



March 5, 2025

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

" It is going to take ABC's work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ—not just to build a building, but to be a church that is a witness to our community of the faithfulness of God our Father and the love of Christ our Savior."

Pastor Connie in this week's sermon

INFO

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Let's Hear It For Altadena Weak!

"ALTADENA STRONG!" is what we're seeing on pop-up signs all over town. That's a good affirmation to give us positive energy as we think of the future of our church and our community. But the truth is we're relatively weak and helpless. Right now, our existence depends on insurance companies, government agencies and donations from charitable organizations. And there are lots of real estate companies and affluent individual waiting to gobble up any properties that previous owners can't afford to rebuild on. What's more, political forces are already making the blame-game about the Eaton Fire Disaster a major campaign platform in the next election cycle. In the face of all that, what power do you and I have to build our future community the way we'd like to see it?

Today is **Ash Wednesday** on many church calendars, a good day to initiate a powerful new movement --- **ALTADENA WEAK!** That's what Ash Wednesday's all about. In many Christian traditions, worshipers will gather today, 46 days before Easter Sunday, for a service focused on humility and repentance. During times of silence, meditation and confession of known sins, the worship leader will remind the people of their tiny place in God's great Creation: "From dust you came, and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19). In some denominations, to symbolize the personal application of this truth, each worshiper receives an ash-mark on her or his forehead, which says "I am sinful, weak and mortal." This marks the beginning of Lent, a season of fasting and self-denial, all in preparation for the great, saving Gospel truth celebrated during Good Friday and Easter.

Today Altadena is wearing her ashes! Our community is confessing, through the debris of destruction, that she is part of what is totally vulnerable, temporary, corruptible and mortal. Dust she was, before there were any roads or buildings, and to dust she will ultimately return. Even a tiny spark can ignite, engulf and consume her. That's where we begin: **ALTADENA WEAK!**

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Once we accept and embrace that reality, we will be able to develop the energy for renewal. We'll be able to join our spirits and fight off the predators trying to consume Altadena. We'll be able to visualize together a creative, distinctive new image around which to define our New Altadena. On some Easter Sunday in the future, we'll be able to stand at the entry of the new Altadena Baptist Church and survey the skyline of the new community, which we'll have a part in developing. But let's not forget the meaning of the ashes: no matter how great our new creation may be, it won't be the **Eternal New Creation** God promises to us. ALTADENA STRONG will still be ALTADENA WEAK --- "From dust she came, and to dust she will return." A future tiny spark (or an AI equivalent) will be able to reduce her to ashes.

Toward the end of his ministry, the "strong" Apostle Paul admitted to his long-term feeling of weakness. He wrote:

*Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ, for **whenever I am weak, then I am strong.***

(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Altadena, when you admit your weakness, God will emerge to make you strong!

Pastor George Van Alstine