

The Good News of Peace

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

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

It seemed rather fitting that, as I pulled into the church parking lot this past Sunday for our final Sunday service of the year, the parking lot was almost entirely empty. The lone exception was a member who appeared to be wondering the same thing I was: am I here on the right day? Or did I miss something? By 9:30 we had 25 people or so in attendance, but 30 minutes earlier I wasn't convinced we'd have anyone at all.

After starting to build some momentum through the summer and into the fall, 2020 admittedly ended with a bit of a whimper in terms of in-person attendance. Three Sundays of suspended in-person services in November and early December did not help, of course. By the time we returned in mid-December, thanks to continuing COVID concerns, along with other factors, our numbers had declined noticeably. That trend continued through all of our holiday services, as well.

It's been that kind of year, I suppose. From one day to the next, and one week to the next, and one month to the next, it's been difficult to know what to expect. It has been a year full of frequent adjustments, much inconsistency, and numerous uncertainties. As the year is drawing to a close, almost nothing seems surprising at this point. Needless to say, let's hope 2021 proves to be a smoother year!

As we enter January, however, until the Board of Elders is able to meet again the first week of the month, we will continue with the same restrictions and limitations in place for now. Services will continue to be slightly abbreviated, singing will continue to be minimized where possible, and Holy Communion will remain suspended for the time being. We will also continue to request that attendees wear their masks when inside the building. We understand that some of these restrictions and limitations are an inconvenience and that not everyone agrees that they are necessary, but we want to continue to do our best to keep everyone safe, particularly while COVID numbers remain on the increase, including locally. As soon as the Board of Elders feels it is safe to do so, we will all be equally anxious to begin to relax some of these restrictions and limitations.

For those uncomfortable returning to in-person attendance just yet, a reminder that all services will continue to be livestreamed on our Facebook page, as well, and will also be broadcast live in our back parking lot on 1210 AM. Both our livestream, as well as a link to our recorded services on

our Vimeo channel, can now be accessed conveniently on our web site at www.peacelcms.org.

Other Sunday morning activities, including Sunday School classes, will resume as soon as possible. While a handful of regular meetings have continued to be held during the week, a number of other mid-week activities have remained on-hold for much of 2020. We will have to see what's in store for the first part of 2021 in the coming weeks. But perhaps this continues to be an opportune time for all of us to be evaluating what activities we have been missing the most this year and which we want to make it a priority to resume when possible. And on the other hand, perhaps it is also an opportune time for us to identify potential spaces for new ministries, whether in a COVID or a post-COVID world.

I, for one, am anxious to see what kinds of surprises 2021 might hold. My suspicion is that, while we're all certainly hoping that it's not going to resemble 2020, it's probably not going to resemble pre-2020 as closely as we might like. But as we look ahead, we can take heart in what the writer to the Hebrews declares in the New Testament: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). Thanks and praise be to God for that! That unchanging truth, I pray, will give us the courage and the confidence we need to face the unknown in the weeks and months ahead.

As we enter the New Year, may our Lord bless and keep each of you!

In His Service,

Pastor Riddle

Pastor Derek Riddle

Daily Bible Reading

In 2020 you were invited to read through portions of the Old Testament, at the same rate as our New Testament reading in 2019 of one chapter per day. As we begin 2021, we are roughly halfway through Isaiah, and we will continue on from there (in early February) to the remainder of the prophets until we reach Malachi at the conclusion of the Old Testament. January's schedule is as follows:

- January 1-31: Isaiah 28-58

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

For Families

A free family Christmas activity from Family Time Training, along with additional activities and information, is available on their web site at www.famtime.com. Click on the "Resources" tab at the top of the page and then "Featured Favorite Activities." Other family-friendly resources may be found at www.visionaryfam.com and www.biblicalparenting.org.

Board of Elders

As a New Year 2021 comes around, many of us become reflective and consider the parts of our lives that we would like to transform. Often these revolve around kicking bad habits (such as eating junk food) or developing new disciplines (like going to the gym three times a week). So, what is the place of resolutions in the Christian life?

On a basic level, resolutions are part of everyday Christian life.

We are resolved to seek God and glorify Him each and every day.

Romans 12:2 calls us to daily transformation of our minds so we can know and live out God's will for us.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is— his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

We are encouraged to be self-disciplined in life.

In 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27 Paul uses the imagery of an athlete in training being disciplined and striving towards the goal.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

What are our resolutions this year? New Year could be the perfect time to commit yourself to pursuing disciplines and habits that will help you run the race and win the prize. These could include:

1. Plan to get into God's Word.

It could be a daily devotion, reading the bible in a year, listening to a sermon each week, or dwelling on a verse every morning. Be creative.

2. Pray daily.

Set time aside for prayer, be structured in praying for people and issues in the world by using prayer lists, start a prayer journal, find a place to go each day to pray.

3. Work on your problem areas.

Pray that God will reveal the sin in your life to work on this year. Acknowledge, confess and repent of this sin. Find someone to be accountable to and meet and pray with them this year!

So, take the time this new year to consider the aspects of your life that need working on while resolving each and every day to choose to live for Christ.

Have a Happy New Year!

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/.

January 3

"Too Much"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

The Gospel according to St. Mark shows us the Savior Who is always on the move.

(Mark 1:1 - 2:12)

January 10

"The Backstory Behind a Bible 'Contradiction'"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

When you open yourself up to hearing the backstory behind the apparent contradiction, you may encounter what the Bible is all about.

(Mark 2:13-28)

January 17

"Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise!"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

The word of Jesus turns us out from ourselves and our problems to the faith, hope, and love that He brings.

(Mark 3)

January 24

"Why Jesus Told Parables"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

(Mark 4)

January 31

"Under the Impression"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

(Mark 5-6)

Stewardship Corner

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

- Who are you?
- To whom do I give?
- And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);
- Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);
- Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);
- Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and
- With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

Taken from www.LCMS.org

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

Voters Meeting Update

As a result of the increased restrictions and limitations over the past couple of months, the decision was made to cancel both our November and December Voters Meetings. Our December meeting, in particular, is the meeting at which we typically approve our annual budget and elect our congregational officers. Both of these items of business will now take place at our January Voters Meeting, which will tentatively be held on Sunday, January 24. Installation of Congregational Officers, typically conducted on the first Sunday of the year, will also be delayed until our next Voters Meeting is held.

Long-Range Planning Process Update

Our Long-Range Planning Retreat, originally scheduled for Saturday, November 14, had to be postponed and has now been rescheduled for Saturday, January 30. Pastor Randy Johnson, who is our District Congregational Missions & Ministry Facilitator (CMMF), will be leading the members of our Long-Range Planning Committee through this process. Following the retreat, the committee will be working towards finalizing a long-term plan, which will be shared with the congregation as soon as it is complete. Please remember the Long-Range Planning Committee, and the committee's efforts, in your personal prayers.