these days are great. It is difficult growing up. Youth often face challenges in their homes, in their schools, from their peers, in our culture. Drugs and alcohol are an ever present temptation; wanting to be liked and fit in often leaves them vulnerable; competition for grades; college acceptance; jobs; success are intense.

It is so important that our children and youth come to know Jesus is a real and personal way. It is so important that they learn and are mentored in their faith and understanding of the Bible. It is so important that they have Christ-centered adults, a supportive congregation and friends to stand behind them, encourage them, pray for them, love them, and to celebrate with them. My friends that is our mission at Messiah Lutheran Church.

That is why Solomon, a very wise man said over 3,000 years ago, “*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come.*” May God bless Charis, our children and youth, along with all of us at Messiah as we work together in helping our young people be all that God created them to be.

Question: *Charis, would you please pray for Messiah’s mission, ministry and youth as we enter into this new school and program year? Prayer:*