

From the Pastor's Desk

Keeping Love Alive

At the end of October, we had the privilege of hosting a Marriage Enrichment Workshop at Peace, under that title. The workshop was conducted by Rev. Dr. Bryan Salminen, a LCMS pastor in St. John's, Michigan, and a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist with many years of counseling experience. He is also a former professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, where he was one of my professors in the mid-1990s, and is currently serving as the Director of Worker Care for the Michigan District of our Synod.

A year or so ago, when I saw that a number of marriages within our congregation were struggling, I contacted Dr. Salminen about the possibility of inviting him to Rogers City for such a workshop. After a series of delays, I approached our Church Council about the possibility early this fall, and the workshop finally materialized. It was, I hope, the first of many such events. I like to think of events like this as an "investment" in the marriages of our congregation, as well as an opportunity to reach out to and serve the marriages and families in our community.

Approximately 30 individuals registered for the workshop beforehand, and roughly 20 attended. If you were not among them, you missed a worthwhile experience. The workshop was very well received by those in attendance. I am aware of a handful of individuals who were interested in attending but were unable to do so because of other commitments. However, if you were kept from

attending either because of fear of embarrassment or the belief that you had nothing to gain from attending, I would strongly encourage you to reconsider the next time such a workshop is offered. No one who attended left without benefiting in some way.

For the benefit of those who weren't able to be in attendance, I thought I would use this space this month to share a few of my notes from the workshop. Whatever your circumstances may be, I pray that you might find something here that will benefit you.

A few questions for husbands and wives to consider:

- What kinds of things did you do while you were dating that you don't do now?
- What kinds of things do you do now that you are married that you never thought you would?
- Too often within our marriages, especially the longer we are married, we lose our manners. What does it mean to treat your spouse as the best thing ever?

A few thoughts for husbands and wives to consider:

- The #1 reason given for divorce, constituting 85% of all divorces, is "I fell out of love." Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to fall in love with the same person again. Start by doing the same kinds of things you did when you were trying to win each other's affection.
- There is no such thing as a "poo-free" marriage. However, most couples don't expect that

to be the case, and when they discover that, they assume that something is wrong.

- When my perspective is that my spouse is God's gift to me, it changes my perspective regarding every issue, even when we are having problems.
- Our feelings are a direct result of how we think and behave. We can change how we think and behave, and that means that we can change how we feel. See Philippians 4:8.
- Because we are a new creation in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17), even though we may be having problems, we can remember that there is a greater reality in Christ.
- Husbands and wives need the ability to have joy and laughter together. Laughter brackets the seriousness of the world and our lives and serves as a sign from God that there is something greater than what we see going on right now.
- "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). Today, not yesterday, not tomorrow. We always think we're going to be happier with the next thing. Enjoy today.
- In Christ, our reality is no longer what we did, but what we get to do. It is no longer what we've "got" to do, but what we "get" to do.
- The only thing that matters in our past is our Baptism. Why what happened in the past happened, doesn't matter.

What matters is, what are we going to do about it? Don't let past events change your reality.

- If it isn't working, change something.

In the second half of the workshop, Dr. Salminen focused on five "love illusions." I will plan to return to that topic in future columns.

Finally, if you are interested in doing some reading on the subject of marriage, here are a few recommended resources that were mentioned at the workshop:

- Shirley Glass, *Not "Just Friends": Rebuilding Trust and Recovering Your Sanity after Infidelity*
- Mark Gungor, *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage: Unlocking the Secrets to Life, Love, and Marriage*
- David Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships*
- Michele Weiner-Davis, *Divorce Busting: A Step-by-Step Approach to Making Your Marriage Loving Again (a copy of this book is available in the church office)*
Or visit www.divorcebusting.com
- Michele Weiner-Davis, *Change Your Life and Everyone In It: How to Transform Difficult Relationships, Overcome Anxiety and Depression, and Break Free from Self-Defeating Ways of Thinking, Feeling, and Acting in One Month or Less (a copy of this book is available in the church office)*
- Michele Weiner-Davis, *The Divorce Remedy: The Proven 7-Step Program for Saving Your Marriage (a copy of this book is available in the church office)*

As we enter the season of Advent and a new Church Year, and begin to have our hearts and lives prepared for our celebration of our Lord's birth, His richest blessings to each of you!

In His Service,

Pastor Derek Riddle

The Advent Season

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.lhm.org

2015 Advent-Christmas Schedule

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming services:

Advent Midweek Services

Wednesdays, December 2, 9 and 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Theme: "Stir Up the Power of...Hope, Preparation, & Love"
Pre-Service Suppers (served by the youth) is from 5:30-6:15 p.m.

Christmas Eve Family Service & Children's Program

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

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

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

Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion

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

New Year's Day Service with Holy Communion

Friday, January 1, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

LHM "FEAR NOT!" Advent Devotions for 2015

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 is entitled **FEAR NOT!**

How often do you face your day with a sense of fear and dread? Holiday seasons like Thanksgiving and Christmas can easily lose their joy and delight when little things relentlessly nag at us and annoy us. Maybe the busy preparations of the season have you down, or perhaps you are reeling from a major life crisis or catastrophe.

This Advent and Christmas season we will study the events of our Savior's birth as recorded in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke. There we will hear God's answers to the fears that threaten to engulf and overwhelm us.

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

Soon the old year (2015) will be coming to the end and the new year (2016) will begin. The last Sunday of the church year has passed and the new church year has started. The Advent season is the beginning of the New Church Year. Are you ready for the end of this year (2015) with all the things you would like to get done before it ends? We have our busy schedule preparing for Christmas, buying gifts, baking our goodies, and getting together with family and friends. With our busy schedules and all the things we want to do, we are easily distracted

from being committed to the Advent season. During Advent we look forward to the birth of the Christ Child while preparing ourselves for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus came to give us life and salvation with Him. Christ is committed to us, and we can stay committed to Him by staying in His Word. Come, join together as brothers and sisters in Christ during the Advent services December 2, 9, 16 at 6:30 p.m., where we hear God's Word and prepare ourselves for Christ's coming.

Soup suppers also begin, so come and enjoy food and fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ where we can strengthen our bodies to serve our Lord and encourage one another, for the Day is coming!

All church services are recorded and available in the church office if you missed a service or know of someone who would like to listen to it or listen again.

Keep a look out in your home mailbox for a postcard informing you of our Advent and Christmas services. Enjoy a Christ-filled Christmas, and have a blessed New Year!

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

The two-fold mission of the Board of Stewardship at Peace Lutheran Church is (1) to help the members of our church family to better understand stewardship as a matter of individually giving of our time, talent and treasure with gratitude to God as He has first given to us, both in the service of our congregation's mission (as a caring family, to reach out to all, share Christ's love and teach God's Word) and in love to our neighbor and (2) to encourage our members to practice stewardship faithfully, cheerfully and generously.

Along with our congregation's mission statement as "a caring

family, reaching out to all, teaching God's Word, and sharing Christ's love" with our neighbors, Peace Lutheran Church has also adopted Core Values that serve as a foundation of our individual ministries. Take time to read our Seven Core Values if you haven't done so lately. These core values help us keep focused on Christ and how He is devoted to us. Christ came, suffered, and carried His cross to Calvary, where He suffered and died for us, and also has risen so that we may have eternal life with Him in heaven. Sometimes we struggle to stay in His Word. With all the distractions of this world, we sometimes forget to pray, praise and give thanks to God. We forget that all we have belongs to God, and that we are the stewards of what He has given us.

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 2015 Schedule:

December 6

"The Voice"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

The voice of John the Baptist calls us to repent and trust in the Savior Who walked in our shoes. (Luke 3:1-20)

December 13

"The Lord is Near"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

God's message is simple and straightforward: Jesus is near-put your trust in Him! (Philippians 4:4-7)

December 20

"The Gift in the Manger"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

From the manger to the cross to resurrection life, God is in the giving business for all of us to receive and believe.

(Luke 2:8-12)

December 27

"No Regrets"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Ken Klaus

Jesus invites you to leave your burden of regret at the foot of His cross.

(1 Timothy 1:16)

Stewardship Corner

Our Lord Jesus Christ healed the man with dropsy by His Word on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1-6). He is the great physician of both body and soul. The paradoxical symptom of dropsy was an unquenchable craving for drink even though the body was over inflated with fluid, a craving that when indulged served not to ease but to feed the disease. And so if a man drinks a great deal, but is never filled, he sees a doctor to inquire about what ails him, what is wrong with his body and how to remedy it. For that is not thirst but a disease (Seneca, *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, 11.3).

But if the owner of five couches goes looking for ten, or the owner of ten tables buys up as many again, and even though he has plenty of land and money, he remains unsatisfied and desires yet more, losing sleep and always in discontent, does he not also require a physician to diagnose the cause of this distress? For this is not want or lack, but a disease (Aristippus, quoted in Plutarch, *Love of Wealth*, 524b). As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, "we may rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man: For the more the one is swollen with excess of water, the more he thirsts; so also the other: The more he abounds in riches . . . the more eagerly he

desires them" (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 4, 135). Both require physicians. Both require diagnosis and medicine applied from the outside to the inward being. For these are not desires to be fulfilled but diseases to be cured.

This is why our Lord instructs us on taking care not to be overmuch consumed by money. "No one can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13). The point is that our desire for money, like the disease dropsy, is never satisfied. We always desire more. We always think, if I just had this much then I would be happy. But even when that much comes, which God gladly gives, that happiness evades us. For the desire for more of these things is never satisfied. It demands our constant energy—either in procuring more or protecting what we already have. When this happens, God, in His mercy, shows us that the money that He has given is no longer serving us, but we it. We have another master.

To overcome this, we need a physician's diagnosis and a physician's remedy. And our Lord, Jesus Christ, our great physician of both body and soul, like the man healed of dropsy, applies His Word to us. He shows us how we have put our fear, our love, and our trust in our money and not feared, loved, and trusted in Him above all things. In essence, He says, "Stop it! Stop chasing after these fleeting things. They are vanity. They are the things that moth and rust destroy. For you cannot have two masters. Repent!" And in seeing our great error, we are sorry that we have not fully feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. And, in the mercy and grace, that He earned for us on the cross, He takes away this sin, restores us to health, and bids us live.

But then what? What do we do with this healing balm and care that our great physician has done? Do we simply go back to our old ways? "By no means!" St. Paul says (Rom 3:31; 6:2). We do not just go back to the old ways. That way is dead to us and leads us to death. No, we live a new life, a life filled with the grace, mercy, and love of God toward us. And God's great mercy, grace, and love toward is so abundant that it overflows and pours out onto those around us. So we no longer hoard money and possessions. We no longer scrape and crawl our way to amass more. We give to those around us, as God in Christ has given to us. We press our money and possessions into service for those who need it: our family, our society, and our church. For money is God's gift to us to serve us and others. Not the other way round. It serves us because it is a gift from our Father in heaven.

Taken from www.lcms.org

BREAKFAST FUND RAISER "Teens for New Orleans" (combined youth from St. John and Peace Lutheran Churches) will be hosting a Pancake Breakfast on **Saturday, December 5** from 9 am to 12 noon at St. John Lutheran School. Menu includes pancakes, kielbasa (donated by Carmeuse), fruit salad, Christmas sweets, milk, juice and coffee. Free will donations will be accepted at the door. Proceeds will go towards the group's trip to the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans 2016. Santa Claus will be the special guest for breakfast and will be available for pictures for \$5 per person. All children that attend will receive a gift bag.

Peace Senior Youth are selling **Pam's Pantry, Rada Cutlery, and Thirty-one gifts**. These items would make excellent Christmas gifts or can be used for your Christmas gatherings. A display will be set up in the narthex for you to place your order, or contact Mary Jo Hein at 989-370-3549.

It's Lutheran Witness time! Time to order or renew your subscription to *The Lutheran Witness*. Reminder—the *Michigan in Touch* publication is now included as a supplement each month! Cost is \$11.00/yr if paid before

December 15; otherwise, the cost increases to \$13.00. Please contact the church office if you are interested in subscribing.

The Board of Evangelism held their first personal care product distribution on October 21 as part of the "Peace Project". We would kindly ask Peace members to keep this project in your heart and mind when shopping...if you find a good deal on something, please pick up an extra item to donate to the Peace Project. If each person picked up ONE extra item each month, we will have **plenty** on hand for our next distribution in January. Thank you so much for all your help!! (**More than 80 people were helped out with our first distribution!!**)

SHOPPING FOR A CAUSE – St. John Lutheran School is now participating in the Scrip Program fundraiser. In this program, store cards for area and online businesses may be purchased to be used at face value. A percentage of each sale will be given back to the school, with no additional cost to you. Orders will be taken the second Sunday of each month and should be delivered on the following Sunday. If you have questions, call the St. John office at 734-3580.

Are you an online shopper? Amazon has made it simple to send a donation to your favorite non-profit organization. By visiting this website www.smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3100896, every time you shop, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Peace. From there you may shop as you regularly would on Amazon's website. In fact, **Peace just received a donation of \$15.95 from shoppers using this service!** Registering is safe, free, and takes only a few seconds. Thank you!!



The Giving Tree has been placed in the narthex with names of children and families in need this Christmas

season. Gifts are due back December 20 to allow for delivery before Christmas. Thank You!

Peace Board of Evangelism