

## FROM THE PULPIT

Excerpts from messages being presented at area places of worship this weekend.

### Rabbi Mordechai Levin, Beth El Synagogue

President Barack Obama's inauguration last Tuesday marked the end of one long road in America and the beginning of another.



Levin

Whether or not one voted for him, his inauguration — one day after Martin Luther King Day — was a time to pause and think of what his presidency means for the history of our country. Obama's ascent to the

highest office would not have been possible without King's dream several decades ago.

His presidency comes as our country and our world face serious challenges. We, and all Americans, pray and wish him success. May God grant President Obama the wisdom and courage to lead our nation into the future.

In the words of one of the paragraphs from the "Prayer for our Country" that we recite at our synagogue every Saturday: "We ask Your blessings for our country, for its government, for its leaders and advisors, and for all who exercise just and rightful authority. Teach them insights from Your teaching, that they may administer all affairs of state fairly, that peace and security, happiness and prosperity, justice and freedom may forever abide in our midst."

### The Rev. Ronald Holling, St Paul and Bethany Lutheran Churches

Nineveh was known for its wicked-

ness and plotting evil against the Lord. I think we can draw some parallels to the United States. We continue to plot evil against the Lord, too.

Jonah went and preached, "Forty days and the Lord will destroy this city. Forty days is all you have to repent." And the amazing thing that happened was that they DID REPENT. It says "The people of Nineveh believed God."



Holling

In His amazing grace our God shows compassion and forgives us, giving up His very own Son to make that possible. God could have let us have it, but chose to pour out His wrath and our punishment upon Jesus, who had come into the world for that very purpose. Jesus Christ came to take what we deserved and go to a cross to suffer in our place. He died on that cross but then rose again, gaining for you and me what we could never have attained for ourselves.

And now He offers it to us to be received free of charge simply by putting our faith in Him and His promises.

### The Rev. Matt Nieman, First Presbyterian Church, Bellevue

Mark 1:14-20

I've never had the patience for fishing. I regret that I never learned how to be patient and persistent enough to find it enjoyable.

The disciples Simon, Andrew, James and John obviously had the patience for it because they made it more than just

an avocation. Fishing for them was their livelihood. They were skilled at it. They were patient, persistent, and it paid off for them.

Maybe that's why Jesus came along and tapped them as some of his original followers with whom he joined forces in doing his work. In his wisdom, Jesus perhaps knew that fishing for people was a lot like fishing for fish. It would take similar patience, persistence and



Nieman

skill to convince others to embrace the Good News.

We, of course, are charged, too, with assisting Jesus in this mission. We are to be fishers of people. And even if we aren't skilled at fishing, we must demonstrate fishing's patience and persistence if we are going to be faithful to Christ's call on our lives.