

April 2017 A.D.

A Caring Family ✦ Reaching Out ✦ Sharing Christ's Love ✦ Teaching God's Word!

## *From the Pastor's Desk*

Dear Friends in Christ,

### **Lent and Holy Week**

As we move into the month of April and the second half of the Lenten season, please remember the remainder of our Lenten midweek and Holy Week schedules:

### **Two midweek services remain as of the time of this writing:**

March 29 (5<sup>th</sup> Commandment) and April 5 (4<sup>th</sup> Commandment) at 6:30 p.m.

Soup Suppers served by the Youth at 5:30 p.m. (Fellowship Hall)

Our **Holy Week service schedule** is as follows:

Palm Sunday – April 9 at 9:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday – April 13 at 6:30 p.m. with Holy Communion (3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment)

Good Friday – April 14 at 1:00 p.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment)

Easter Sunrise – April 16 at 7:00 a.m. with Holy Communion (1<sup>st</sup> Commandment)

Easter Festival – April 16 at 9:30 a.m. with Holy Communion (1<sup>st</sup> Commandment)

### **Stewards Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love**

The theme for this year's late winter-early spring stewardship emphasis is **Stewards Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love**. We began this emphasis on Sunday, February 26, and will continue on Sundays, March 26 and April 23. As God's people, we have been given the high honor of being His stewards. As His stewards, we are called to manage faithfully all with which we've been entrusted according to His will and benefit. Because of His generous gifts of grace, faith, and love, we can accomplish all that He asks us to do. He works in and through us as we become His hands, feet, and mouth.

In February, our focus was on God's undeserved kindness and love, which the Bible calls **grace**. In March, we will be reminded that it is through **faith** that we have access into God's grace and a new relationship with Him. Through faith, God changes us, and we are born anew of Him. Not only does faith justify us and give us peace with God (Romans 5:1), we are told by James and other writers that faith produces works (James 2:18). Faith leads to action. Through faith, we are empowered to fulfill God's purposes. Our deeds as

stewards are evidence of our faith. In April we will focus on the virtue of **love**.

A booklet of five accompanying **devotions** for this month's emphasis are available in the narthex; please take one home and consider incorporating it into your daily devotions. February's devotions remain available, as well. Copies of the brochure placed in your mailboxes last month also remain available in the narthex.

### **Joining Jesus on His Mission**

Copies of this book, which I will be referencing in the coming weeks, can be ordered either on-line or through the church. New copies are available through Amazon (among other places) for \$16. Used copies are also available, but the exact cost depends upon what is available at the time of the order. Only a handful of the \$8 copies announced on Sunday, March 19, were available; those have been ordered for those who signed up right away. As of the last check, the used copies that remain available will start at closer to \$10. Please see me or Julie if you are interested in having the book ordered for you. Or see the sign-up sheet in the narthex.

### **The Past Is the Hero**

The Planning Team is currently reading and studying a compelling and challenging little book entitled, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*. As I've mentioned the last couple of months, I'd like to start to use this space to share a few thoughts from the book with the entire congregation.

In Chapter 3, the author notes that dying churches typically struggle with living in the past. For such churches, the past is often viewed as the "hero." This often means clinging to the things of the past with desperation and fear. It means insisting stubbornly, "We will die before we change." And in many cases, that is exactly what happens eventually.

An important point of clarification is in order here. The author points out that he is not talking about changing Biblical truths or Christian morality. These are things we are not at liberty to change and that must be defended regardless of the consequences. If we lose those things, we have nothing to offer to the world around us. However, congregations often hold on just as fiercely, maybe even more so, to the "good old days," to the way things "used to be."

The author contrasts this mindset with that of the “Heroes of the Faith,” as they are often called, in Hebrews 11. These Biblical, faith-filled men and women obeyed God even though they did not know what the consequences of their obedience might be. The “good old days” did not exist in their minds. For them, the future held the best days, and they understood that this life was not a time to get comfortable. We can and should learn from their example.

There is also, by the way, the author points out, an important difference between, on the one hand, respecting the past. And on the other hand, living in it.

The author goes on to suggest a handful of examples of the kinds of things to which churches are sometimes tempted to cling, even though those things may mean their eventual death. But more than anything, he notes, dying churches tend to focus on their own needs instead of the needs of others. They look inwardly instead of outwardly. They make their highest priority doing things the way “they’ve always done it,” whatever makes them the most comfortable.

Do you see any evidence of this mindset creeping in anywhere here at Peace? If so, it isn’t necessarily intentional; it is very easy to have this mindset without being conscious of it. How, on the other hand, might our congregation’s ministry look different in the years to come if we decided to be more intentional about looking outward? What might happen if we decided to make our highest priority, not what makes us the most comfortable, but finding new ways to reach out to and serve the people of our community, many of whom don’t yet know Jesus?

Once again, I invite you to make the prayer at the close of Chapter 3 your own:

### **Prayer**

God, give us the conviction and the courage to be like the heroes of Hebrews 11. Teach us not to hold onto those things in our church that are our personal preferences and styles. Show us not only how to let go, but where to let go, so that we may heed Your commands more closely. Amen.

Chapter 4 of the book is entitled, “The Church Refused to Look Like the Community.” I will plan to share a few thoughts from that chapter in next month’s column.

In His Service,

Pastor Derek Riddle

**Directory App:** Another reminder that our new pictorial directory is also available as an App on mobile devices. The Universal Church Directory App may be downloaded on the App Store or on Google Play. Once the App is installed, you will need a unique identifier code in order to access the App for the first time. This code is available in the church office upon request to all members who were photographed. (Members who were not photographed should be able to borrow a code from a member who was photographed.) You may call or stop by the church to request your code, or send an E-mail to [peace@peacecms.org](mailto:peace@peacecms.org).

A tentative date has been set for this summer’s **Vacation Bible School**, which will be run jointly with the congregations of St. John’s, St. Michael’s, and Immanuel (Moltke): June 27-29 from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., with lunch included, at St. John’s school. Members who would be interested in lending their assistance in any of the traditional areas are asked to please notify the church office by Sunday, April 23. Members of each of the congregations involved will be teamed with like-minded members of the other congregations in each of the areas where help will be needed. A second organizational meeting will be held on Sunday, April 30, at 6 p.m. at St. John’s school.

## **Board of Elders**

WHY? Have you ever just asked yourself WHY?

A Crown of thorns was placed upon His head. He knew He would soon be dead. He asked, “Did you forget me, Father? Did you?”

They nailed him to a wooden cross and soon the world would feel the loss of Christ the King. Hallelujah!

He hung His head and prepared to die then lifted His face to the sky. He said, “I am coming home now, Father, to you.”

A reed which held His final sip was gently lifted to His lips. He drank His last and gave His Soul to glory. Hallelujah!

The soldier used his sword to pierce the body of our Lord, and said, “Truly, this is Jesus Christ, our Savior.”

Then he turned his face to Christ the Lord and fell to his knees crying. Hallelujah!

They wrapped Him in a linen gown and laid Him inside the tomb, the holes in His hands, His feet and side.

Now in our hearts we know He died to save us from ourselves. Hallelujah!

Three days went by and again they came to move the stone to bless the slain with oil and spice anointing. Hallelujah!

But as they went to move the stone they saw they were not alone, but Christ has risen. HALLELUJAH!  
Lyrics by Kelley Mooney

Jesus suffered the agony of hell so we could receive the glories of heaven. Jesus was cursed so we could be blessed. His last question before His death was to show us God's sacrifice and His unending love. The Father held nothing back for us. "LORD, YOUR WILL BE DONE." Let us remember to start our days with these words, as was the humble attitude of heart and willingness to obey that Jesus exhibited as He opened the way to God for every person. HALLELUJAH! HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! HALLELUJAH!

### From the Board of Evangelism:

On April 23 at 2:00 p.m. the Board of Evangelism members will be hosting a **Ladies Afternoon**. Here are the details....this is for high school age and up. The lady from Cobbygoose in Alpena will be coming to do a painting with us. For the first time we are all going to do the word FAITH. You can customize yours by the colors you choose. Lisa will have an example at the table in the narthex for you to see. This is a very easy project--anyone can do it. The cost is \$20, which needs to be prepaid with your registration. This is NOT a fundraiser...it is what Cobbygoose charges for this project. There is only room for 40 ladies, so the first 40 who register (and prepay) will get to have an afternoon of fun. Please, if you're paying by check, make it out to Peace Lutheran Church because we will be paying her with one check. The members of the Board of Evangelism will be offering a dessert bar and beverages. The ladies from our congregation give a lot of their time in service for our church, so we thought it might be fun *not* to work but to just laugh and enjoy each others' company. Ask a friend if you would like, but the **DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS APRIL 16**. If this works out okay, we may offer one later on for the younger people.

## The Lutheran Hour

The Lutheran Hour can be heard locally on Sunday mornings at 7:00 a.m. on 92.5 FM and at 11:00 a.m. on 1450 AM. You can also listen on-line or via podcast at [www.lutheranhour.org](http://www.lutheranhour.org). Now you can also download the new Lutheran Hour Mobile App to your mobile device. Instructions for doing so can be found at [www.lhm.org/apps/](http://www.lhm.org/apps/).

### April 2

"Freedom in the Spirit"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
Jesus frees you to be the person you were created, redeemed, and called to be.  
(Romans 8:1-11)

### April 9

"Humble Strength for Eternal Salvation"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, not to set up an earthly kingdom but to overcome sin and death--for us.  
(Philippians 2:5-11)

### April 16

"Empty Tomb Hope!"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
The assurance of Christ's resurrection turns wonder into reality and gives us an eternal hope.  
(Matthew 28:1-10)

### April 23

"A Living Hope for a 'Dead as Doornails' World"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz  
No matter how hard the world tries to shake our joy and faith, we have an inheritance in Christ that can never be taken away.  
(1 Peter 1:3-9)

### April 30

"Unadulterated Fact"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus  
The early believers knew two things to be true: Jesus performed miraculous works and He rose from the dead.  
(Acts 2:22-25)

## Stewardship Corner

Easter is a moveable feast. Easter isn't on the same calendar date every year in the way that Christmas is always celebrated on December 25. The date for Easter each year always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox. And once you find the date of Easter, everything else finds its place—Good Friday and Maundy Thursday, Ash Wednesday and the Transfiguration, the Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost.

All this is a long way of saying that Easter determines everything. Easter defines everything. It orders not only the entire church year, but it orders our very lives. It defines and gives meaning to our lives, as well to the things that happen in them. And since Easter defines everything, that means it changes everything, too. It redefines who we are and where we stand with God and with one another. Easter makes all things new.

Without Easter, Jesus would not be raised from the dead. Without Easter death would still reign, we would still be in our trespasses and sins, and our faith and hope would be in

vain. But Jesus is raised from the dead. Easter changes everything. It makes all things new. Therefore, darkness is overcome with light, wrath with peace, fear with hope, angst with rest, sadness with joy, hatred with love, sin with righteousness, and death with life. Easter changes everything, redefines everything, determines everything. Easter makes all things new.

Thus, Easter also changes our attitude about giving. For if God gave us His own Son into death so that we will live, how will He not give us everything else we need? He will, and He does. He provides for us. He even gives us the gifts that we give back to Him for service in the church. Easter demonstrates that we have a God who loves us, a God who provides for us, a God who presses us into His service, a God who has made us new in the death and resurrection of His Son.

For when you give to the church, you pass along those things that God alone has given to you. You pass along the message to others that Easter changes everything and makes all things new, even as it has done this for you. This is not a burden, but pure joy. For God has given you a part in the administration of His kingdom. He provides for the needy through your hands. He ensures that the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are given out through the work of your hands and in the gifts that you give. And He honors and blesses this work and generosity as it redounds to those around you.

So when you sit down on the first day of the week to make your offering to the place where Easter is proclaimed and where the gifts of Easter are given out, remember: Easter changes everything. It makes all things new. More than that: Easter has changed you and made you new. Because Jesus who was crucified for our transgressions is raised for our justification.

Taken from [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)

If you are interested in receiving the monthly **newsletter** electronically, please notify the church office and make sure that we have your current E-mail address on file. Please also note that both the monthly newsletter and the weekly News & Notes are available on our **web site** at [www.peacelcms.org](http://www.peacelcms.org).

Click on this hyperlink [www.michiganintouch.com](http://www.michiganintouch.com) to view this month's Michigan in Touch supplement.

Visit us on the web at [www.peacelcms.org](http://www.peacelcms.org)



Peace Lutheran Church, Rogers City

## Simple Ways to Witness

A thorough course on evangelism is great for every Christian to take. But to get started as a witness, all you need to know is the Apostles' Creed and a few things to say about matters of faith. The creed provides a simple outline.

### I Believe in God the Father

Add to your conversations the following (or similar) simple statements: "God has given us a beautiful day/night." "I'll pray for you." "God bless your day."

These are great ways to start, continue, or end a conversation. People do not take offense when you use such expressions. So share these thoughts with confidence. When you are comfortable doing so, follow up with a question: "Can we talk about matters of faith?"

For most people, this is a nonthreatening question because it simply invites them to share their thoughts about God and faith. You are not requiring them to know a lot, so they will not feel quizzed. You are not promising to have all the answers, so you do not need to worry that you will say something wrong.

After you have asked this question, just listen. Be cordial and respectful, learning about what they believe and have experienced. Polite conversation allows that, if they share their thoughts about matters of faith and you have listened, you may share your thoughts about matters of faith with them. They will most likely listen. You can talk about your church, praying to God, or how much faith means to you. Most people are quite comfortable with such conversation.

### I Believe in Jesus Christ

You have not really borne witness as a Christian until you have spoken with someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. Any religious person might talk about God or a religious upbringing. But Christians believe in and talk about Jesus Christ. Begin this important conversation with a simple question: "What do you believe about Jesus Christ?"

As before, just listen to the answer. Try to understand where they are coming from and what they know about Jesus. If they seem uncomfortable, apologize for making them uncomfortable and suggest that perhaps you could talk another time. If they seem comfortable, wait for an opportunity to share what you know and believe about Jesus, such as "Jesus is my Savior." Or, "I pray to Jesus when I'm facing challenges in life." Let the conversation develop naturally from there. Once again, you do not have to have all the answers. Just share what you know, what you understand. If they ask questions you cannot answer, say, "I don't know about that. I'd like to talk with my pastor about that. Okay?" Follow up later.

### I Believe in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Christian Church

The Holy Spirit makes people Christians and brings them into the fellowship of the Church through Holy Baptism and God's Word. Many people today believe they can be Christians without the Church. But Jesus clearly taught that His followers would be part of the Church, and He taught His disciples how to care for one another in a community of faith.

Follow up your conversation by simply inviting them to church, Bible class, Vacation Bible School, or any event that brings them into contact with other Christians. Surprisingly, most people say that they would attend a church service if someone invited them. Pray that the Holy Spirit would strengthen you as a witness and pray for the persons to whom you witness. If they come to church with you, introduce them to others who may share their interests or experiences so that they can bear witness to them as well. It is really that simple.

To grow more confident and comfortable as a witness, read Milton I. Rudnick's, *How to Share Christ Confidently*, copies of which are available in the narthex. (Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible* (p.1425). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.)