

Get It dONE for Families

Daniel 4:1-3

Paul Gauche

For over half a century Prince of Peace Lutheran Church has been a strong presence of faith for countless people near and far. From down the street to across the state, from Seattle, Washington to Clearwater, Florida, from Canada and the Dominican Republic, to the western shores of the continent of Africa, Prince of Peace has been known as a community of faith that takes seriously God's call to "Get It dONE" for the sake of the Gospel. Since the very beginning the focus and goal of everything has been faithfulness to the call to pass on a vibrant faith from generation to generation, to Get It dONE for Mission. To Get It dONE for Families. To Get It dONE for Children. To Get It dONE for Worship. To Get It dONE with Generosity.

For decades people have embraced this vision and supported this ministry that expresses God's amazing grace and awesome love for all people – no exceptions. And now Prince of Peace continues to be poised to be...

- A church that Gets It dONE through engaging worship with beautiful music led by gifted, talented, creative musicians;
- A church that Gets It dONE by families living into the promises of baptism;
- A church that Gets It dONE by serving young people, seeing them NOT as the church of the future, but embracing them as the church of the present;
- A church that Gets It dONE by teaching, coaching people how to enter into the scriptures; to think creatively, critically, in ways that illuminate how the Bible still speaks;
- A church that Gets It dONE by gathering for weddings, confirmations, community meetings, AA meetings, school district meetings, being available even as a voting site;
- A church that Gets It dONE by walking deeply into

grief and loss, by conducting funerals and memorial services that bring comfort and closure for people in grief;

- A church that Gets It dONE by packing millions of meals for starving children around the world and providing food, clothing, dignity, respect, dental care, emotional and spiritual support for people in need right in our midst;
- A church that Gets It dONE by opening the doors – all 14 or 15 of them between two buildings (we'll come back to that) – as wide as they can possible open in order to lean into the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I don't know about you, but every time I look back at our history, I'm more committed and inspired than ever to continue the partnership with such a spectacular congregation and a gifted staff. I want to lean further into all that God is up to through Prince of Peace as we move into our future together. And while I don't want to miss a thing, even more than that, I don't want the next generation of disciples at Prince of Peace to miss what it means to say that Prince of Peace is a place that Gets It dONE for the sake of the Gospel.

Nancy Lee and I raised our kids here; our daughter, Sarah, was a 4th grader at Echo Park Elementary and our son, Soren, was in 2nd grade when we arrived in November of 1995. Nancy Lee and I were both pastors on staff here for a number of years together, and from the very first Monday morning one of the non-negotiables was this congregation's commitment to connect with people of all ages – no matter where they were on their faith journey, and to provide models for living into relevant and practical faith on a daily basis. Over the past 25 years it has been evident in a thousand different ways that Prince of Peace understands its responsibility to Get It dONE for the sake of the Gospel.

But God is not finished with us yet. To use an image from my beloved brother from another mother, Jeff Marian, all of that is what we see in the rearview mirror, which is always quite small. But now we're

looking into God's future for us here and we're looking ahead into a big windshield. It's time to press ahead and move into Phase Two of the Get it dONE campaign to complete the transformation of our campus; to Get It dONE for Families by completing the new Chapel.

When I imagine what this new space looks like, when I think about what it feels like to be in it, when I talk with young people about the possibilities for Children's Ministry, for Student Ministry, for families... when we dream of all of the ways this new space will serve us well into the next generation – from generation to generation – it gets really exciting really quick!

That excitement is deeply grounded in Scripture. In the ancient book of Daniel we meet King Nebuchadnezzar. He's got a heart like a stone. He wants nothing to do with God. He wants nothing to do with the people of God, especially these four young boys – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and their friend, Daniel, who are all about 14 years old. Just imagine four 8th graders. But King Nebuchadnezzar experiences a radical transformation of his life by witnessing first-hand what God is up to through 14 year old Daniel and his friends. Their Middle School aged trust in what God is doing is so deeply moving and inspiring to King Nebuchadnezzar that his heart softens, his life changes and he turns toward God. He expresses his faith in Yahweh and he makes this bold proclamation:

(Nebuchadnezzar said) "...to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:1-3)

Because Daniel and his friends were faithful to God's leading in their young lives, the king caught the vision for what a life of faith looks like "from generation to generation." But that didn't just happen. These young people were surrounded by a community that poured the faith into their young hearts.

We get to do that here and now... as we Get It dONE for Families by finishing the Chapel.

The new Chapel isn't going to replace the Sanctuary. The Chapel will be an equally beautiful space, but for smaller gatherings who will gather in a room right-sized for those who gather in it.

Let's imagine small gatherings in the new Chapel. People of every age celebrating important moments

and marking significant steps of faith formation. Baptisms, Confirmation, Engage Bible Study, Mothers of Preschoolers, Grief support, and Parkinson's support groups, and any number of smaller groups that gather in the Chapel to learn and listen, discuss and grow, find comfort and a way forward in life, because the Chapel is a welcoming, right-sized space for people to discover what it means to Get It dONE for the Gospel.

Let's think about Weddings. Consider this: By far, most of those who are invited to a wedding at Prince of Peace are guests; they have little or no connection to what goes on here; some have no connection to any church at all. Brides and grooms invite their families and friends to come to Prince of Peace for an hour long celebration and then they're off. That one hour here in this place with people who aren't connected to this congregation, or frankly any other congregation, is one hour of opportunity to touch their hearts and lives. And as the saying goes, "We don't get a second chance to make a first impression." In the past, guests have arrived in our parking lot and wondered where on earth is the front door? Now there's no mistaking where the front door is. And when they walk in the new front doors looking for the new Chapel, they won't miss a thing.

And never again will it happen that I leave one groom and five groomsmen downstairs in the Fellowship Hall with these instructions: "Hey guys, at five minutes to the hour, just walk up the ramp and meet the bridesmaids at the back of the Sanctuary." And then, five minutes after the hour without one groomsman in sight, Bruce Becker's on his third trip through Trumpet Voluntary, there's a low-grade panic setting in among the guests, and I'm breaking into a sweat, I excuse myself and I go down the ramp, only to find six guys huddled at the dark end of a dark ramp wondering which of the three identical ramps they should come up. They had no idea where they were and no idea how to get up to the Sanctuary. Now to be fair, since we hired wedding coordinators, that hasn't happened again. But still, with the new Chapel and its proximity to the front of the church, to the front doors, to a well-lit welcome area with a dance floor and beautiful music floating out and over everyone, we'll Get It dONE with great hospitality for guests who come to celebrate a wedding.

Let's think about Memorial Services. I look forward with a full heart of compassion to the day when 50, 75 or 100 people can gather in both grief and gratitude to say farewell to their loved one in the new Chapel.

While our Sanctuary is beautiful, it is also very big. And sitting in a large and spacious Sanctuary with a small group of 50 to 100 people is kind of tough. Friends, let's Get It dONE by walking deeply into grief and loss – in all of its expressions by providing a beautiful, accessible, right-sized Chapel for families and memorial services that bring comfort and closure for people in grief.

Our vision calls us to be a congregation that connects people to God, to one another, and to a world in need all around us. As we move ahead into a brand new year and into the second phase of our campus transformation, we're focusing on effectively accomplishing that vision by completing the Chapel. When I close my eyes and let my imagination take me to where God is leading us, I see joy doubling, creativity compounding, and excitement building as I think about our families gathering for Worship on Wednesday evenings. And when I see that, of course, I see Swen and our Family Ministry team in this space responding to God's call through them to Get It dONE for Families! (video)

So friends, when I imagine Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in 25 or 50 years from now, I imagine a whole new generation of Christ followers, celebrating a vision and a mission that is global in its reach and centered in its identity to be the Connecting Church. I imagine then as now that families will gather on this campus to connect with one another and nurture their faith together. That will be part of the rich legacy that we'll help create as we respond to God's call to finish the Chapel. So let's Get It dONE for Families!