

## From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I look at the calendar and realize that I am writing a column for our May newsletter, and then look at the thermometer and see that it is only 32 degrees outside, and feels like a mere 21 degrees, I find myself wondering if that can possibly be correct. Ah, Spring in northern Michigan!

This past weekend, we were privileged to host Christian Artist, Clinician, and Worship Leader David Paul Britton here at Peace. If you were unable to be in attendance, you missed an uplifting service and Bible Study on Sunday morning, as well as an invigorating series of worship-related workshops on Saturday afternoon. Mr. Britton has been to Peace previously on a couple of occasions, and he has made numerous visits to Rogers City over the years, and I had spoken with him several times over the phone. This was my first opportunity to meet him in person, however, and to experience his ministry first-hand, and I personally enjoyed the opportunity and found his visit with us to be very beneficial. If you were able to be here for any part of the weekend, I pray that you did, as well.

In keeping with the theme of his visit, I would like to utilize this space this month to share a few worship-related reflections. The first of our Saturday sessions was a thought-provoking Bible study entitled, "Worship in Spirit and Truth: The Need for Vibrant Worship in a Lifeless Society." This study and discussion addressed some of the challenges of planning weekly worship that is relevant across all generations and in today's society by raising the basic question of what worship is at its heart. As Lutherans we recognize the dual focus of worship: primarily, the Lord comes to us in order to serve us in Word and Sacrament; and secondarily, we respond to His gifts, not only in the worship service itself but also by living lives of worship and service every day (see Romans 12:1). I found these simple reminders very helpful.

As you may know, the word "worship" itself, as Mr. Britton also reminded us, comes from an old English word, "worth-ship." Our participation in worship, in other words, is a way of acknowledging what God is worth to us over against the other things in our lives. It is also a declaration that it is worth our time and energy to set aside the time praise and thank Him for all that He has done for us and, of course, to hear and learn His Word. How often do we think about worship in these terms, rather than in terms of what we are going to get out of worship, for example, or the ways in which worship attendance may be interfering with our lives?

Mr. Britton also reminded us that Satan, on the other hand, hates worship. His goal is to prevent us from worshipping

God; it is the last thing he wants us to do, of course. In the process, he is fond of using lies, diversions, distractions, and various other strategies against us. For example, if he is able to divert the focus of the individual worshiper from God and His Word to the style of music being utilized, he has succeeded. Similarly, if he is able to divert the focus of the worshiper to issues such as the length of the service, or to what is on the agenda for the rest of the day, he has succeeded. How easy it is for us, I was reminded, to lose sight of what is most important when it comes to worship and to think more in terms of our own personal comfort and convenience!

As it happens, our insightful study and discussion on Saturday afternoon coincided with some worship-related matters I had been mulling over early last week. Worship, both from the standpoint of what we receive from God and what we return to Him, is an essential part of our lives as Christians. It is so because our relationship with God is at the center of our lives. Increasingly, however, our society is providing us with no shortage of excuses as to why our participation in worship should be optional at best, as well as any number of supposedly viable alternatives to worship. Needless to say, it is tempting for all of us to accept this way of thinking and operating, at least when it is convenient for us to do so. It is also tempting, I think, to assume that God, because He loves us, somehow understands.

I recently came across a Bible passage in my own devotional reading which served for me, at least, as a reminder that worship is vitally important to God, in fact, and that He has always treated it, throughout the history of His people, with the utmost seriousness, and encouraged His people to do the same. In Exodus 31, after rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt, and in the process of giving Moses the Ten Commandments, the Lord says the following in verses 13 and following:

"You are to speak to Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you **throughout your generations**, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you.'"

A few verses later, the Lord continues, "Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath **throughout their generations, as a covenant forever**. It is a sign **forever** between Me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

It is true, of course, that in the New Testament era some things have changed since the days of Israel. For one thing, Christians have from the beginning observed Sunday, the day of our Lord's resurrection, as our day of worship and rest, rather than the Old Testament Sabbath. Much has not

changed, however. Although we live in a different time and place, we are still the people of God, who have personally experienced His love and salvation. If worship was to be such a vital part of Israel's life throughout their history, while they waited for the coming Savior, how much more should it be for us to whom the Savior has already come, laid down His own life for us on the cross, and taken His life up again in His resurrection!

In the light of all that our gracious God has done for us, worship is hardly something to be neglected, or marginalized, or short-changed. It is rather something to be celebrated, appreciated, enjoyed, anticipated. Sometimes we may just need to be reminded, at its heart, what worship is and what it is really about. It is about what is, as it has always been, at its center – our Triune God, His saving love for us in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and the unchanging truth of His holy Word.

Rejoicing with you in the gift of worship and celebrating with you the joy of this Easter season,

Pastor Derek Riddle

## **Wednesday Bible Study Resumes**

Now that Lent and Easter are behind us, and before we get into the busy summer months when no one wants to be inside, a short-term five-session Bible study is being planned for Wednesday evenings beginning on April 29, at 7:00 p.m., at the church. Our topic for discussion will be a short book entitled, "5 Things You Can Do to Understand the Bible Better." Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

"One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ (see John 11:25; John 8:36; Matthew 4:4). ... Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing."  
– Martin Luther, from *The Freedom of a Christian*

## **Highlights from the March and April Strategic Planning Meetings**

### **March**

Pastor Riddle led us in discussions of the "Reaching" part of the Mission Statement. One of the main topics of discussion was the possibility of purchasing flat screen TVs for the sanctuary and how that fits in (or doesn't) with our mission statement. There were two very different ideas expressed.

There were some Council members who felt doing so is important to meet the needs of members who have a hard time holding the hymnal, either because it is too heavy or because it is difficult while holding a child and a hymnal at the same time. It also makes it easier for our young people to follow along and participate in the service. All of this could be included under the "Caring" part of the Mission Statement. The other thought expressed was that purchasing flat screen TVs does not necessarily fit into priority spending of our monies, and it doesn't necessarily meet the criteria of "Reaching" or "Caring" for the community. Other thoughts expressed were that it is still important to address our members' needs. Going through the comments that were made at the Vision Cast meeting in October, it was also apparent that there are many needs that could be carried out to reach out to the community and to our own inactive members. Some of these suggestions could cost money, but other ideas would cost members their time and/or their talents. Next month, after the regular Council meeting, we will work on another part of the Mission Statement.

– Althea Luebke

### **April**

At our April meeting, we finished our discussion of the "Reaching" category of the Mission Statement and also discussed the "Sharing" category. Here are a few highlights:

- The importance of going out of our way to welcome our Sunday visitors
- The importance of members being willing, for example, to give up their pew for a visitor, rather than holding on to their own "spot" (which may well cause a visitor to feel unwelcome and never return)
- The importance of encouraging and supporting our young parents with children
- The importance of having Greeters on-hand for our services
- The importance of having Ushers available to assist worshipers in finding a seat
- The importance of establishing a publicity/advertising strategy and possibly a publicity/advertising team to oversee this strategy
- The value of having a church business card available for members to hand out when they have the opportunity
- The possibility of establishing a "Hygiene Pantry" (something the Board of Evangelism is already discussing)
- The importance of either establishing or participating in other community-oriented outreach efforts (such as putting on a Thanksgiving Dinner for needy people in the community, an effort already underway)
- The importance of making better use of Time-Talent Surveys, as a way of connecting members' gifts with specific ministries and needs (something the Board of Stewardship has been working on)

In May, we will be proceeding to the "Teaching" category and from there beginning the process of establishing priorities. Please continue to keep your Church Council and the strategic planning process in your personal prayers!

## Board of Elders

A *caring* family, *reaching* out, *sharing* Christ, *teaching* God's Word! On May 17, Demi Jo Flewelling, Catheryn Hart, Cole Kamyszek, and Abigail Pflug will be confirmed. The Elders will be doing the confirmation exam. This is a great opportunity for the Elders, confirmands, and parents to get to know one another a little better. What a blessing to have David Britton with us for the recent workshops and church services. If you missed the church service, you may hear it on the recorded discs that are kept in the church office. If you want the outline from the workshop entitled "Worship in Spirit & Truth," ask Pastor Riddle or David Grulke. Do you need a devotion topic? Consider reading the book of Malachi. The Elders are here to serve you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact an Elder. If you want a visit or know of someone who does, please call an Elder.

## BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

We thank everyone for filling out the Time & Talent Survey during the church service on April 26. If you did not have the time or for some reason you did not fill out the survey, please take the time and fill one out. You can give it to one of the Stewardship Board members or turn it in at the church office. Thank you very much. The Lord serves us through His Word and Sacraments. Jesus shows us His love with all the blessings that He gives us daily. We show our love to God by staying in His Word and by loving and serving others. At the May 10 Voters Meeting the Board of Stewardship will be recommending to the Voters that Peace Lutheran Church adopt a missionary. The money this year would be coming from the Fundraising Fund, and next year we could add it to the annual budget.

## Music Ministry

"I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me."  
Psalm 13:6

Our Palm Sunday service this year we celebrated in song.... we began our service singing with joy of our Lord riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and followed with Scripture and song with 'The Passion of our Lord'. We told the story of our Lord through the many musical gifts of our congregation- young and old- with singing. As the younger children processed in to church, "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna" was played with the musical instruments of our youth. We followed

with the readings and solos, duets, choir and bells to fill in the story of 'The Passion.' We so much appreciated all the different kinds of musical gifts from instruments, bells, CD accompaniment, solos, duets, choir & groups, along with a video "In Christ Alone," with congregational accompaniment and our Senior Youth acting out the scene of the crucifixion... all showing different ways to 'worship our Lord'. The service was followed by a special Sunday School craft of making a crucifix. Thank you to all who gave and participated and worshiped. "Come let us sing for joy to the Lord." Psalm 95:1

A couple weeks ago we had the pleasure of having David Britton come and work with us and give us the Word through music and song. Saturday afternoon was spent with sessions. The first session of the day was **WORSHIP in Spirit & Truth: The need for Vibrant Worship in a Lifeless Society**. The session was not just about music but responding and serving our Lord; it focused on the biblical understanding of what worship is. "I will sing of the Lord's great love forever" (Psalm 89:1). In this session we learned about giving to our Lord through worship. We respond to Him by giving and living in worship. "Sing the glory of His name, make His praise glorious" (Psalm 66:2). We can focus on this in worship and then love and serve so that others see Jesus in us. We live in a 'Sight & Sound World,' and we can show and give the Word to others through our actions. We also need to inspire one another and evangelize both **INSIDE & OUTSIDE** our walls. Music in church is not just to entertain people but to engage them in worship.

We would like to have a couple of special services during the year, possibly when we have a 5th Sunday, which would be "Praise" services—incorporating Scripture and song. Please give us your input. Let the Music Ministry Committee know your thoughts and ideas about worship so we may worship in 'spirit and truth'.

"I will sing of the Lord's great love forever."  
Psalm 89:1

## 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/).

### May 3

"You Can Live a Meaningful Life"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

A life that is meaningful is one that is connected to Jesus.  
(John 15:1-8)

### **May 10**

"Relentless Compassion"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

God's love excludes no one.

(Acts 10:34-38)

### **May 17**

"Without a Fight or a Prayer"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

Jesus prays for us because He knows we are vulnerable and need protection from a world that seeks to steal us away from God.

(John 17:11-19)

### **May 24**

"Power Connection"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Gregory Seltz

Pentecost is a day to celebrate God's gift of the Holy Spirit as Counselor and Comforter, sent by Jesus to bless you!

(John 15:26-27, 16:14-15)

### **May 31**

"Enough Is Enough"

Speaker Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Ken Klaus

God shows grace to sinners but His patience has its limits.

(2 Peter 3:9-10)

## ***Stewardship Corner***

We pray in the Lord's Prayer for daily bread. The *Small Catechism* teaches that "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." This is a pretty comprehensive list of what God provides for our daily bread. But all of this, eventually, and finally, will be taken away from us—not because God is punishing us, but because this is not the goal of life. There is more to life than these things. In fact, we will truly live when all these things are taken away, and we no longer need to pray for daily bread. For God our Father in heaven is calling us home to Himself. We are just sojourners here. We are on a journey in the wilderness of this world toward our true home, the land of promise, in heaven. Everything that we have in this world and this life will be left behind. But as much as we long for heaven, as much as we eagerly await that time when our Lord will take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven, we still struggle with letting go of what we have in this world. We still suffer the temptation to hold on to this life and this world and the things of this life and this world. But this is not our true home. And as good as this life is, and it is often by God's grace very good, the life to come in His kingdom far exceeds it. And

giving, stewardship, is a practice that teaches us to look to, long for, and trust in the eternal realities rather than the earthly. It teaches us to loosen our hold and let go of those things that keep us earthly minded, so that we may look what our Father in heaven has in store for us for all eternity. It teaches us to concentrate on what God has done, is doing, and will do for us instead of the constant work-a-day world and noise that we have here. It teaches us to long for that better country, the heavenly one. For God is not ashamed to be called our God. And He has prepared for us a city, His city, not made with hands. Thus we give generously to the church, to our family, to those in society. We release our grasp on what would keep our focus on the here and now, so that we would be free to receive and rejoice in what our future shall be in heaven. We invest where moth and rust will not destroy. We put our treasures so that our hearts will follow them (Matt 6:21; Luke 12:34). For we are only of any earthly good, when we are truly heavenly minded. Make this your practice for your own good eternally and your neighbors' good temporarily.

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

# ***Spring Fest***

**Saturday, June 6**

**10 a.m. until 5 p.m.  
Westminster Park**

Lisa Coolman, on behalf of the Board of Evangelism, will be chairing a Bake Sale fundraiser during this event. Donations of baked goods, as well as helpers on that day, are needed. Sign-up sheets are located in the narthex. Last-minute donations are also welcome, but we would like to be assured that we have enough goodies to sell on that day. You may also call Lisa for more information at 734-0713.

*Thank you for your help!!*

