

Pastor's Perspective

In a couple of weeks we will enter the season of Lent. This 40 day season (not counting Sundays) serves to invite self-examination. It is a time to delve more deeply into prayer and scripture. In so doing, the Word of God convicts us of our sin. Duly convicted, we repent. We confess our sins and in so doing make the appropriate amendments in our lives so as not to continue in sin. God delights in our repentance, eagerly welcomes us back and declares to us the forgiveness of our sins.

The forgiveness of sins is but one of God's many gifts to us. Through the work of the Holy Spirit and for the sake of Christ, we are also formed into a community. Community is a gift from God. In Scripture the Christian community is described as the body of Christ. First Corinthians 12:27 states this clearly. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

The gift of community that we most commonly experience within the vast communion of saints of every time and every place is the local community we call a congregation, specifically, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Trauger. In this congregation we experience a part of what it means to be the body of Christ.

Being part of Christ's body in a congregation is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gathers us together in the grace that comes from our Lord. This is a different way of looking at what it means to be a congregation. It is different because the focus is not on how large or small the congregation is, but the focus is on our relationship with Christ. This mindset also distinguishes us from clubs or groups where we join in order to be members. Unlike groups or clubs where we may unite around a common goal, the church is united around Jesus and it is only through him that we can be the church. It is by the grace of God that we are brought together that we may use our individual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (See Ephesians 4:1-16, 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Romans 12:3-8).

Like all gifts, being in a congregation is one that can be easily taken for granted. I have listened to the heartache of many who mourn not being able to be with us on Sunday mornings due to their health, an inability to drive or other limitations. They miss the union they have with Christ and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Missing is the fellowship. Missing is the opportunity to share in the ministry of the congregation.

It is at such times in the lives of individuals that we as a congregation work intentionally to minister with them and to them. Regardless of bodily or mental health, regardless of the limitations our brothers and sisters in Christ have, we have the privilege and responsibility of being the visible sign of Christian community. Our time in visiting be it in person or on the phone, time spent listening to these valued disciples of our Lord is a blessing we can give. Together in these visits there is opportunity to pray and to read scripture, acts that remind us that we are still part of the community of faith.

Now for some, being a part of the community on a regular basis for worship is difficult because of our vocations. Many are called to loving service of our neighbors on Sundays. Opportunities need to be considered for how we nurture these brothers and sisters in Christ in Christian faith that they may continue to know they are part of our community of faith.

When individuals are not regularly part of the worshipping community of faith, it is they who suffer the most, though they may not even realize it. Missing is the proclamation that their sins are forgiven. Missing is receiving the true presence of Christ who reveals himself in the Sacraments. Missing is the opportunity to be in a loving, albeit not perfect community, of Christians who believe that "Jesus is Lord". Too often we consider worship (the gathering of believers around Word and Sacrament) just one option for our day as opposed to seeing it as a gift from God. The excuses may be many. However, the benefits go beyond the treasures of this world. It is for God,--Father, Son and Holy Spirit that we gather in worship in obedience to his command and in thankfulness for his amazing grace. It is in the community of faith, that we discover the richest blessings of His love.

I look forward to seeing you frequently in our gathering as a community of faith to worship and praise our loving God.

God bless
Pastor Mark

Sermon Titles

February 3 – No Excuse Discipleship
February 10 – “I’m spending my kid’s inheritance”
February 13 – The Lord is gracious
February 17 – Hardship is not permanent
February 24 – Close your eyes and see
March 3 – “Deliver us from evil”
March 10 – See your neighbor as God made them.
March 17 – Moving Forward
March 24 – We did it
March 28 – (Maundy Thursday) The beloved community
March 29 – (Good Friday)
March 30 – (Easter Vigil) My Redeemer lives
March 31 – (Resurrection of the Lord) Christ is risen

Council Actions

The following persons were elected as officers of the congregation, President - John Houtman, Vice-President - Pat Ankney, Secretary - Pat Shopsy, Treasurer-Glenn Yothers, Financial Secretary - John Houtman.

After reviewing the constitution and bylaws, there is nothing in that prohibits a single person holding multiple offices.

Committee Appointments

Karen George - Evangelism Committee

Glen Tarris – Community Service Committee

Council Meetings will now start at 7:00 p.m. and adjourn NO LATER than 9:30 p.m.

Council approved:

- with regret the transfers of Ken & Liz Baker to St Johns Union Church
- the agenda for the annual meeting on February 10th following the worship service.
- the dates for the Girl Scouts during the spring of 2013

Council recommends the budget for 2013 -- \$168,937

Communion Assistants	2/24	Ross Howard
2/3 Ken Long		Pat Ankney
Sue Vikartosky		
2/10 Ron Struble		Greeter
John Houtman	2/17	Greeter – Ken Long
2/13 Karen George		
Glenn Tarris		

We have an opening! Due to the resignation of a council member, we have a two year opening on council. If anyone is interested, please contact the office or Pastor Mark. Council meets usually the second Wednesday of the month @ 7:00 p.m.

Health Kits The Women of the NALC are starting to make up Health Kits for the Lutheran World Relief. Each kit consists of 1 towel (52x27), 1 comb, 1 metal nail clipper, 2 bath size bars of soap and 1 toothbrush (in original package). The items are wrapped inside the towel and tied with a ribbon and left in the Sunday School Office.

Appreciation and Thank You

“Thank you” goes out to the many people who continue to donate memorials in memory of Jerry Lewis, Connie Hails and Grace Kelly.

The following gave in memory of Jerry Lewis: Doris Knechtel, Faye Musick, Eric & Kim Povlik, Bill & Doris Smith, Denny & Tina Muia, Darrel & Bonnie Williams, Jeff & Barb Schmitt, Bruce & Theresa Park, Deborah & Larry Kull, Susan Seltzer, Dick & Ellen Briggs, Dick & Nancy Zimmerman, chuck & Sandy Freeman, Vikartosky Family, John & Kathy Houtman and Pam & Joseph Policastro.

Memorials given in memory of Connie Hails: Dick & Ellen Briggs, Dick & Nancy Zimmerman, Elizabeth Circle.

The following gifts were donated in memory of Grace Kelly: Leona Lewis, Linda Rath, Vaun & Carolyn Hile, Judith Cromer, Walter & Judy Long, Gabe & Betsy Naggy, Dale Dix, Carol Shultz, Paul, Helene & Lauren Grega, Robert & Erna Marie Borland, Marie Fisher and Sandra Walborn.

Flower Chart It is a “new” year, and the Flower Chart for 2013 is located in the Sunday School Office. If you would like to place flowers on the altar to celebrate a special occasion, to honor a special person or to the memory of a loved one, it is very easy to do.

1. Select an available date & WRITE **your name** on the Chart for THAT date.
2. Complete the **FORM** (forms are located below the chart) indicating your intention to supply flowers on that date, and HOW it is to be acknowledged in the church bulletin.
3. Deposit the **FORM** in the Offering Plate or outside the Secretary’s office.
4. It is your responsibility to contact the florist of your choice and make arrangements for the flowers to be delivered to the church the day prior to the specific date. (or other arrangements at your direction)

Did you know that we “recycle” Aluminum cans??? Well, we do! The collection can is beside the shed/dumpster for the collection of all aluminum cans. The cans are then recycled and the proceeds are turned over to Camp Lutherlyn. Last year, was our lowest collection, EVER, and we would to improve that this year. So let’s “pitch in” and donate our Aluminum Cans.

Cookie Week The first full week of each month our congregation has volunteered to provide cookies for the local Meals on Wheels. Cookies can be delivered on Monday morning to the Pleasant Unity

Methodist Church, or can be left at St. Paul any time that week. Please place them on the desk outside the secretary's office. They will be delivered to Meals on Wheels. Cookie week is February 3rd. Sugar free is always welcome.

Food Pantry – In the current times, we are receiving calls requesting assistance of food products. There has a need for personal care items such as shampoo, laundry detergent... This is to remind you that the on February 3rd we will have the “shopping cart” in the Sunday School Office to receive **donations**. We ask you to place your donations of non-perishable foods in the cart which will be put in the St. Paul Food Pantry to help those in need from our community. Thank you.

Seven Springs Family Snow Tubing Trip 2013

St Paul’s Youth Group will be sponsoring a FAMILY snow tubing trip at Seven Springs Mountain Resort on **February 9th, 2013** from 3 to 5 P.M. The cost for this event will be \$27.00 for twelve and over, four to eleven is \$22.00. **Children under the age of four are not permitted to snow tube.** We will meet at the church at 1:45 P.M. We will then carpool to Seven Springs and register by 2:30. Signs up sheets are in the Sunday School Office along with **family** permission forms. . **Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.** If you have any questions please contact Pastor Mark or Dylan Grindle. We hope to see you there!

Lenten Schedule

The season of Lent will begin on February 13th with the Ash Wednesday service with the Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion @ 7:30 p.m.

Following is the schedule for the observation of the Lenten Ecumenical services within our community. Evening services will begin at 6:30 p.m. Except for the Good Friday service, that will be at 11:00 a.m.

The schedule is as follows:

February 20 th	Pleasant Unity United Methodist Pastor Joanie Scarff
February 27 th	St Paul Lutheran Church Pastor Mark Werner
March 6 th	St Paul United Church of Christ Pastor David Ackerman
March 13 th	Norvelt Union Church Pastor David Greer
March 20 th	Christ the Good Shepherd (meeting at St Stanislaus rectory) Brother Stephen Paul
March 29 th	Good Friday Trauger Mennonite Church Pastor Merv Lapp, Hosting Pastor David Auckerman, preaching.

Bible Study Come join us as our Bible Study continues on Thursdays. As we look at the Fruits of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23. Each evening we will discuss a particular spiritual fruit. Each session will be held in the General Meeting Room from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. **

The full schedule is as follows:

- January 31st – patience
- February 7th – kindness
- February 14th – goodness
- February 21st – faithfulness
- February 28th – gentleness
- March 7th – self-control

** In the event of inclement weather, all church activities are cancelled on days when the Mt. Pleasant school district closes. In that case, the scheduled topic will be pushed back to the next Thursday.

Joyful Discipleship!!!! This is a two day workshop focusing on Discipleship April 12th & 13th in Export @ Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Pastor Michael Foss will be a presenter.

Pastor Foss is gifted as a teacher, preacher, and trainer, he has authored the books *Power Surge*, *A Servant's Manual*, and well as the recently released *From Members to Disciples*

The workshop is divided into four segments:

- Creating a Culture of Discipleship
- The Joy of Discipleship
- The Vision for Mission
- Discipleship as the church's way of life

This should be an exhilarating and amazing experience for all who attend. Brochures are available in the Sunday School Office. We may be able carpooling if needed.

Communion Prep Groups

February 3rd	Linda Campbell, Faye Musick, and Kim Pavlik
February 10 th	Dolores Friedline, Marsha Cochenour, Ron & Sandy Vodopivec
February 13 th	(Ash Wednesday) Tom & Claudia Dunn , Gaille Hoffer
February 24 th	Susan Vikartosky, Terri Geary, Amy Werner and Jerry & Erin Howard
March 3rd	Shawna & Bill Willochell, Josephine Linden, Dick & Nancy Zimmerman, Ivan & Doris Couchenour
March 24 th	Dick & Ellen Briggs, Marci Albright
March 28 th	(Maundy Thursday-Cleanup)

March 30th Jane Cole, Shelly Wile, Mandy Newill,
Pat & Ray Ankney
(Easter Vigil)
Kellie Hoover, Emilie Throm, Jack & Judy Throm

Happy Birthdays

Mrs. Kathryn Barron	February 7 th
Mrs. Ivy Hoffer	February 10 th
Mrs. Marie Fisher	February 12 th
Mrs. Donna Nicholson	February 17 th
Mrs. Elizabeth Struble	February 17 th
Mr. Joseph Sidehammer	February 18 th
Mrs. Sara Brisbane	February 24 th

Acolyte

February 3rd – Lucy Briggs
February 10th – Hannah Newill
February 17th Kayla Fretz
February 24th Dillon Albright

Bell Ringer

Hannah Newill
Karley Bobel
Kaiman Fretz
Rachel Albright

Lectors

February 3 rd	Jerry Howard
February 10 th	Andrew Chelsted
February 17 th	Myrna Miller
February 24 th	Dick Zimmerman

At the inaugural convocation of the North American Lutheran Church a motion was made for the church to issue a statement regarding what we teach on the topic of abortion. In response to that motion, the Joint Commission on Theology

and Doctrine of both NALC and Lutheran CORE has developed a statement on “The Sanctity of Nascent Life.”

This statement is provided for the church as an “educational and theological resource” as part of an ongoing conversation around this important topic. It is not a statement that will be up for any vote. It is simply provided as information.

The following article is copied from the NALC December Newsletter. The monthly newsletters of both the NALC and Lutheran CORE are available on their respective websites and a hard copy is available in the Sunday school office.

‘The Lord Is with You’

A Word of Counsel to the Church - The Sanctity of Nascent Life

**The Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine
North American Lutheran Church
Lutheran CORE**

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The beginning of human existence, i.e., nascent life, carries in it the fullness of the genetic code, the complete chromosomal material of an individual. The strengths and characteristics given to us by God have not yet blossomed for all the world to see, yet they are fully present in the beauty of His love. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5) Luther’s Small Catechism proclaims, “I believe that God has created me and all that exists,” so in faith we continue to proclaim that our life, and every life, comes from God and belongs to God. In our earthly dependency upon the womb of our mothers for protection, nourishment, and love from the first

moments of our lives, we see in the creation of each life the shape of faith. We will always be fully dependent upon God for life, for shelter, and for mercy — the God who uses men and women to bring forth every generation of His creation.

How we in the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE speak about the dignity of nascent life is indicative of so much more. As the fullness of God's mercy calls us into newness in each day, we come to know that no day in our lives is beyond His care. God himself has given us a pattern by which we know His love: the conception, gestation, and birth of our Lord Jesus. As we reflect upon when life begins and what life means, we look to what God has done in sending His Son to live among us from conception, to death, to resurrected life.

In the Annunciation of the Good News given to Mary, the Mother of our Lord, we come to know the gift of every life in a new way, and we come to know the holiness of her womb as a sanctuary of mercy for all humankind. She who is our Mother in the faith shelters the One who is the Savior of the world with her very body, a model of love beyond all fear, of obedience beyond all personal security, of faith in the One who is yet unseen.

In the self-emptying (kenotic) movement of God In the incarnation, He was never more vulnerable, more helpless than when He was *in utero*, swaddled in amniotic fluid. He was also never more intimately protected, swaddled in the myriad layers of a mother's love. It is the vision of this love that is ever so needed in this day — a death defying love, an eternal love, a fierce love, a sacrificing love. It is this vision that we are called to bear for the sake of generations to come. For in the disordered loving of a fallen world that removes sexual intercourse from the fidelity, trust, and delight of the marriage bed, there will continue to be the littlest among

us, made in the image and likeness of God, who without a holy love, will be unprotected from the lies that say they are neither human nor of any value. In a time in human history when the laws of many nations sanction the destruction of new lives simply because they are an inconvenience, the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE, and all who belong to the Body of Christ, are called to teach and preach the message that the Lord who created the heavens and the earth, the Lord, who in the power of the Holy Spirit grew in His mother's womb, the Lord, who in obedience gave His life for all, The Lord is with you.

“The Lord is with you.” This is what we are called to speak to every woman with a child in her womb. The Lord is with you, regardless of the circumstances of your pregnancy. We urge the NALC to commit itself as a church, as the Body of our Lord on earth, along with those joined with it in mission in Lutheran CORE, to be with you as well. We seek to attend to your needs, to help you, to guard you, and to guide you that you may bear your child in a community of love. Whether a husband and wife, or a mother alone raises that child or puts that child into the arms of another family, we will provide spiritual counsel so that parents and child will have the abundant life that Christ Jesus has promised them. We do not want a woman who is overwhelmed by the news of an unintended pregnancy to abort an innocent child, a child whose cries for life cannot yet be heard, a child who is of great value to God, regardless of the circumstances of the child's birth. Whatever the circumstances of the pregnancy, the termination of the life of their child will not make a mother's or father's life better. Apart from victims of sexual violence, the NALC and Lutheran CORE should call to repentance all men and women who have engaged in sexual behaviors outside of marriage. Men and women who are not

married to each another and who have used their procreative abilities irresponsibly and then have chosen to abort a child, as well as husbands and wives who have aborted children whom they do not want, are called to confession, contrition, and amendment of life. God wants us to know His joy, and until we acknowledge our sin and throw ourselves upon His mercy, we can never live rightly. The wanton destruction of a human life for matters of one's own convenience is sin. The casual use of abortion as a final solution for a conception born of recreational sex is sin. The intimidation and emotional blackmail to undergo an abortion that women have received from the men who have impregnated them is sin.

The church also has great concern for those among us, who under the advice, counsel, or persuasion of family and/or medical personnel, have aborted a life *in utero* as a result of rape, incest, severe abnormalities of fetus, or endangerment to the life of the mother. In these cases, we as a church seek to be a vessel of compassion and consolation. Even in the most difficult situation, the termination of the pregnancy will not necessarily bring an end to the intensity of the current pain. The end of any of new life, even when it comes to be the only apparent solution that one believes can be endured, will still carry layers of sorrow. Again, we urge the NALC to commit itself as a church body, along with its partners in Lutheran CORE, to provide pastoral care to all parties who are involved, for there are no decisions in such times that will be without familial grief. We seek not to condemn but to console. As anger, abandonment, regret, and the depths of despair each come in their turn, so the mercy of our ever-present God will need to be spoken. The Lord is with you. The Lord is still with you.

The rationales, however, for legalizing abortions in North America are far from these limited cases of “therapeutic” abortion. The arguments have changed

throughout the 20th and 21st centuries from easing the burdens of the poor on the society, to the right of a woman to have autonomy over her own body (Roe v. Wade; Morgentaler v. Her Majesty the Queen, Supreme Court of Canada, 1976), to sex-selection of children from cultures that value male progeny over female, to simply one of economic gain, (i.e., not wanting to support another child). In too many cases, legalized abortion has simply become a form of retroactive birth control. Abortion dehumanizes and diminishes all who are involved. It affects the father, who has lost what it means to be a guardian to his family and who has lost the learning that comes from a relationship in which spirituality and sexuality are not divorced. It affects the mother, whose denial may break down if she later conceives and bears a child, or is later unable to conceive a child, or whose guilt may spiral into the bondage of shame as she seeks to keep her abortion a secret. At last, it affects the child, the blessed child, a living human presence who is denied the fullness of body that was intended for him in this life and in the age to come. Legalization of abortion puts the state at odds with the historic witness of the church, and so we are called to listen again to the Word of God as proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures, the wisdom of the Church Fathers, and the insight of the Reformers as we seek to follow Christ faithfully in our day. The *Didache* clearly speaks the law as stated in the fifth commandment to the issues of abortion and infanticide in the ancient world, “Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor again shall thou kill it when it is born.”¹ *The Epistle of Barnabas* speaks of those who seek to end the life of one *in utero* as “killers of the child, who abort the mold of God.”² The Nicene Creed professes that Jesus is fully human and fully divine from the moment of His conception and in doing so declares that human life begins at conception.³ Again and again the Psalter sings that fearfully and wonderfully

made, we are the work of God's hands (Ps 139:14). John Calvin, in concert with the early Fathers, regards an unborn child as "already a human being."⁴ Martin Luther regards procreation as "the work of God" and speaks of those who kill the growing fetus as an example of the wickedness of human nature.⁵ The witness of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is clear: There is no life that is beyond God's care, beginning at the moment of conception. The child *in utero* is not simply the possession of the father or the mother, for each nascent life is the handiwork of God. "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:15).

The North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE strive to witness to the all-encompassing love of God in early 21st century North America, when nearly 50 million abortions have been legally performed since 1973 in the United States and 1988 in Canada. We urge the NALC and Lutheran CORE to commit not only to protecting the next generation of children during those first exquisite nine months of life, but to helping those for whom abortion mars their procreative histories. As parents come to healing through the counsel and ministries of the church, their witness will be invaluable. In the renewal of their faith, the lies that were told against the littlest among us will come to an end. As their voices then sound within the assembly of all who believe that He who is the Savior of the world is fully human and fully divine from the moment of His conception, so we come yet again to understand the giftedness of the creation of our own bodies. May each of us seek to live out the dignity with which we were created, so that our lives as the enfleshment of God's love will bear witness to His love for all the world.

December 14, 2012

Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine

Robert D. Benne, Kenneth H. Sauer, Carl E. Braaten, Amy C. Schiffrin, John F. Bradosky, Henry Schulte Jr., David E. Hahm, Paull E. Spring, Benjamin A. Johnson Sue A. Tolton, James A. Nestingen, Paul T. Ulring, Eric M. Riesen, J. Larry Yoder

¹*Didache* 2:2.

²*The Epistle of Barnabas* 19:5.

³The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) is explicit, “We confess the Holy Virgin to be the Mother of God because God the Word was made flesh, and became man from the moment of conception.” See also the Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article VII.10, “Therefore we believe teach, and confess that the Son of man according to his human nature is really (that is, in deed and in truth) exalted to the right hand of the omnipotent majesty and power of God, because he was assumed into God when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb and his human nature was personally united with the Son of the Most high.” *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 488.

⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses*, trans. Charles Bingham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 3:41,42.

⁵Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* vol. 4. ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1964), 304.