

ST. PETER COMMUNICATOR

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December 2023

From the desk of Pastor Peterson

Grace, mercy, and God's peace to you this Christmas Season. As you all know I love college football, and I am also a Packer's fan. Go pack Go!!! Is a theme I hear quite often, and of course Go Big Red!!! It is nice to have a team to root for and to follow. I have spent many a Saturday at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, and have attended 5 Orange Bowls, 2 Rose Bowls, a Sugar Bowl, and a Fiesta Bowl. I enjoy rooting for my Huskers and have seen them win 3 national championships in person. The zealous nature for our favorite teams is indeed powerful and can create a community of fans that are like-minded. Fans can go to stadiums, watch parties and of course your favorite sports bar. I can remember one time in Iowa, I was wearing a Packer jacket, and an individual came up to me and wondered if the quarterback situation was good for the Pack. Aaron Rogers was the QB at that time. I knew immediately what he was talking about. When you wear sports gear for your favorite team, people who follow the same team will talk to you about the state of the team. We tend to be more comfortable with talking about our sports teams, the weather, and our family. Yet, when it comes to Jesus, we tend to keep to ourselves under the illusion that we do not want to force our religious beliefs on someone, or that we just feel unworthy to talk about Jesus with others because we may get ask a question that we cannot answer.

On November 19th as I was driving back to Hilbert after the 2nd service at Saint Luke, I noticed that many cars were parked outside of local bars and of course the reason was that Packer fans were gathered to root on the Pack. I kind of smiled in a sad way because what if the people were as zealous about attending church and responding to the invitation from God Himself to come into His house and

hear the forgiveness of sins and receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Now please do not take what I just wrote wrong. It is wonderful to have a team to root for. Yet, the question needs to be looked at and we need to ask ourselves where is our passion for Jesus? Do we invite our friends and family members to church so they can hear the Word? I recently ran into a poll that showed that the vast majority of people come to church when invited by a family member or friend. Those who have been invited may seem reluctant at first, but persistence can make a big difference. Brothers and sisters in Christ, people love to root for teams, and they are passionate about their teams. Again, that passion is not a bad thing at all.



In the above picture, the statistics show how to get people to attend church. The most powerful impression to get people to come to church is you! Invite a friend comes in at a whopping 86 percent. **In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus tells the disciples and us “¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

God has a zealous passion for us that supersedes any passion that we have for our favorite teams. So much so that as we celebrate this Christmas season, and all seasons for that matter we must always remember that God comes to us with zeal and passion. **Isaiah 9:6-7** ⁶ **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** ⁷ **Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.** Notice that the last sentence has the words “the zeal of the LORD of Hosts will do this. The Lord is passionate and zealous about us, so much so that He sent Jesus to be the atonement (at-one-ment) for our sins. This is an agape love that is zealous, passionate, and all-encompassing love for us.

So, let us also with zealous and passionate love spread the good news of God’s zealous love for all peoples. Have a blessed and Merry Christmas.

In His Grip,



Pastor Peterson

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter article – December 2023

The Measure of Our Generosity

If you open up the Small Catechism, you’ll find a shortened version of the Third Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” But if you look up the list of the Ten Commandments in Exodus, you’ll find the full version:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the

sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:8–11)

Why did Luther shorten this commandment for the Small Catechism? Was it so that the kids wouldn’t have so much to memorize? No, it was because Luther knew that all the details of the Third Commandment were part of the “shadow” of the Old Testament (Col. 2:16). Or as St. Paul puts it, there is “letter” in the Old Testament law and “spirit” (2 Cor. 3:6). The details of not working on Saturday were fulfilled by Christ. That part of the Sabbath regulation no longer applies. But the spirit of the law does remain: We need to dedicate sufficient time each week to hearing God’s Word and giving it honor and respect. Or as Luther sums it up in the Small Catechism’s explanation to the Third Commandment: “We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.”

The same sort of analysis applies to our giving. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites so that those men could dedicate their lives to serving in God’s house, teaching the people, conducting worship, etc. In the New Testament, there is a rigid requirement listed about handing in your tax forms to church to make sure you’ve given enough. But the mandate to have a full-time ministry, which is the spirit of that law concerning tithing to the Levites, is right there in 1 Corinthians 9:14: “The Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel.”

The New Testament church’s job is significantly larger than the job of Old Testament Israel. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations. There was only the temple to maintain in the Old Testament, but we have churches, schools, universities and seminaries, plus missionaries everywhere. So you tell me: Can we really undertake the work of the ministry if our giving doesn’t even measure up to Old Testament levels of generosity?

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry
lcms.org/stewardship



LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION

Gifts from the Heart:

Free at Last: Several large boxes of warm clothing items were delivered to Mission of Christ Lutheran Church for the Free at Last ministry. They were delivered in early November. The men from Free at Last were waiting for us with open doors, and they were so pleased to see all the warm sweaters, jackets, pants, gloves and socks we brought for them. We also had one warm quilt and a few hats! In addition to the clothing items, we brought a large box of unused devotional materials. These are used with the Free at Last members and are also shared with the congregation members and folks in the neighborhood. Many thanks to all our members who donated to this clothing drive, and also thanks to Thrivent for the gift of a Thrivent Action Card to purchase items to add to our gifts.

While we were there, the members of Mission of Christ showed us the display they had put up to draw attention to the homeless in Milwaukee. This was in keeping with a national week of recognition for the homeless in our country. The church members also expressed much gratitude for the warm clothing we brought for the area homeless. They are devoted to serving the needy in their neighborhood. We were inspired by the dedication these brothers and sisters in Christ continue to show the less fortunate children of God.

Souper Bowl Sunday items for the Salvation

Army Food Pantry in Chilton: As has been our custom, we will gather items for the local food pantry to assist the needy in our own area. We will start this right after Christmas and continue until Super Bowl Sunday. Once again, watch for more details toward the end of December. Remember that the pantries become quite empty over the holidays.

Christmas Brunch:

The WIM are excited to once again coordinate a Christmas brunch for our members, their families and friends. Watch the bulletins and the bulletin board/sign in counter for ways to participate. We would love to have everyone join us for this enjoyable fellowship. It will be held Dec. 10 right after church and our brief voters' meeting.

Advent luncheons:

New this year are Advent luncheons. We hope that all members attend our Advent worship services at 10:30 on Wednesdays with a light luncheon to follow. This is another time for fellowship as well as an opportunity to have a lunch provided for you! We're hoping this will be a well-attended venture! It's fun to get together.

WIM meeting:

With all our activities in December, we will not have our regular Bible study and meeting. Watch for announcements as we restart our monthly meetings in January.



Letter From the Editor

Ground of All Truth

by Roy S. Askins

Two millennia ago, Pilate uttered one of the most profound questions that we still ask in the *modern* era. As Jesus stood before him, Pilate asked: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). That we have continued to struggle over this question points to its enduring nature.

Many today would say that truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder — or perhaps the heart. Driven by emotion and controlled by our passions, we have become a society obsessed with looking inward for truth. If a man claims to be a woman, our culture will say, “Well, that’s his truth.” If someone disagrees with us, we might say, “Well, that’s just your perspective.”

And, of course, it might be. That’s the heart of the matter, isn’t it? How do we know when someone is telling the truth or when someone is just giving us his perspective? Where is the truth to be found? Is it really found within the wicked human heart?

The irony of Pilate’s question is that Truth with a capital “T” stood right in front of him. “What is truth?” Jesus is Truth. And so Jesus stands at the heart of this — and every — issue of *The Lutheran Witness*.

The inspiration for this issue of *LW* came from one of LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison’s letters to readers almost two years ago. He mentioned a book by Carl Trueman called *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. It is an excellent book about the contemporary obsession with identity. He wrote a “lighter” version of it called *Strange New World* in which he details the collapse of Western culture and asks how we reached the point where the phrase “I’m a woman in a man’s body” makes any sense.

This issue of *LW* explores this topic for Lutherans, centered primarily around truth. Christopher Esget finds the ground of all truth in Christ. Because of Christ’s work, our lives have meaning and direction. Peter Scaer shows us how the loss of truth affects the weakest among us. When emotions run the day, then the truth of human life in the womb is lost.

William Cwirla returns to a topic on which he wrote a decade ago, showing how we cannot pick and choose our truths. Matthew Rueger discusses the prevailing sexual immorality in our culture. This also stems from a loss of truth, a loss of understanding about who God says we are.

This issue should challenge you. The secular culture will influence us. Of course, we cling to

God’s Word and pray for strength to withstand the temptations Satan sends our way. We hope this issue will help you examine those areas in which you struggle to find the truth and point you to the Truth who was crucified for you.



In Christ our Truth,

Roy S. Askins

Managing Editor, *The Lutheran Witness*

Print Feature



God Creates, the Devil Destroys

by Peter Scaer

Abortion is tragic, a deadly and heartbreaking deceit. No bond is more sacred, more profound, than that of a mother and child. Life’s journey begins in the womb, given by God as a safe space, a place for shelter, warmth and nurture. The umbilical cord is a miraculous lifeline through which oxygen and nutrients flow. This umbilical cord offers an image of what fundamentally makes

for a good life: not autonomy and self-expression but dependence and interdependence on others.

Roe v. Wade has been overturned, and we rejoice. Yet abortion is still with us. This is because we need a change of heart. We are told to be all we can be, to reach for the stars. Parents want their children to be happy and successful in the things most valued by the world. Many young people seek out life experiences, which may include trips to exotic places, perhaps a hike in the Himalayas, a visit to the pyramids or, closer to home, a visit to all 50 states. Our world today is most concerned with self-fulfillment and self-expression.

Satan, the father of all lies, has deceived our culture into focusing on our own self-fulfillment and self-expression. Consider how our fallen culture encourages us to think of children as obstacles, of pregnancy as a medical condition and of abortion as health care. Abortion has become an emancipation that allows a woman to pursue her dreams. Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, was fond of saying, “No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her own body.”

The child who lives in the womb has a body all her own. And yet, abortion culture treats children as expendable, leading us to think that our own worth depends on whether or not we fit into the plans of others. Those who defend abortion must dehumanize little children, even calling them parasites and intruders. They treat children as things that inhibit our personal, bodily autonomy.

But the idea of bodily autonomy is misleading. We are not our own. We belong to God who created us, to Christ who redeemed us and will come one day to be our judge. We also belong to one another, a husband to a wife, and a wife to a husband, children to mom and dad. The experience of the womb gives us insight in this reality. We depend on one another, and we are made for one another. We are more like preborn and newborn babies than we might like to think, dependent upon others for life. An illness or infirmity, or even the aging process, reveals how much we depend on others. Even now, we lean on others for many things.

This is in part why the breaking of a family is painful. When a child runs away from home, he has no idea what he is leaving behind. The father who abandons his children misses out on the joy of serving others.

The physical and the spiritual intersect and overlap. A child lives her first nine months in the body of her mother. Christians also live in the Body of Christ. God also created us for communion; this first happens as the child is at home in her mother’s womb. When we gather as Christians, we come as those baptized into Christ’s Body, completely dependent upon Him for our physical and eternal life. The church service culminates in Holy Communion, a drawing up into the life of the God who loves us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Satan’s work is to divide and separate, to destroy and undo. God creates; the devil destroys. Satan seeks to separate us from God, to turn Adam against Eve, Cain against Abel, and even now a mother against her child. Satan pictures rebellion against God’s law as freedom, but its path leads to loneliness, despair and isolation.

True liberty comes in Christ who rescues us from isolation and death into a life of family and friendship, into dependence and service. Human relationships give us a glimpse into things eternal. In marriage, we see Christ’s love for His church. Good fathers give us a picture, however imperfect, of our heavenly Father. And as our spiritual families gather, we are drawn to the Lord’s Supper, the family gathering that has no end and will know no sorrows.

Abortion is not merely an ethical question, like gambling or smoking. Nor is abortion only a matter of the law. Remember, love is the law’s fulfillment. Seen in Christ, the Ten Commandments picture for us a better way — the way of relationships. In Christ, the Ten Commandments show us a world in which parents love their children and children honor their parents, a world where marriage binds man and wife to their children, creating a wonderful network of cousins and grandparents, aunts and uncles. That is to say, God knew that it was not good for man to be autonomous or alone.

The division of sin runs deep, but no sin is unforgiveable. Christ died for both Cain and Abel, for Uriah and David, for St. Paul who breathed out murderous threats. We have no need to justify ourselves. It would not work anyway. In our weekly gatherings, we pray for and receive God's forgiveness. Then we work together for the sake of others, little ones especially. And in doing so, we become more human, more like Christ, who is the vision of the new way of life into which He invites us and for which He paid the ultimate price.

Selfishness ends in misery while love rejoices in being bound to one another. Sin leaves us in chains, but love is a blessed tie. Every abortion ends in death, in the severing of an umbilical cord, in the unravelling of the ties that bind us together. But true joy is found in mutual commitment, in hardship for the sake of others.

Life has never been about self-expression, as if we were the stars of our own reality shows. Our Father shows us a better way, giving up His Son that He might save us from the isolation of our pride and self-centeredness. We cannot remain silent. We trust in our Lord Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and made His home in Mary's womb. With our lips, we defend all who cannot yet speak for themselves. And in this we are truly human, acting in the image of Christ who came to save the little children, who even saved us from ourselves.

This article originally appeared in the November 2023 issue of The Lutheran Witness.

The Lutheran Witness magazine
Subscribe today at cph.org/witness

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Dec. 9th Don & Karen Price

UPCOMING SPECIAL SERVICES

Midweek Advent Services

Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. @ St. Peter

Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. @ St. Luke

November 29, December 6, 13, 20

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24th 5:00 p.m. @ St. Peter

7:00 p.m. @ St. Luke

Christmas Day

December 25th 8:30 a.m. @ St. Peter

New Year's Eve

December 31st 8:30 a.m. @ St. Peter

10:30 a.m. @ St. Luke



Happy Birthday

December

- 1 Susan Reeve
- 2 Abby Marose
- 3 Pastor Peterson
- 5 Elena Weyenberg
- 6 Doug Koffarnus
Coreen Behnke
- 7 Wally Jentsch
Tom Kamps
- 10 Michael Hostettler
Rebekah Bergelin
- 11 Lori Ott
- 12 Debbie Manders
- 13 Dean Bergelin
- 15 Sue Plate
- 17 Germaine Zahn
- 23 Ben Marose

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Altar Guild: Dean & Jan Bergelin					1 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	2
3 First Sunday in Advent <i>Blue</i> 8:30 Divine Service 10:30 Sunday School sings at St. Luke	4 7:00p Joint Parish Meeting @ St. Luke	5 7:00p Bible Study	6 10:30 Midweek Service and Lunch 7:00p Midweek Service @ St. Luke	7	8 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	9 9:00 Set-up for Brunch
10 Second Sunday in Advent <i>Blue</i> 8:30 Divine Service (NC) Sunday School sings Voters Meeting Brunch 1:15p Caroling @ Century Ridge	11	12 7:00p Bible Study	13 10:30 Midweek Service and Lunch 7:00p Midweek Service @ St. Luke	14	15 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	16
17 Third Sunday in Advent <i>Blue</i> 8:30 Divine Service 9:30 Sunday School	18 Newsletter articles due	19	20 10:30 Midweek Service and Lunch 7:00p Midweek Service @ St. Luke	21 6:00p Council Meeting 6:30p Elders Meeting Winter Begins	22	23
24 Fourth Sunday in Advent <i>Blue</i> 8:30 Divine Service (NC) <i>White</i> 5:00p Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day <i>White</i> 8:30 Divine Service	26	27	28	29	30
31 First Sunday after Christmas <i>White</i> 8:30 Divine Service	----- Pastor on Vacation until Jan. 2 ----->					

Divine Services marked (NC) will not have Holy Communion