

The Good News of Peace

April 2021 Newsletter from Peace Lutheran Church-LCMS, Rogers City, MI

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

What a joy it was to be able to gather for worship in person on Easter Sunday once again this year! While we still did not see our usual Easter crowd in terms of size, it was a blessing to see so many in attendance. Personally, I was particularly struck by a number of our Easter hymns this year. Our hymns have a way of permitting us to consider familiar truths from a slightly different perspective. While I would happily do so with all of them, I thought it would be appropriate to use this space this month to reproduce the text of one of Easter Sunday's hymns here, in order to give us an opportunity to relive the message of Easter through it at the beginning of the joyous Easter season. We sang this hymn, one of my favorites, as the Closing Hymn of the Sunrise Service:

- 1 He's risen, He's risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord;
He opened death's prison, the incarnate, true Word.
Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song
And earth, sea, and mountain their praises prolong.
- 2 The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
The Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,
For Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.
- 3 But short was their triumph; the Savior arose,
And death, hell, and Satan He vanquished, His foes.
The conquering Lord lifts His banner on high;
He lives, yes, He lives, and will nevermore die.
- 4 O, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;
Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door.
For all our transgressions His blood does atone;
Redeemed and forgiven, we now are His own.
- 5 Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;
Proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.
Laud, honor, and praise to the Lamb that was slain:
With Father and Spirit He ever shall reign. Amen.

Text: © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110017133

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As we continue to celebrate our Savior's resurrection and life, a blessed Easter season to each of you!

In His Service,

Pastor Riddle

Pastor Derek Riddle

Christ's Descent into Hell

A couple of members asked, following our Good Friday service, for some clarification regarding the Biblical doctrine of Christ's descent into hell. The following is an excerpt from an on-line article at www.lutheranreformation.org, authored by Rev. Aaron Moldenhauer:

Arguably the most opaque passage of the Creed is that Christ descended into hell. The passage is based on Scripture, but these scriptural passages (e.g., 1 Peter 3) lend themselves to multiple interpretations about what the descent into hell was, leading to centuries of debate on this article. Which part of Christ descended? To which hell? What did He do there? Is this part of His suffering? ... Article IX of the Formula [of Concord], following a sermon of Martin Luther's, advises that one stick with a simple explanation, taking comfort that Christ has destroyed hell for believers.

The Formula of Concord on the Descent into Hell

[Prior] treatments of the descent into hell give us context to understand the Formula of Concord's treatment of the article. The Formula notes that Lutheran theologians debated the article and what it might mean. Their questions parallel those asked previously: When did Christ descend? In what manner? Before or after His death? Only His soul? Is this part of Christ's passion, or His victory and triumph?

The Formula recommends avoiding "useless, unnecessary questions" about this article. It is enough to stick with the simplest way, for the matters discussed surpass the ability of reason and the senses to comprehend. Yet, there are necessary points to confess about the article. One ought to know from this article

that Christ destroyed hell for all believers and delivered them from death, eternal condemnation, and the jaws of hell. How this happened is an unnecessary question. That it happened is the profitable use of the article.

Martin Luther's Sermon on the Descent into Hell

The Formula of Concord, addressing the descent into hell only briefly, refers readers to a sermon that Martin Luther preached in 1533. In this sermon Luther repeatedly advocates a simple understanding of the words, stressing that the useful reading of the article is that Christ has delivered us from death and hell. As Luther and Lutherans reject belief in places like purgatory or limbo, readings of the descent as Christ's deliverance of souls from these places are no longer tenable. Rather, the article is read to speak of Christ's deliverance of all believers from hell. Luther places the descent after Christ's death, but before His resurrection and ascension.

Luther mocks attempts to debate fruitless questions with his typical sarcasm. Human minds benefit from an image, so we have the image of a descent into hell. But this image should not be taken too literally, Luther says. Christ goes to hell to plant a victory flag, but we should not worry what the banner was made of, or how it did not burn in hell. Rather, Luther advocates sticking to the practical use of the question: Christ has destroyed hell and robbed the devil of all his power.

For Study and Reflection

Behind the Formula of Concord's reading of the descent into hell stand scriptural passages such as 1 Peter 3. 1 Peter 3:18-20 describes Christ preaching to the spirits in prison. This passage suggests that Christ descended to hell to proclaim His victory over Satan and hell. In that light, may you find comfort in the victory of Christ over death and hell for you!

This entire article may be found at: <https://lutheranreformation.org/theology/formula-concord-study-article-ix/>

Equality Act

What follows is a statement issued last month by our Synodical President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, on the subject of the so-called Equality Act currently before the U.S. Congress:

A Word on the Equality Act To the Pastors, Called Workers and Members of the 6,000 Congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The words of the apostle Peter apply to us now:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:3–8)

The church's task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). "The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered" (AC VII 1).¹

God rules His church by His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15–16). God rules the state by His eternal law, reason and reasonable laws for the common welfare. "Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God" (AC XVI 1; see Rom. 13:1–7). The church should not meddle in government affairs, especially in matters upon which the Word of God is silent. It is also wrong when governments act against God's eternal law, reason and the basic civil rights of all people. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines this truth. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Throughout history, governments have acted unjustly — sometimes in the name of race, atheism, communism, religion and even Christianity — and curtailed or denied the rights of conscience and the free exercise of religion.

And governments continue to do so. Our Lutheran and biblical confession is that “it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)” (AC XVI 6–7; see 1 Peter 2:13–14).

St. Paul made use of his legal right as a Roman citizen (“I appeal to Caesar” Acts 25:11). “Christ’s kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air” (Ap XVI 54). Our Lutheran Confessions commend the seeking of public remedy for injustice. “Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God’s work, according to Paul (Romans 13)” (Ap XVI 59). Our God-given right to act as citizens is very important, especially now.

The Equality Act is before Congress.² It sounds innocent. All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals.

Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24, when He stated:

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:4–6)

In fact, those churches and institutions that are bound by the Word of God to the truth of marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that institution is contrary to the word of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:2), could be punished for simply standing on our consistent, ancient Christian beliefs. The Equality Act effectively outlaws the words of Christ, the sublime doctrine of Creation, the First Article of the Creed, and our “free exercise of religion” based upon the Bible and Apostles’ Creed. The biblical teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman is to be labeled forever a mere “sex-based stereotype.”³

The Equality Act expands the definition of “public accommodation” and puts an ultimatum to individuals, religious non-profits, food banks, schools, charities, adoption agencies and others: “Change your faith-based practices or face government punishment.”⁴

Religious schools (K-12 and universities) are a prime target of the Equality Act, which will make it difficult to maintain standards for admission and codes of Christian conduct for students, faculty and staff.⁵ The Equality Act will forbid college students from using federal tuition assistance at schools that maintain standards of conduct on the basis of the Bible regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sex-specific facilities and female-only spaces could be eliminated. Biological males will have the right to participate in female sports, unjustly denying female athletes at our schools a fair competition and the due rewards of accomplishment.⁶

The Equality Act will eliminate the significant protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 1993.⁷ This law has provided strong protections for “free exercise of religion” in the face of overzealous officials.

The Equality Act contains no conscience protections for medical staff who choose not to perform abortions, even if they have religious objections. Because of its broad definition of “health” services, the Equality Act threatens the Hyde Amendment, which limits public funding for abortion. It also threatens Christian hospitals with elimination of funding for not performing “health” services, including abortion or genital mutilation.

The Equality Act was recently passed by the House and is currently pending in the Senate. The margin is razor thin. If it does not become law now, we can be assured that it will be pressed again. We encourage all LCMS people to:

1. Treat all people with kindness and respect (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” Mark 12:31), while holding firmly to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).
2. Become informed about the Equality Act and the issues of gender dysphoria. (See “Additional Resources” below.)

3. Consider your role as Christian citizens and make your voice known to your elected officials, particularly in the U.S. House (house.gov/representatives) and Senate (senate.gov/senators/index.htm).

4. Pray for our officials, government and the church in these challenging days.

Martin Luther once said, “Christ dwells only in sinners.” We recognize ourselves as sinners constantly in need of Christ’s forgiveness. We recognize the truth of the apostle Peter’s words, “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17). We know that Jesus’ opponents grumbled against Him by saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). This comforting verse applies to us sinners, and we welcome all others to join us at the feet of Jesus, the sole Savior of all (John 3:16). As Christians, we believe that God has created all people, and all are infinitely valuable and accountable to Him. As Christian citizens, we recognize and demand basic God-given civil rights for all people, even as we insist on the First Amendment rights of Christians.

No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:8–9, 13–17)

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison

President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Daily Bible Reading

In 2021 you are invited to continue reading through the Old Testament, at the same rate as our readings during 2019 (New Testament) and 2020 (Genesis-Isaiah) of one chapter per day. As we move into April, after finishing Jeremiah and Lamentations, we are at the beginning of Ezekiel, the last of the major prophets. From there we will continue on to Daniel and the minor prophets until we reach Malachi at the conclusion of the Old Testament. April’s schedule is as follows:

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| April 1: | Jeremiah 52 |
| April 2-6: | Lamentations 1-5 |
| April 7-30: | Ezekiel 1-24 |

As always, please feel free to share your questions with Pastor any time.

April’s “Life Quotes” from Lutherans For Life:

April 4 “As we gather this Easter just with our household, or perhaps all alone, we will undoubtedly miss some of the traditions that we have embraced over the years. Do not lament the loss of what does not last. Rather, embrace the enduring message that ‘He is risen! He is risen indeed!’ It changes everything!” *Rev. Robert Fleischmann, Christian Life Resources – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

April 11 “Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter clinched it for Paul. If God’s Son, divine and holy from all eternity, would take on human flesh for me, obey the commandments for me, suffer and die for me, and rise again to guarantee my forgiveness and resurrection, there can be no doubt. He loves me.” *Rev. Mark Jeske, Time of Grace – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

April 18 “Hang on to Jesus, my dear friend. In Him and Him alone is true life—both now and forever. Though God’s work in the world may be hard to understand sometimes, we rejoice and celebrate as we look forward to all that He has in store for us.” *Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffman, The Lutheran Hour – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

April 25 “Death is the one thing no Christian has to do on his or her own. Jesus has already been through suffering and death before us. He knows the way through death and the way back to life, too. Our friends and family cannot go with us—but Jesus can. He will never let

go of our hands. And He will bring us back to life with Him because He has promised, and He will never lie.”
Dr. Kari Vo, Lutheran Hour Ministries – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org

Board of Elders

The beginning of April is upon us. We look forward to sunny warm days ahead, new life forming from the ground, tulips and trees in blossom, the smell of spring in the air. A great reminder of what our Lord has done for us, in His resurrection from the grave. When we reflect on Easter, we must remind ourselves of the real story. It is not the Easter bunny, colored eggs, new Sunday clothes for our children, but the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for us on the cross. We wanted to share with you some very potent verses from Hymn 439 in our Lutheran Service Book:

*O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken
O dearest Jesus, what law has Thou broken?
That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?
Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession, What dark transgression?
They crown Thy head with thorns, they smite, they scourge Thee
With cruel mocking to the cross, they urge Thee
They give Thee gall to drink, they still decry Thee
They crucify Thee.
O mighty King, no time can dim Thy glory!
How shall I spread Thy wondrous story?
How shall I find some worthy gifts to proffer?
What dare I offer?
And when, dear Lord, before Thy throne in heaven
To me the crown of joy at last is given
Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee
I, too, shall praise Thee*

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

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. You can also download the Lutheran Hour Mobile App to your mobile device. Instructions for doing so can be found at www.lhm.org/apps/.

April 4

"Fear...Like Onions, You Know?"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

Why end a good news story on a note of fear? St. Mark's Gospel wants us to see human fear as evidence that God is at work.

(Mark 16)

April 11

"What It Means to Be a Family"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling

Loving, caring, and sharing--it's what we do as God's family, His Church.

(Acts 4:32-35)

April 18

"One Greater Than Mrs. McCallister"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

Where does one go to hide from God? Dr. Michael Zeigler says the book of Jonah is about God, on a mission to get through to you.

(Jonah 1)

April 25

"Replace or Repair?"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

Broken doesn't mean "disposable." Dr. Michael Zeigler tells how God redeems and repurposes broken people.

(Jonah 2)

Stewardship Corner

Our Father in heaven sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. His atoning sacrifice is the first fruits of all the dead, a pleasing aroma to His Father, so that His perfect life and death count for all who believe in Him. He claimed us as His own children in Holy Baptism. He sustains and strengthens our faith with His Holy Word and His Body and Blood.

As new creatures, who have put on Christ, we bear good fruit. We do the good works prepared for us, which He makes known to us in His Word. By faith then, trusting in the Word of God, we do what he says because He does not lie and always keeps His promises. For "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

And so the Lord promises: "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine" (Prov. 3:9-10). How do we honor the Lord with the wealth that God has given us in His generosity? By giving generously to those whom the Lord has called us to love and support your family, your society, and your church. And His promise is that, in so doing, you will never lack.

A common counterpoint is: "But that's from the Old Testament!" Our Lord Jesus Himself gives us similar promises in the New Testament. He says, at the conclusion of the parable of the talents: "For to everyone

who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance" (Matt. 25:29).

And then at the end of the parable of the dishonest manager, he says: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Luke 16:10-13).

And in His sermon on the mount, he says: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

We have become conditioned against these promises because of their misuse by the peddlers of the prosperity gospel - the guys on TV who say you get rich by putting God in your debt. And thus, we miss out on the fact that God does reward temporal faithfulness in temporal matters with temporal blessings. It's no quid pro quo. It's all from God's grace and His fatherly divine goodness and mercy. But those Bible passages do in fact say what they say! It's not the Old Testament's problem. It's ours. It is almost as if we have become so jaded against this that we think it a virtue to be stingy with our offerings.

But our Father in heaven still loves to bless those who bless others. He loves to give to those who give freely and generously. In fact, he challenges us to challenge Him: "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need" (Mal. 3:10).

And so, while we don't give so that we would get, we do receive from the Lord in order to give, and He will bless your giving with more receiving. As St. Paul wrote in Rom. 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

Taken from www.LCMS.org

Click on this hyperlink www.michiganintouch.com to view this month's Michigan in Touch supplement.



**Renewed Blessings
Resale Shop**
invites area kiddos
(Preschool thru 5th grade) to



"April Showers of Blessings" (A Shipwrecked Saturday Spring Adventure)

Saturday, April 17, 2021
from 10 am - 4 pm

Help us "Shower" our local babies with blessings of needed goods by bringing in an item (or two) for our Presque Isle County Baby Pantry

Door Prizes to be awarded



Goodie bags provided
by Peace Lutheran Church



Service Project

So...new year, new project! In partnership with our sister congregations St. John's and Immanuel, the members of Peace will be collecting cleaning items for the Franklin Avenue Mission in Flint.

If you are able, please take one of the brown paper sacks (located by the Hygiene Pantry) and fill it with cleaning items such as:

toilet bowl cleaner
Spic & Span
paper towels



Comet cleanser
window cleaner
sponges, etc.

To make it easier, you can opt to pick up one item each time you go shopping and just add it to your sack!
You can also donate money (to Flint Mission).

The bags need to be returned by May 9. Shortly thereafter, members of the Mission will pick the items up for delivery to Flint.

If you'd also like to include an encouraging note for the recipients, that would be great!

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Thank you for your support in this Mission Project!