

Pastor's Perspective

The season of Lent is drawing near. This is a season of the year in which we mark the 40 days that lead up to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Important to our life as Christians are repentance and forgiveness. While this is important throughout the entire year, there is deeper focus on repentance in Lent. To repent is to turn away not only from our sinful behaviors, but also to turn away from our *sinful nature*. The emphasis on sinful nature is deliberate as it refers to our inherited rebellion against God, which has been handed down from Adam and Eve and has left all of creation broken.

The theme of repentance appears primarily in the New Testament. As the one to prepare the way for Jesus, it is John the Baptist who "... came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Matthew 3:1b-2). Jesus will repeat this message following his temptation in the wilderness. As recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Repentance is crucial for our life as disciples of Jesus. Repentance starts with recognizing our sin. Recognizing our sin we can then show contrition for our sin, confessing that sin, and making the appropriate changes in our lives so as not to repeat that sin.

Repentance doesn't stop with our apology for sin. This is made clear in the Augsburg Confession. Article XII concerning repentance reads in this way:

"Now properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace. Then

improvement should also follow, and a person should refrain from sins. For these should be the fruits of repentance, as John says in Matthew 3:8: 'Bear fruit worthy of repentance'."

How we worship in the season of Lent reminds us very clearly of our dependence on the grace of God. In fact, going back to the days of the "old Red Hymnal" otherwise known as the Service Book and Hymnal (SBH) there was a rather blunt declaration following the confession of our sins, particularly to those who are unrepentant.

Such declaration to those who are unrepentant and unbelieving is that their sins are not forgiven and that God will visit their iniquity. In other words, there are consequences to our sin. Now, perhaps one might say it was a good thing this paragraph was not included in subsequent hymnals. The danger in that is by not hearing this judgment about our sin, we would not take seriously our need for forgiveness and our dependence upon Christ. In so doing, we also miss out on the incredible joy that is ours through faith.

God meets our repentance with the promise of forgiveness that is accomplished by Jesus Christ. Remember, God does not desire our death. He is merciful to us. The Apostle Paul notes this in Romans 2:4 that "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." Such repentance leads to forgiveness and declaration of our justification before God. Christ died for us that we may have life and not suffer the eternal consequences of our sins, namely hell. This work of Christ for us is a free gift as stated clearly again in Romans.

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1-2.

In many ways, we forsake that comfort when we treat our sin like just a common cold and fail to repent, failing to receive what Christ so desperately wants to give to us.

Poconos and **September 26-28, 2014** at Olmsted Retreat Center, Ludlow, PA, an hour north of DuBois. Weekends are for married couples whether you have been married a few months or upwards of 50 years. They run from Friday at 8 PM to Sunday around 4 PM. Two nights lodging, 5 meals for each, and all supplies are included. There is a \$45 per couple registration fee, plus you will be given an opportunity to make a confidential contribution toward the continuation of the program.

Register now to avoid being disappointed! Simply go to the website:www.GodLovesMarriage.org and sign up. Use a credit card to pay the \$45 registration fee, or mark the option to pay by check, and you will be notified where to send your check. For questions, or if you would like a brochure with registration form mailed to you, contact PA Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166.

Furthermore, as a Mission Driven congregation, we are called to declare both law and the Gospel of God for the sake of not only those who come to church weekly, but for our neighbors who do not believe in God, lest they perish. This mission comes from Jesus. Christ speaks to the disciples following his resurrection, he offers these words about what we as his followers are called to do.

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’ Luke 24:45-48.

So, I encourage you to keep a holy Lent through repentance and forgiveness. Remember it daily as a gift from God that you are His child. You are so precious before our Heavenly Father that Jesus died for you. Come, hear this good news each week in our worship that you may have peace.

God bless,
PastorMark

Sermon Titles

March 2	Perfect Submission
March 5	Cleaning Tips (Ash Wednesday)
March 9	Happiness is Being Forgiven
March 16	Our Help Comes from God
March 23	Greater Than Adversity
March 30	Prison Break

Council Actions

Council approved having The Irwin Male chorus perform here on April 6th at 7PM. A free will offering will be collected and refreshments will be served following the program.

Council approved an extra cost associated with refurbishing the hand bells. The extra cost amounts to roughly \$850. If anyone would care to donate toward this cost, please put your contribution in an envelope and mark it “bells.”

Council approved having a “Lutheran Lay Renewal Weekend” in October 2014. More details will follow.

The next two Council meetings will be Thursday, March 13th and Thursday, April 10th so as not to conflict with Lenten services.

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Christians Uniting is pleased to announce the Lenten schedule. This year’s theme is the “I Am” statements of Jesus from the Gospel according to St. John. The services will start at 7:00 p.m. at each of the churches listed below with the Pastor of that church leading worship and preaching.

March 12 – Norvelt Union Church

“I Am the Good Shepherd”

March 19 – Pleasant Unity Methodist Church

“I am the Bread of Life”

March 26 – Kecksburg Church of God

“I am the Vine”

April 2 – Trauger Mennonite Church

“I am the Light of the World”

April 9 – St. Paul United Church of Christ

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”

April 18 (Good Friday) – St. Paul Lutheran Church 11:00 a.m. “I am the Resurrection and the Life”

Anthony Thomas Pol, Jr. was received as a member of our congregation through the Sacrament of Baptism on February 16, 2014. Anthony’s, parents are Anthony and Marcy Pol; grandparents, Tom and Claudia Dunn; great grandparent, Edith Dunn.

Communion Assistants

March 2nd Karen George and Pat Ankney

March 5th Glenn Tarris and Pat Ankney

March 23rd Ken Long and Tom Dunn

SPY Clean-up Day at St. Paul will be Saturday, March 29th beginning at 9AM. After disposing of junk from the attic, we will go out to members of our church and clean up their yards from sticks, branches and other debris from winter.

SPY has been invited to participate in the 2014 Mid Northeast Mission District Bible Bowl. It will be held Sunday, March, 30th at Zion Lutheran Church, Brentwood. If you wish to compete, please speak to Pastor Mark.

ATTENTION MARRIED COUPLES: Have you signed up for your spring Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend? What better way for you and your spouse to spend a weekend than escaping from all the daily pressures and responsibilities to search out and discover an even warmer, closer, more joyful marital relationship! The Pennsylvania spring Weekends are:

March 28-30, 2014 at Park Inn Radisson, West Middlesex, PA, where each couple has a king bed and their own hot tub -- an hour north of Pittsburgh, just off of Interstate 80

April 25-27, 2014 at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel in State College—Happy Valley’s premier conference center located on a quiet hillside with views of the Nittany Mountains

We are also accepting registrations for the fall Weekends: **September 12-14, 2014** at Spruce Lake Retreat Center, Canadensis, PA in the heart of the

Date	Acolyte	Bell Ringer	Lector
March 2 nd	Chloe Eutsey	Hannah Newill	Larry Yanetsky
March 5 th (AshWed)	Judy Long		Ross Howard
March 9 th	Josh Clevenger	Michael Clevenger	Michael Clevenger
March 16 th	Sarah Lazeski	Blake Lazeski	Shawn Lazeski
March 23 rd	Nicholas Wile	Walter Long	A.J. Wile

The Women’s Organization is beginning to collect items for the layettes that we send to Lutheran World Relief. The items do not need to be new, but in good condition. We need 38 receiving blankets, 19 pairs of baby socks, 19 sleepers, 42 diaper pins, 22 hand towels (dark color) and 8 dozen flat fold diapers. With these items we can make 24 layettes. The items you donate may be placed in the drawer labeled “Layettes” in the Sunday School Office.

We would also like to thank everyone who helped make our soup sale a success. Whether you cooked or bought, thank you for your support.

Want Some Chili???

Please join us for a chili cook-off on March 9th, right after worship service. Sample and vote for your favorite chili and/or submit your chili for a chance to win. Donations benefit Women of Faith Trip, May 2 and 3 in Columbus, Ohio. May the best chili win!!! Any questions? Contact Amy.

You may have noticed that there are two new churches joining our mid-week rotation. As a result, this is why we are hosting the Good Friday ecumenical service. Additionally, St. Florian has declined to host this year because of the family demands of their Priest. Father Sedlak provides care for his elderly mother and thus limits what he is able to do. Please know that he is supportive of the ecumenical work our congregations do. All offerings will be used for the work of Christians Uniting.

Bible Ministry

Having a Bible in each pew by Easter is the aim of Church Council and Pastor Mark. Please help fulfill this wish by donating a Bible “in memory of” or “in honor of.” This program will also help provide a Bible to people who may not have one in their home. The cost is \$10 each; order forms are in the Sunday School Office.

Our next Bible Study will focus on Romans. For the most part the Bible study will take place on Monday evenings, with the exception of the week of March 31st. The Bible studies will begin at 6:30 and conclude at 8:00 p.m.

Here is an outline of the portions of Romans we’ll cover each night.

March 3 – Romans 1:1 thru 2:11

March 10 – Romans 2:12 thru 4:25

March 17 – Romans 5 thru 6

March 24 – Romans 7 thru 8

April 3 (Note that this is a Thursday) – Romans 9 thru 12

April 7 – Romans 13-16

Please come and bring a friend.

Octogenarian Birthdays

Mrs. Katharine Jones	c/o Bonnie Polakovsky 4086 Rt. 981 Mt. Pleasant PA 15666	March 6 th
Ms Martha Snyder	609 Marguerite Road Latrobe PA 15650	March 14 th
Mrs. Charlotte LeJeune	374 Turnpike Road Mt. Pleasant PA 15666	March 15 th
Mrs. Emilie Throm	214 Larkspur Circle Mt. Pleasant PA 15666	March 18 th
Mrs. Christine Metzler	406 White School Road Greensburg PA 15601	March 26 th
Mrs. Leona Lewis	139 Holly Place Mt. Pleasant PA 15666	March 29 th

Thank You

Sarah Fligger says, "I would like to thank everyone for their cards, phone calls and prayers in my time of recovery. Everyone is so very special to me. Thank you."

From Ivan and Doris Couchenour, "Ivan and I want to thank you all for all your prayers and cards during his recent illness. We're hoping he's on his way to recovery. God Bless you all."

From Charles T. Lockwood, M. Div., Ed.D. President/CEO Glade Run
"A heartfelt thank you for your Christmas gift donation to Glade Run Lutheran Services. Your generosity will bring joy to the children on Christmas morning and all throughout the year. God Bless!"

We gratefully acknowledge gifts in memory of:

Dorothy McWilliams and Ivy Hoffer by Dick and Ellen Briggs.
Charles Dean Reese by Vaun and Carolyn Hile

Communion Prep Groups

March 2 nd	Dolores Friedline/Ron and Sandy Vodopivec	Regular
March 5 th	(Ash Wed) Kellie Hoover/Emilie Throm/Jack and Judy Throm	Regular
March 23 rd	Mazzie Kernicky/Dick and Nancy Zimmerman/Ivan and Doris Couchenour	Regular

Books and Brunch will meet on Tuesday, March 18th. We'll be discussing Chapters 1 through 4 of "The Prodigal; God" by Timothy Keller. If you would like to purchase the book, please tell Pastor Mark. The cost of the book is \$8.00.

Vacation Bible School will be held June 23rd through June 27th. If you're interested in helping, call Hannah Yothers at 724-832-1145. Look for more details in future newsletters and the bulletin.

If you have signed up for the "Basement Church Ladies" play, please be reminded that the show starts at the Palace Theater at 3 PM on March 16th. You can go online to see the seating chart: Center Balcony where we will be seated. Thepalacetheatre.org

Please be reminded that the first Sunday in each month we collect nonperishable foods for supplying the food pantry here at St. Paul. If you are a coupon user, perhaps you could purchase a product for the food pantry using your coupon for the savings.