

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Sunday, October 26, in conjunction with our Mission Festival and Reformation Sunday, we held a "Vision Cast" event during the Christian Education Hour. This event provided an opportunity for our members to be involved in our current strategic planning discussion by sharing a few ideas for ways in which we might carry out our mission of caring, reaching, sharing, and teaching.

Prior to that discussion, it was my job as your pastor to answer five questions in order to set the tone for the discussion that would follow. Those questions were "who are we?", "what is our address?", "what time is it?", "what is God calling us to do?", and "what is our strategy?" For the benefit of the entire congregation, I thought it might be worth using this space to review how I attempted to answer those five questions. Last month, I began with the first question, "Who are we?" This month I will continue with the second question, "What is our address?"

What is our address? In other words, where are we located? Where has God placed us? What is the nature of the community which God has called us to serve?

1. Rogers City, Presque Isle County, northeast Michigan. What does this mean?

2. Ours is a community that has changed and is still changing. Its heyday is in the past, it would seem. Jobs are scarce. Unemployment is relatively high. Poverty (and various related social problems) is more widespread than we may care to admit. We don't necessarily have a lot of members with these issues, however (although we may have more than we realize). Are we somewhat oblivious to the problems and realities in the

community around us? Or are we looking for ways to respond to them? If so, I think we would discover that the opportunities to do so are abundant.

3. Because jobs are scarce, young people tend not to stay around after high school. People moving into the community are mostly retirees. We are becoming more and more a retirement destination. I think we need to be realistic about this and give some consideration to how this impacts our ministry.

4. As a result of our location in northern Michigan, we also have a number of "part-time" members and a pretty steady stream of visitors, especially during the summer months. How might we better minister to them? Or better incorporate them into our ministry?

5. Finally, it has been observed that Rogers City is somewhat behind the times. This poses certain challenges but also provides certain advantages. How does this impact our ministry?

Next month I will continue with the third question, "What time is it?" I continue to be excited about the work God has before us in the months and years ahead! I pray that you are, too! And I invite you to continue to pray with me that the Lord will make His vision for our congregation's ministry our vision.

In the meantime, His richest blessings to each and every one of you in Christ, our Savior, especially during the Advent season ahead, as He prepares our hearts once again for our celebration of His coming in the flesh!

In His Service,

Pastor Derek Riddle

What is Advent?

Need to be reminded what Advent is all about and why we observe it? Here are a few notes to refresh your memory:

From www.lhm.org (Lutheran Hour Ministries):

The Church divides the year into different seasons that emphasize the life of Christ and the life of the Church. Beginning on Sunday November 30th, we will enter the season of the Church year called Advent. Advent is a four-week season of preparation and anticipation leading up to Christmas, on December 25th, and continuing to Epiphany on January 6th.

The focus of Advent is two-fold. On the one hand, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world as both God and man so that our sins might be forgiven. On the other hand, we anticipate the day when Jesus will return to Earth and bring an end to this world. Those will be scary days, but we can look forward to the end of the world with hope because through faith in Jesus, the end of this world will mean the beginning of a new life with Christ for eternity.

Advent, then, is a time for us to repent and believe. Knowing that Jesus was born to forgive our sins, we repent (admit our failures to God) and believe that we are forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf. Also, knowing that Jesus is coming back, we repent and believe that when He returns, He will give us eternal life.

From www.lcms.org (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod):

Why does the church year begin at Advent, what is the history of Advent, and what is the history behind the Advent candles and wreath?

The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh.

Advent begins the church year because the church year begins where Jesus' earthly life began - in the Old Testament prophecies of his

incarnation. After Advent comes Christmas, which is about his birth; then Epiphany, about his miracles and ministry; then Lent, about his Calvary-bound mission; then Easter, about his resurrection and the sending of the apostles; and then Ascension (40 days after Easter) and Pentecost, with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The first half of the church year (approximately December through June) highlights the *life* of Christ. The second half (approximately June through November) highlights the *teachings* of Christ. The parables and miracles play a big part here. That's "the church year in a nutshell," and it should help reveal how Advent fits into "the big picture."

Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways - past, present, and future. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the future focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings which highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today.

The traditional use of Advent candles (sometimes held in a wreath) originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle. The purple candles matched the purple paraments on the altar (purple for the royalty of the coming King). The pink candle was the third candle to be lit (not the fourth) on Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means "Rejoice!" in Latin, which is taken from Philippians 4:4 ("Rejoice! ... the Lord is near"). Hence a "pink" candle was used to signify "rejoicing." Some also included a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas (December 25-January 5).

The concept of giving each candle a name, by the way, i.e., Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherd and Angel, etc., is a relatively novel phenomenon and probably originates with certain entrepreneurial publishers seeking to sell Advent candles and devotional booklets.

2014 Advent-Christmas Schedule

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming services:

Advent Midweek Services

Wednesdays, December 3, 10 and 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Theme: "Come, Lord Jesus, and Show Us the Father"

Pre-Service Suppers (served by the youth) at 5:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Family Service & Children's Program

Wednesday, December 24 at 6:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

Wednesday, December 24 at 9:00 p.m.

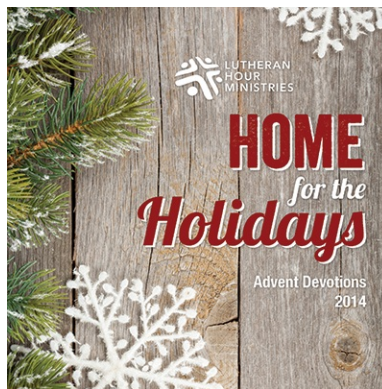
Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion

Thursday, December 25 at 9:30 a.m.

New Year's Day Service with Holy Communion

Thursday, January 1 at 9:30 a.m.

LHM Home for the Holidays Advent Devotions for 2014



Each year **Lutheran Hour Ministries** provides special devotions during the Advent and Lenten seasons that are used both by individuals for personal reflection and congregations as a customizable outreach tool to be distributed throughout their communities.

This year's Advent devotional, *Home for the Holidays*, reflects on the various "homes" God provides through His Word, Baptism, the Sacraments, and our church family. Drawing on several familiar and family-oriented events of the Christmas season (deciding on a tree, decorating the house, setting up the Nativity display, baking Christmas cookies, etc.), the devotions balance treasured holiday memories with the reality that not everyone feels at home with the holidays. While life's hassles, relationship burnout, and financial stress may leave us out in the cold, there is solace and warmth when we visit the "home" we have at church.

Read or listen to the devotions on-line, subscribe to receive them via E-mail, or download them to listen to them via podcast. Visit www.lhm.org.

BOARD OF ELDERS

The Board of Elders will be sending members cards with information on the Advent and Christmas activities. We are encouraging you to stay in God's Word by attending the midweek services along with Sunday Worship services. We also would like to welcome you to the soup supper at 5:30 to enjoy a meal and fellowship before our midweek service.

The Elders are making some visits to members and shut-ins. If anyone wants a visit or knows of anyone who would possibly like a visit, please let an Elder know. We are here to serve you in any way we can. If you have a question or any input that could help us as a whole, please don't hesitate to contact an Elder.

The Elders would like to encourage male members to think and pray about becoming an Elder of Peace Lutheran Church. Think/pray hard to see if God is calling you to serve as an Elder.

As our congregation moves forward with our mission and vision statement and as a caring family reaching out and sharing and teaching God's Word, let us pray for Peace Lutheran Church and all its members so that we may do what God wants, by caring for one another and reaching out with love as we share and teach God's Word with one another, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless us as we continue in His Word. Have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Our three-week stewardship series on "Living Each Day as a Steward" has been completed but still lives on through our works and actions. These three weeks put an emphasis on and encouragement to the importance of stewardship. Stewardship brochures were put in your mailboxes and Daily Devotions books were available in the narthex. We hope that you took the time to read this year's stewardship material. If you haven't, we encourage you to do so. It's not too late to learn more on living each day as a steward. God gave us our identity through our baptism. He called us to be His own. We give thanks to God for giving us life with Him. Jesus is our Chief Steward and has taught us by what He has done for us by His suffering and dying on the cross. He showed us how much He loves us. We give thanks to God by showing that love to others as we give as Jesus gave and continues to

give. Giving God the glory in everything we do and say and reading His Word will help us to be the stewards God called us to be. Hope that everyone had a blessed Thanksgiving and will have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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. 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/.

December 2014 Schedule:

December 7

"We Need Something Stronger"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev.

Gregory Seltz

Jesus exchanges our weakness for His strength.

(Mark 1:1-8)

December 14

"In Christ, Unbroken"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev.

Gregory Seltz

God's grace restores those broken by sin and grief.

(Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11)

December 21

"Surprised by Grace"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev.

Gregory Seltz

God's grace comes as a surprise and blessing to those who deserve none of it.

(Luke 1:26-38)

December 28

"Monsters in Our Tomorrows"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran

Hour: Rev. Ken Klaus

Unknown monsters lurk in the shadows of the new year but Christ will carry us through.

(Romans 8:37-39)

Stewardship Corner

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God became man; he took on human flesh, so that men would once again dwell with God. In the fullness of time, the Son of God from eternity became a part of history to be born under the law in order to redeem those under the law. Christ came from heaven above to earth below for us men and for our salvation.

He who knew no sin became sin so that we would be declared righteous in God's sight. He was defiled so that we would be cleansed. He was born so that we would not die, and He died for us so that we would live in Him. He took upon Himself everything that rightfully belongs to us—sin and death—and in exchange gave to us everything that rightfully belongs to Him—righteousness, life, and the status as the sons of God.

This is what we celebrate in Advent and at Christmas. We celebrate the coming of our Lord to save us from sin, death, and hell. We celebrate that God in Christ cared for us in body and soul, for He came not only to reconcile us to the Father by taking away our sin, but also to redeem us from death and hell so that we would live with Him in His kingdom, which has no end.

In a sermon on Acts 6 for St. Stephen's Day, preached on December 26, 1522, Martin Luther said this: "From this story we learn in the first place how a Christian community should be constituted. In addition, we have a true pattern of spiritual government that the apostles here provide. They care for souls, occupy themselves with preaching and prayer, and yet also see to it that the body is cared for; for they suggest several men who are to distribute the goods, as you have heard. Thus the Christian rule is concerned for the people in body and soul, so that no one suffers want . . . that all were richly fed and well cared for in both body and soul."

And this is one reason we give to the church. We give so that people will see the church not just as a place that cares for souls, that forgives sins, but also a place that cares for the body. For the church is a place of mercy. It is a place where we inhale God's mercy and loving kindness through the Word and the Sacraments for the forgiveness of our sin. And it's a place where we exhale the mercy we received there in love and service to our neighbor. The church cares for both the body and the soul.

The church is not so heavenly minded that it forgets those in need on earth. In fact, it cares for the needs of this body and life precisely because it is heavenly minded. We seek to do what God has done for us. The church is so ordered that it does both.

Giving to the church is a responsibility given to those who are the church. This can sometimes be difficult. But it is also a great joy. For in giving to the church we are giving back to God for His use for others what He has first given to us. In giving to the church, we participate in God's work here in time for all eternity. In giving to the church,

we who are heavenly minded do what God has done for us: dwell with those who live in a fallen world and care for them in both body and soul. Let us, then, in this most joyous season of the church year, dwell not on the struggles in giving, but rather on the joy set before us in caring for body and soul as God in Christ has done for us.

Taken from www.lcms.org

December Anniversaries

	Date	Yrs
Jim & Carol Fleury	12/2	19
Tom & Jan Dullack	12/4	33
Art & Irene Radtke	12/23	52
Bob & Lee Bingle	12/28	51
Dale & Joan Sorgenfrei	12/30	31

If you notice your name is missing from the birthday or anniversary sections, please let the church office know so we can update our records... and celebrate these milestones with you!!

December Birthdays

Jan Dullack	12/2
Bill Claus	12/4
Amanda Jumper	12/5
JoAnne Muller	12/7
Opal Wright	12/7
Scott Grulke	12/9
Matthew Boughner	12/10
David Kaski	12/10
Hunter Jumper	12/11
Larry Grulke	12/13
Rose Buck	12/14
Gene DeBeust	12/15
Mark Fuhrman	12/17
Alyssa Hudock	12/17
Rae LaLonde	12/19
Cody Elowsky	12/20
Norm Elowski	12/21
Nicole Hoefft	12/22
Carol Fleury	12/23
Jacob Longoria	12/23
Tom Bruning	12/24
Alex Rhode	12/25
Kari Grulke	12/26
Chelsea Myers	12/26
Mark Rhode	12/26
Cody Wenzel	12/27
Frankie Jumper II	12/28
Janet Schalk	12/28
Sandy Ruttan	12/29
Melissa Schleben	12/31