

Pastor's Perspective

What is love? Context plays a key role in understanding this question. Love in relation to the sport of Tennis is a far different concept than to love one's neighbor. To say I love a particular food is very different than the love one has for his or her spouse. So, the question is, "What is love."

The first place to answer this question is from First John 4:8 and 16. "God is love." True love cannot be separated from God. We also know that God's love is eternal as is God.

- The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Psalm 103:8
- Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 106:1.
- The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; Lamentations 3:22.

We know that within the Trinity there is perfect love.

This we know to be true because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal. Jesus states, "I and the Father are one". (John 10:30) It is from God the Father and the Son that the Spirit is sent forth. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you." John 14:26. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." John 16:7.

God loves you. Jesus loves you. The Holy Spirit loves you. God's love for us never ends.

God has given us the gift of life. On the sixth day of creation, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27. Furthermore, God considers all life to be precious including the gift of human life. "When I look at your

heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” Psalm 8:3-5.

Because God cares for us so deeply, He has given us boundaries for how we live in relationship with Him and with each other. That boundary is called the law. God gives us this law out of love, that we may be kept safe from the chaos of an unlawful society and that we would be driven to Christ.

Because we cannot fully keep the law, our Heavenly Father sent Christ to search for us. In fact, God went to the amazing extent of becoming incarnate. In Jesus Christ he took on our lot. All this was out of God’s great love for the world he has made.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17.

God has not only given each of us life, but in His great love has sent Jesus to redeem our life. That means God values us. God values you. You are precious to him.

I set this before you as we will look at the topic of love in the next few sentinel articles. This article is meant to serve as a foundation for how we love God and for how we love our neighbor. God’s love for us has many implications which are good and life giving.

God bless,
Pastor Mark

Sermon Titles

August 4	Guest Speaker
August 11	Holy treasure!
August 18	A not so gentle Word
August 25	Obtaining grace
September 1	Be Content

Octogenarian Birthdays

Mrs. Emma Lou Crum August 21
PO Box 93
Norvelt, PA 15674

Council Actions

- Marty Drexler received a commendable review.
- Noted with thanksgiving that Pat Ankney has painted the nursery and kindergarten room.
- Council approved the statement on memorial giving drafted by the Finance Committee and the Trustees of the Memorial Trust Fund.
- Noted that Pastor Mark and others from St. Paul will be visiting the Nile Lutheran Church on the weekend of September 20-22. If you are interested in going on this visit, please speak with Pastor Mark.
- Responded to a letter from the Mission District Dean donating \$150 to help house members of the Westmont College choir who will be singing at the NALC Convocation in Pittsburgh.
- The property and grounds committee noted that there are approximately 20 2X12 inch treated boards measuring 16 feet long that are available to any member of the congregation that would like them. Council is asking for a donation of half what they

would cost in the store. (at the time of printing the newsletter, the boards are taken)

- Expresses thanks to all those who helped with Operation Fresh Express. It is also the consensus of council that we schedule another Fresh Express event in 2014 through the Westmoreland County Food Bank.

Thank You Thank you to all of the wonderful members of our congregation who helped with the Westmoreland County “Fresh Express” food distribution on July 1st. We were asked to have 25 volunteers, and we had well **OVER** that number. We had adults and teenagers donate their time to help others in need.

A copy of the letter received from the Westmoreland County Food Bank.

Dear Friends of the Food Bank:

Thank you for your generosity in allowing the Food Bank the use of your parking lot while providing food to needy in your area on July 1, 2013. With your help, we were able to serve 73 Households.

The families served comprised of **49** children, **106** adults, and **23** senior citizens. Amazingly, **10,228** pounds of wholesome, nourishing foods were distributed.

We couldn’t have done it without your help. Again, thank you very much. We are proud to have you as our partner in the fight against hunger.

Clarissa Amond
Community Outreach Coordinator

TIME IS RUNNING OUT! Have you signed up for your fall Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend? Married couples overwhelmingly say that the Weekend is the best thing they have ever done for their relationship. Sign up today for one of the following Weekends:

* September **13-14** at the beautiful Olmsted Mansion and Retreat Center which is located in the Allegheny National Forest in northwest PA

* October **11-13** at the Mountain Laurel Resort in White Haven—in the Poconos, just off of Interstate 80 -- 2 hours north of Philadelphia

Weekends run from Friday at 8 PM to Sunday at 5 PM and are designed to enrich ALL MARRIAGES. There is a \$45 per couple registration fee, plus toward the end of the weekend you will be given an opportunity to make a confidential contribution of whatever amount you wish toward continuation of the program. Two nights lodging, 5 meals for each of you, and all supplies are included. To sign up, simply go to the website: www.GodLovesMarriage.org, and fill out the form. You may use your credit card or select the option to pay the \$45 with a check. For questions, or if you would like a brochure with registration form mailed to you, contact Pennsylvania Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at 724-325-3166 or email: fjschamber@comcast.net.

Terrorists in the Church

Submitted by Rev. Warren “Chip” Roy

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches! They have been identified as: Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Missin, Bin Fightin, and Bin Complainin! Their leader, Lucifer Bin Workin, trained these groups to destroy the Body of Christ!

The plan is to come into the church disguised as Christinans and to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy. However, there have been reports of a sixth group! A tiny cell known by the name Bin Prayin is actually the only effective counter terrorism force in the church. Unlike the other terrorist cells, the Bin Prayin team does whatever is needed to uplift and encourage the Body of Christ. We have noticed that the Bin Prayin cell group has different characteristics than the others. They have Bin Watchin, Bin Waitin, Bin Fastin, and Bin Login fortheir Master, Jesus Christ, to return.

Which one do you belong to? Let us join the Bin Prayin cell group before it is too Late!

Thank You Our congregation is such a wonderful FAMILY. We are always there for each other through a thought, a prayer, a card or a simple action. The following “Thank You” requests received THIS MONTH, is truly evidence that we are a loving congregation.

- The Kenneth Ludvik family thanks the congregation for the cards, prayers and acts of sympathy. Special thanks to Pastor Mark, Josephine Linden, Sandy Freeman, Candy Hoffer, Kathy Houtman, Judy Franco and Darlene Metzler for their help with the meal, assistance and kindness.
- Richard and Ellen Briggs thank you *sincerely* for your prayers, your kindnesses, and the messages of hope sent to our son-in-law, Shawn Boyle. The MRI following his course of radiation at Walter Reed Hospital showed his condition is stable, and the family is at home again. Thanks be to God!
- Thank you to Candy Hoffer and her quilting group of retired teachers for the beautiful “Quilts of Valor” they donated to “Wounded Warriors” in treatment at Walter Reed Hospital. They were delivered to Walter Reed on July 10th by Shawn and Sarah Boyle for distribution to six soldiers wounded in combat, three men and three women: Wesley, Joseph, Brian, Taylor, Fatima, and Deanna. The quilts are just beautiful; the loving kindness of those who created and gave them, beautiful as well. Let us pray for the recovery of these six young people, and remember the quilters with gratitude in our prayers.
- Thank you for all of your thoughts and prayers for my recovery. I am doing well. God Bless. Sarah Fligger
- We gratefully acknowledge the donation in memory of Irma Skoloda by Bob and Paula Struble.

Rally Day – Save the Date

Sunday School will start with our Rally Day program on September 8th at 9:15 a.m.

Prayer Chain To be included in the prayer chain, please submit your email address to receive prayer pages. Or, you can pick them up from the Secretary Door.

The Women of the NALC will meet Wednesday, **August 7th** at the Sheraton Square Hotel in Pittsburgh. Our women's organization will pay half of the registration fee for any women who want to attend. Contact Judy Long (724-423-5862) for more information or to register to attend. The deadline to register was July 13, 2013. You may be able to still register, but a late fee may be charged.

The WNALC Woman's retreat will be held on **September 13 & 14** at St. Emma's in Greensburg. The cost is \$125.00 for overnight stay and \$75 to attend without overnight accommodations. Ladies: You will not want to miss this event – the guest speaker alone will inspire you to new heights. Please see the brochure in the Sunday School office for complete details of the weekend events or speak to Karen George 724-539-9226(H) for registration and details.

Lutheran Church–Canada

The Reverend Dr. John R. Stephenson

The North American Lutheran Church

The Reverend Mark C. Chavez

The Reverend Dr. David Wendel



St Mary Festival On Sunday, August 4th, St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trauger will hold its annual summer festival from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Social Hall and on parish grounds located along Route 981. There will be ethnic food, children's games, a Chinese Auction, games of chance, craft tables and refreshments. A DJ will provide musical entertainment. Come escape the heat and join the fun. Call 724-423-3673 with any questions.

Latrobe Senior Center – On August 5th, 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., there will be a Hot Dog Bar and we will be giving tours of the center.

Latrobe Senior Center – On August 24th, the Center will have a booth at the Street Fair in Latrobe. Stop by and check out Center-made noodles, crafts and bake goods.

In faithfulness to Christ and in recognition of God’s desire to continue to bless men and women in the gift of holy marriage, the church through the ages has sought to encourage godly, joyful, faithful preparation for marriage according to God’s plan and work. This is in obedience to the Scriptures, which call men and women to an appropriate discipline of desire. Our human inclination is one of self satisfaction, but God’s Word calls us to a higher purpose—serving God and others (see Rom 6:12-14; 1 John 4:20). To serve the other requires the discipline of our bodies, which obviously includes sexual desires (see Rom 13:13). Therefore both biblical and wider human traditions of most cultures have emphasized the importance of chaste relationships which reserve sexual intimacy for marriage.

In such ways Scripture holds forth a vision of human life as male and female—one which invites us to see that as embodied creatures, our Creator intends great joy for us. Joyful, fulfilled life as men and women requires a paradox, however, for it demands the discipline of our bodies so that our desires do not rule us. This is so because the source of deepest human joy comes as our lives reflect their highest purpose in serving God and our neighbor (Matt 22:38-39).

May 2013

Approved by:

The Reverend John F. Bradosky, Bishop
The North American Lutheran Church

Other denominations that approved this statement include:

The Anglican Church in North America

The Very Reverend Dr. Jonathan S. Riches
The Rt. Reverend Dr. Ray R. Sutton

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The Reverend Dr. Frederic W. Baue
The Reverend Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer
The Reverend John T. Pless
The Reverend Larry M. Vogel

Women of the NALC Our women’s organization is working on school kits. Each kit contains:

- 4 – 70 count spiral notebooks
- 1 – 30 centimeter, 12 inch ruler
- 1 – Pencil sharpener
- 1 –blunt scissor
- 5 - #2 unsharpened pencils
- 5 – Ballpoint ink pens (no gel ink)
- 1 – box 16 or 24 crayons
- 1 – 2 ½”eraser

All of the items go in a bag which you can get in the final drawer in the Sunday School Office. Completed kits can be returned there also.

Bible Study “Christians Uniting” Summer Bible Study continues. As a Group, we are hosting a Bible Study covering **PEOPLE** of the Bible. The Bible Study will start at 6:00 p.m. at the HOST church with covered dish meal. Each family is asked to bring a covered dish and table service for each member of their family. The Host Church will be providing beverages.

July 24	Pastor Ackerman St Paul UCC	Rhoda
July 31	Pastor Stickley Kecksburg Church of God	Joseph
August 7	Brother Stephen Paul Church of the Good Shepherd (Former St. Stan’s)	Noah

Work in Progress If you look around, WE are a work-in progress. There are MANY jobs that the Property and Grounds committee are working on, and LOOKING to do! Would you be able to - carry material for us? Can you paint? Would you be able to help to put the newsletter together or maybe change Banners in the church. Or work outside pulling weeds. What is your area of expertise or interest??? There are many ODD JOBS that we need help to accomplish. If you are interested or able to help, please contact the office and we will direct you to the proper group.

Communion Prep Groups

August 4	Tom & Claudia Dunn Gaille Hoffer, Deann Walbaum	Intinction
August 25	Marci Albright, Dick & Ellen Briggs, Megan DiGuglielmo	Intinction
September 1	Kellie Hoover, Emilie Throm, Jack & Judy Throm	Intinction

During the summer schedule, we ask for volunteers each week to serve as Lector, Bell Ringer, Acolyte and Communion Assistant. Please volunteer as you are able.

SAVE the Date

The Hilltop Quilters will have their Quilt Show on Saturday September 28th from 10:00 – 4:00. Volunteers would be welcome to help hang the quilts on Friday 27th at 10:00 a.m.

protected by the bond of faithfulness. The committed love of marriage always reveals God’s intention that individuals are called into community, since marriage takes us beyond our individual identities so that we give ourselves to another who is distinctively different from us.

The beauty and significance of marriage go beyond its earthly effects—as rich and wonderful as they are. God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. In sustained and exalted language, Ephesians 5:21-33 connects godly marriage with the glorious relationship of Christ and His church. As a man and woman relate to one another with rich love and profound respect, their one flesh union hints of and is intended to signify the union of Christ and His bride, the church. But Christ and His bride also indicate the fullness of divine intention for marriage. Speaking of Christ as bridegroom and church as bride, the apostle notes that husbands are called to sacrificial love toward their wives and wives to a willing respect for their husbands.

In responding to the bitter reality of divorce, the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus, reaffirms the gift of marriage and then reminds us of an obvious implication: “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (see Matt 19:3b-6). His warning is necessary because the beautiful gift of marriage—like all of God’s created goodness—can be and is marred by sin, which Jesus describes as “hardness of heart” (Matt 19:8). Yet, sin does not have ultimate power. Christians recognize that marriage is lived under the cross. Husbands and wives are not exempt from the suffering that comes with faithfulness in marriage. Rather, trusting in the promises of Christ Jesus and clinging to each other in love, marriage is the arena for husband and wife to live together in repentance and faith.

God’s intention for marriage is also skewed when it is spurned as unimportant for human well-being, or repudiated as a godly gift, or twisted into forms that no longer correspond to the gift God has intended. Rather, God gives marriage to humanity for its wellbeing. He commends Biblical marriage for couples to make a deep commitment to one another before God for a life time of giving to each other.

“one flesh” commitment and bond. Marriage is created by God and is not simply a social contract or convenience.

Flowing from the gift of marriage is another precious gift of God, the gift of children. “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) is as much a word of divine blessing as it is a command. Children are the most obvious, distinctive, and natural gift of marriage, for the child is in every sense the “one flesh” of the mother and father. Marriage lived out according to God’s purpose is therefore also, just as naturally, the optimal setting for the child. Within the gift of marriage children receive the blessing of a father and mother who nurture and care for them, modeling a life in which the distinctive uniqueness and created differences of male and female serve to complement one another.

Part of the tragedy of contemporary cultural perspectives in Europe and North America is a growing bifurcation of marriage and child-bearing. Growing numbers of men avoid or abdicate fatherly responsibility. Growing numbers of women choose to have and/or raise children apart from marriage. Just as frequently encountered is the pervasive assumption of married couples that postponing or purposefully rejecting children is compatible with the marriage bond. In these different ways, children appear to have value only to the extent they fulfill parental desires.

While the gift of procreation is a profound and beautiful testimony of the blessedness of marriage and reveals one of marriage’s most fundamental purposes, marital goodness is not limited by procreation. Where procreation is not possible, many couples choose to adopt a child into their family and, regardless of intention, also reflect the divine love which leads God to adopt us as His own (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5).

So also, a childless couple exhibits, richly and beautifully, the blessings and goodness of man and woman living in complementarity. Although as an individual male and an individual female they are different, even to the point of often seeming to be alien to the other, their sexual and emotional bond enacts a life of self-giving openness to each other,

Description Statement for Memorial Trust Fund Giving

This is a statement of the policy followed by the financial secretary and the treasurer regarding donations given to the church in memory of a loved one. These memorials are of two types, unrestricted memorials (no designation other than to St. Paul), and restricted memorials (specifically designated for a special purpose, or targeted).

Unrestricted memorials to St. Paul are deposited into the general fund of the congregation and are used to support the ongoing needs of the congregation.

Restricted memorials may have one of several specific purposes, such as for property repair projects, the new furnace, etc., or are to be passed through for another charitable purpose designated by the donor.

In addition, the memorial gift may be designated to be held for deposit into the Memorial Trust Fund. The trust fund was set up several years ago to provide for savings and a long term investment of monies for use by the congregation at some future time, if needed.

All donations for a specific (restricted) purpose should be accompanied by written instructions signed by the donor or using the envelopes provided by the church. This will ensure proper recording by the financial secretary and the proper ultimate distribution by the treasurer.

For your convenience, envelopes for making a gift are available in the Sunday school office and at the entrance of the church.

From NALC Bishop John Bradosky June 2013

A Response to the Recent Rulings of the United States Supreme Court regarding Marriage

While the decision of the court is not a complete surprise we were hoping for more than a ruling aligned with the popular opinion of our culture. Many of the basic tenets of our legal system are rooted in biblical principles. The laws of our nation were once established on transcendent truth and not simply what citizens were willing to tolerate. Contemporary decisions seem to be based on only the most recent cases, philosophies and political will. The historical foundation and connection to biblical principles is seldom raised or followed. The prevailing attitude is that the wisdom of man in contemporary culture is far superior to the wisdom of God.

There are few in our culture bold enough to speak out against the slow erosion of the Biblical understanding of marriage and the family that each of these decisions bring. The recent decisions of the Supreme Court should cause us to raise some important questions. We believe in equality and justice for all people, but can justice be separated from righteousness? Can one speak out for the biblical understanding of justice without also speaking out for the biblical understanding of righteousness? Can acceptance and tolerance of behaviors in opposition to the Word and will of God be considered equal to those behaviors that are in agreement with scriptural teaching?

We must never simply acquiesce to such rulings but engage in constructive dialog, consistent prayer, biblical study, loving obedience to Christ and faithful caring for our neighbor. Our response is grounded in the Great Commission, making disciples obedient to Christ, teaching the faith and trusting in

the constant presence of Jesus. We must remain all the more committed to influence our culture and the world by faithfully proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, boldly living what we confess.

While our pastors and congregations will not participate in the blessing of same sex unions and continue to uphold in our preaching and teaching the Biblical standards for marriage and sexuality, we have an even more positive word to offer. I commend to you the ecumenical statement on marriage and the family. (<http://thenalc.org/educational-resources/>) This is a perfect time for our pastors to preach and teach about the biblical understanding of marriage and the family making full use of both the Old and New Testament references. I am confident that our pastors and congregations in the NALC will continue to boldly proclaim God's truth in love, offering the forgiveness, mercy and healing that only Christ can provide. We will continue to pray for all men, women and children affected by these decisions as well as those responsible for making them.

**NALC Affirms Stand on Marriage –
An Affirmation of Marriage
From the NALC Website June 26, 2013**

The Sacred Scriptures teach that in the beginning the blessed Trinity instituted marriage to be the life-long union of one man and one woman (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6), to be held in honor by all and kept pure (Heb 13:4; 1 Thess 4:2-5). God's Word assures us that each time one man and one woman join themselves together in the union of the marriage commitment and relationship, God himself has joined them as one. It is important to see that marriage is not only a grace-filled institution of the church, but part of the very fabric of God's creation which extends to every time and place on earth and includes every man and woman who are joined together in this