

NORTHWEST LINK

rejoicing in the Lord together!

My purpose is to gather on paper (or screen) words that comprise the essence of LCMC. I don't summon the words, I just locate the people with the intelligence and knowledge to supply them. Since these people aren't mysterious wraiths lurking in shadow lands but rather solid, God-fearing folk wearing stripes and plaids (not together) my purpose isn't a burden. Praise the Lord!

I drove away from Kellogg and watched the district gathering in my rear view mirror and as it got smaller it got larger. The light, the buildings and streets and businesses and lights and gondolas shrank. The spirit grew large and filled the sky. The essence was tangible. Handshakes still resonate in my heart and the smiles echo belief.

The get-together was successful because of the hearts and minds that produced it, from those who organized it to those who filled the pews. And all those in between. The cadre of speakers were very inspired and inspiring. They were the core of thought that expressed the heart of us being there. We officially began in the evening with a truly uplifting worship service. Pastor Kurt Raul from that suburb of Kalispel, Evergreen, started us off with *Freedom for Living*, an old topic that always new. It's always invigorating, causing us to throw off the yoke of slavery.

Oh freedom! I can't imagine my physical life as being any other way. What's that? I'm not free? Even submitting to



Pastor Gary Jepsen
Living Word Lutheran

the yoke of slavery is a choice. And we were also free to listen to the great singing of LG Senelly.

I am free to go anywhere but I should start at the beginning; most of us attending met at a restaurant at the base of the gondola, an impromptu meet and greet. It was so encouraging to see all the new faces. Also, the old, or rather, the familiar faces.

The beginning of Saturday brought us all kinds of information, such as the minutes of the 2009 gathering, treasurers report, introduction to elections further business and more business and that was wrapped up in a tidy package in less than an hour. It was exciting to learn that there were 5 states and 21 churches represented. Bible study was then delivered by Pastor Berthelot. Paul Berthelot has been there and did that. Or "been there, done that" and according to his resume that's the truth: the man's been around.

Our keynote speakers, Pastors Murray Stanton and Gary Jepsen crowned our gathering. I wouldn't do them and their material justice if I tried to summarize. I believe hopefully, that notes from the district convention will find their way to the NW District website (nw-lcmc.net) and you will be able to read their comments there.

At our closing worship we heard the Word preached by Pastor Jason Bonnicksen, pastor of American Lutheran in Kellogg, our host congregation. Pastor Spike Shine



Pastor Murray Stanton
Zion Lutheran Church

from St. Paul's in St. Maries Idaho (our new district council chairman) was the liturgist for both worship services.

I'm always impressed with the way these gatherings come together, whether the district or the national. The amazing part is that business seems to be secondary. "... by the way, we have a business meeting scheduled for the next ten minutes." Then, we'll warm up with an hour of praise singing.

I guess that I'm kind of rambling here, but there is a point. Any get-together is a blessed event. All who participate whether they speak, sing or pour coffee do it with a joyful

heart. I'm here to encourage people to participate because no matter what you do, you're not on the sidelines.

This edition of the Northwest LINK is late and I take full responsibility for that. I pray that hasn't caused problems for anyone—now that it's here I hope you enjoy it and find it helpful. If so, lemme know.

— Sig Person
tsp@blackfoot.net
Grace Lutheran
Paradise, Montana

SEEKING TREASURE

a fun church family activity



In a couple months Sunday School will start up again. Are you ready? This issue has a free, Lutheran, Sunday School curriculum, check that out if you haven't already. In fact the last couple issues have more good stuff for your youth education programs. Go to the website (<http://www.nw-lcmc.net/>) and check out back issues of the LINK

OK, now for a inter-generational activity that is lots of fun. It's a treasure hunt. Please don't confuse this with a scavenger hunt as some folks did the first year we did this. The first year we had some reluctant starters but after that we had inquiries weeks ahead of time so folks could plan around it.

Pick out some common landmarks in your community. Find a Bible verse with the keyword that describes each of them. We used a concordance (Strong's) to look for key words and hoped that the same key words would be in the RSV which was the pew Bible that the teams took out on the hunt.

Write the clues on index cards and hide them just before the hunt while the hunters are gathered to form teams and get directions. If we hid them before the hunters were accounted for the odds of being seen hiding the clues were pretty good. We hid the clues in small plastic bags with a stone in each one to keep them dry and in place.

When the hunters get to the church let each hunter draw a number from a basket. Before they get there you put bits of paper with numbers on them in a basket. If you have three teams put three pieces of

paper with the number 1, three pieces of paper with the number 2 and so on. Once the teams are identified, each team captain gets the first clue for their team. Some years we had all teams leave from the church and other years we had host people give each team their first clue at a preset time at different locations. Other variations we used over the years were to write a set of clues for each team, the same clues in different order, or mostly the same clues with a couple different ones for each team. We live in a small town so we had to allow for teams running into each other at a clue location.

If your clue is Matthew 24:20. It says "20Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath". Where would you look for the next clue? Here that was a clue for the local small airport. All clues had a back-up clue which was designed to make the first clue more clear. While the back-up clue could make finding the next clue easier, it also took extra time to return to the church to get it. The back-up clue for our example is Proverbs 23:5 "Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle".

One last thing, when your teams are forming make sure there is a variety of ages on each team. Our players quickly learned that the different perspectives came in very handy.

Late summer or early fall is a good time for this activity. We always followed the hunt with a pot-luck, after all, it was a Lutheran treasure hunt.

This activity suggestion was brought to you by the Person family. If you have any questions please feel free to call 406-826-5570 or send an e-mail to Sig at tsp@blackfoot.net.

I'm not Ready! Or am I?

Amazing things are happening all over LCMC, including my little corner. I am a BTRA (Beyond the River Academy) student—far from completion. I belong to a small LCMC congregation in Spokane, WA. Last week, I came home to find a phone message from Pierce, Idaho and two more from a pastor in Iowa. (I didn't know either of these people.) Both were asking me if I would consider a call to a small congregation in a small town, miles from anywhere. I did not expect this type of call for a couple years, after I finish my education and training.

Within 3 days, I drove to Pierce for a meet and greet, that turned into an interview that turned in a call being extended, all within 2 hours. I start preaching at Faith Lutheran the beginning of August and will figure out the rest after that. I am still in shock, and yet the whole situation feels quite comfortable.

The Lord's timing and planning are amazing. Just recently, I was feeling at loose ends. One night, in a heartfelt prayer, I said, "Father, I'm not sure what you have planned for me; I don't know what you want me to do, but right now, I want to give you back me. I give up my control. Do what you will, and I will hang on for the ride."

And here we go!

– Ingrid Aderhold
(soon to be at)
Faith Lutheran Church
Pierce, Idaho

**WOMEN of the WORD (W.o.W.!) EVENT**

A very successful Women of the Word Event was held recently in north central Montana. There were 68 women in Conrad, Montana, representing 10 towns and 11 congregations! We had a delicious lunch, an ice breaker, a speaker and a Bible Study on our theme verses, Colossians 2:6-7 & 3:17. We had a brainstorming session on what it means to be a Woman of the Word and how often we want to meet as a group. Lots of good ideas were exchanged and new friendships started.

A comment heard often was, "Oh, how I ***needed*** this!" We intend to meet a couple of times a year in our large group with our next event scheduled in the fall in Great Falls, Montana. We hope to stay connected in between times with email and possibly a newsletter. We decided that the host city will determine where our offering will go. This time \$457 was collected for the mission focus, the Conrad Food pantry! If you missed this event, we hope to see you in Great Falls this fall!

– Kim Wiest
Pondera Valley Lutheran
Conrad, Montana

Announcement for July 26th in Conrad, Montana

On Monday July 26th 2010, The Rev. Dr. Paul Spaulding from Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ will be in Conrad Montana at Pondera Valley Lutheran Church. We are inviting LCMC pastors, lay leaders, (and others that wish to come) to a meeting for information, Q. & A., and a time of some good fellowship with other leaders.

We will gather at Noon and have a light lunch around 12:30 PM. Pondera Valley will be providing the refreshments.

This will be a great chance to meet Dr. Spaulding if you have not had the opportunity to do so. So bring your concerns and questions to the meeting. This will also be a good time to get networking started with each other.

RSVP at sculley.michael@yahoo.com or call Pondera Lutheran Church at 406.271.3934 and let us know how many will be attending. Thank you in advance!

May God bless and strengthen you as you continue to serve Him.

LCMC Annual Gathering

Celebrate! Jesus Christ, The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever

The Annual Gathering of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ returns to the Twin Cities in 2010. We will be meeting at:

Calvary Lutheran Church
7520 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55427
October 3-6, 2010

The theme this year we will be ***Celebrate! Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever*** concentrating on the following verses:

Hebrews 13:1-8 —Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.



If you have any questions, please contact Sharon at sharon@lcmc.net for more information.

Register early!

You can register online at Regonline. Their web address is <http://www.regonline.com/> 872563.

Come to Calvary in Golden Valley this October and help Celebrate!

The Trip to Conrad

Over the weekend of May 21-24, I traveled for the first time to Conrad, Montana. You could tell calving season was in full swing, as was a contingent of bicyclists and vintage car collectors.

The weather was perfect. I left Missoula early Saturday morning to connect with Pastor Michael Sculley and his wife, Debra. The occasion was Michael's ordination and I had the privilege of preaching at the 11:00 Sunday service and officiating at the 2:00 ordination. Of course there was the



Pastor Spike Shine
St Paul's Lutheran Church

traditional Lutheran (third sacrament) "potluck" in between. Michael's two congregations, Pondera Valley and Golden West, combined ranks for the day.

I can't express enough the outpouring of love and support the Sculleys received from their two congregations, the community, and area pastors. Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Reformed pastors took part in the laying on of hands – eight in all. It was Pentecost Sunday, and in a period of about twenty minutes, years of delay, promises not kept and foolish rules were wiped away giving Michael what he had always prayed for and deserved. The LCMC made that possible. What an unforgettable day it was for all concerned. Thanks be to God!

— David "Spike" Shine
Chair, N.W. District

You Are Invited to Attend ...

A One Day Women's Retreat this August 21, 2010!!

The Women's Ministry Team of Richland Lutheran invites you to join us for a one-day retreat on August 21, 2010.

This year's theme is "God Sightings".

What is a "God Sighting"? We know that God is at work around us, among us, and within us. A "God Sighting" happens when we actually experience God at work. Reflection on the Word can make us more sensitive to God's presence and activity. As we explore what God did in the past, that invites us to explore what God might be doing right now – and look for "God Sightings" in our daily lives.

During this retreat, we will look for "God Sightings..."

In moments of Reflection (Psalm 8)
 In moments of Penitence (Psalm 32)
 In moments of Confusion (Psalm 73)
 In moments of Need (Psalm 27)
 In moments of Gratitude (Psalm 103)

Retreat Schedule:

8:30-9:00 Registration and continental breakfast
 9:00-11:30 Morning sessions
 11:30-12:30 Lunch
 12:30-4:00 Afternoon sessions

The cost per person is \$5.00. To register, please call us at (509) 943-3164 or send us an email at office@richlandlutheran.org by August 15.

Child care will be provided upon request. For those coming from a distance, we will be happy to provide information about hotels.

Looking forward to sharing a wonderful day of "God Sightings" with you!

Richland Lutheran Women's Ministry Team

Greetings from Waterville ...

... Washington where the wheat goes well this year.

Our congregation has been busy; remodeling our kitchen, redoing some of our lawn sprinkler system, hosting a bicycle group that rides from the west coast to the east coast each year—a 62 day trip, and we had a wonderful VBS. We are truly blessed.

In these trying times—which is a phrase that has been used since the beginning of time—Christians must not continue to be lulled into a stupor that allows Satan to crush our faith, kill our hope and steal our souls. And, which to us Americans—the evilness that seeks to totally destroy our nation. This is nothing new to Christians but the war waged against us has truly intensified over the past two years and increasing to a point that will be devastating to not only Christianity, but to our nation. I am an optimist. I am a realist. I hold my hope in God! God listens to His people. God also hears the silence of those who profess to know Him.

With that said let me tell you about a book—a book that every American should read; especially every Christian! It is written by a proclaimed atheist (but with prayer God can change that). The author, S.E. Cupp really tells it like it is. The forward is by Mike Huckabee. The book is about how our nation is being destroyed ... and, let's be honest, it is. We do have a great nation, but the war to destroy it is a war that destroys America's foundation. A foundation that is Judeo-Christian.

The writing is on the wall. Soon, VERY SOON, Christians will be fined and jailed and most often sued for our beliefs because it "offends" someone.

cont'd at "VERY SOON" on Page 6

“My experience at the Gathering was enlightening to find that many others were going thru the same experiences as our new church. Hearing the speakers got me back on focus. I was "awakened from slumber" to restart my "walk by faith".

— Naomi Peterson
 Grace Lutheran of N Idaho

 the Pastor's Corner

“If there is anything I can do, just let me know.”

We often say this to people who are going through tough times – and of course, we mean it. But for all our good intentions, we also know how unlikely it is that they will take us up on the offer. Why won't they? It could be pride. It could be fear of burdening us. Or it could be they feel so drained that they simply haven't got the energy to figure out what they need, much less ask for it. No doubt, that is why Scripture doesn't tell us to just wait for folks to ask for our help. Christian love takes the initiative. As St. Paul says in Romans 12:13, **“Contribute to the needs of the saints!”**

Now, we all know how this verse applies to our personal relationships. But I think it is worth asking: *How does this verse apply to congregational relationships?* Within our LCMC Northwest District, how can we **“contribute to the needs of the saints”**?

Some things are clear. Each congregation has needs. Each congregation has resources. What we don't have is an elaborate organizational structure to coordinate everything. This means we will need to be more proactive about building partnerships, offering resources, and providing mutual support. This won't come easily. Some of us have felt so isolated for so long that it is hard to imagine other congregations might be interested in us. But that isolation is now behind us! Not only are others interested in us, this new situation opens up wonderful opportunities for congregations to be engaged with each other!

But what do we have to contribute? And how do we go about it? Ever since our church joined LCMC, this has been a vital topic of discussion. I suspect it has been in all of our churches. And what do we have to contribute? Money may be one resource a congregation can share, but there are other equally important resources we don't want to overlook – like expertise in certain areas of ministry, experience dealing with certain challenges, not to mention encouragement, helping hands, and intercessory prayer. Being “free in Christ” and “accountable to one another,” the door is wide open to new approaches and new partnerships. Of course, not much is likely to happen with a passive approach: *“If there is anything I can do, just let me know.”* As in personal relationships, it will work better to ask how we can be helpful or even offer suggestions: *“Would it be okay if we did such and such?”* That will at least get the ball rolling!

– Pr Bill Martens
Richland Lutheran Church
Richland, Washington



“VERY SOON,” cont'd from Page 5

Even if our nation has 90% who believe in God ... the 10% control the nation. The goal is to silence us. Our silence will be just like in the Old Testament days ... God will allow our nation—a nation founded on faith in Christ Jesus—to be crushed. The book is ***Losing our Religion*** by S.E. Cupp. Read it. Our individual faith needs it. Our churches need it. Our communities need it. Our nation needs it. The world needs it.

How do Christians reclaim our nation?

1. Realize there is a spiritual war for our nation's soul.
2. Know the enemy ... 1 John 2:18 [Warning Against Antichrists] Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.
3. Kneel, fold your hands and pray.
4. Get up, open your hands and get to work.
5. Just tell the truth to everyone ... do not keep silent about the Word of God.
6. Encourage one another to run for public office and seek public job appointments.
7. Give financially to Christian candidates, work for them, and VOTE! Votes do count!

That my Christian brothers and sisters is all I have to say—for now. I could go on for hours.
Blessing to everyone!

– Pastor James Robinson
United Lutheran Church
Waterville, Washington

This article is a condensation of material found at <http://www.st-lukes-la-mesa.org/curricula.php>, the web site of St Luke's Lutheran Church, La Mesa, California.

Sunday School Curriculum Offered

Is your church currently looking for a Sunday School Curriculum? If so, you might want to look a little closer at Genuinely Lutheran Learning's Sunday School Curriculum. GLL is a product of St Luke's Theological Academy, associated with St Luke's Lutheran Church of La Mesa, California.

The curriculum is designed to impart a basic knowledge of many important Bible stories coupled with a basic knowledge of elements of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*. It lays a solid foundation for entry into catechism / confirmation instruction, offering maximum learning for children with minimal preparation by teachers.

Lessons can be tailored to each congregation's needs, and best of all, it is offered free of charge.

The goal of Genuinely Lutheran Learning Sunday School Curriculum is to assist, equip, and encourage each child and teacher to communicate the Word of God confidently and competently to other people as a witness to God's love revealed to us in Jesus Christ, his Son and our Lord.

The textbook used is the Bible. Children and teachers are led through the given Bible stories twice. In grades/years one through three (1 - 3), both the Old and New Testament are covered. Then, in grades/years four through six (4 - 6), the same material is learned a second time but more in-depth. Again, the Bible is the textbook.

The first lesson of each grade begins with the topic of baptism. Subsequent lessons are based on biblical stories and are supplemented with catechetical material.

Repetition of lesson material for the grades 1 and 4, 2 and 5, and 3 and 6 is intentional to reinforce learning.

If this information interests you, you can learn more at the web site address above.



CHECK THESE OUT, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID

<http://www.youtube.com/faithchurchbudapest#p/u/u-all/o/i5dSIL358NM> — The title of this video is Resurrection Sunday Dance, Budapest, Hungary. Over a thousand people dancing!

<http://www.jrsbible.info/bible.htm> — This is really handy. The Bible on one page...try looking up a verse.

LISTSERVS

<http://lcmcfriends.info/index.php> — This is a nicely formatted forum. Just pick what you're interested in and read what's been written on the topic.

erdtalk@lcmc.net — This is the Evangelical Renewal District listserv. Prayer requests, what's happening in different congregations, that kind of thing.

<http://groups.google.com/group/friends-of-lcmc> — Another good list to follow. Lots of information.

<http://www.lcmc.net/lutheranmen.html> — This is a unique organization. How many other organizations do you know that never meet? Check out the Buck-a-Month Club.

www.bible-aliveministries.com — If you haven't read an issue of "Connections" magazine, you are missing something. It's a beautiful publication, quality paper, color photos and most important are the articles, in fact the current issue has a great "God thing" story by part-time resident of the NW district Keith Kapelke. A year's subscription is only \$20.00. Their phone number is 218-731-0662.

<http://www.nw-lcmc.net/> — A personal favorite. The web site for the Northwest District!

<http://www.lcmc-erd.net/> — This is the web site for the ERD district. (That's redundant, but it makes more sense.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H17edn_RZoY — Are you a dog lover? Even if you're not, you will probably enjoy this.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDzzHA3WUbu> — Some pretty funny church videos.

<http://games.toast.net/independence/> — How is your knowledge of this great country? Try this test.

The Journey

My path forward through Beyond the River Academy finds me immersed in the New Testament studies conducted by Pastor Rusty Bailey of Swea City, Iowa. Pastor Rusty has many years of experience in the Lutheran faith and shares his insights with us often. Pastor Rusty also has a sense of humor which makes the class entertaining, to say the least.

When he initially contacted me he told me that there would only be two assignments in the New Testament class. Sounds easy doesn't it? Then he proceeded to tell me that the first assignment is to outline all the books of the New Testament. We don't just start at Matthew and end up at Revelation, but he directs us through a reading order designed to give us the feel for the flow of events in the New Testament. As we (BTRA students) finish each book we send it Pastor Rusty and he makes additions and comments to our work. These outlines are designed to give us an opportunity to write down our own observations. Pastor Rusty tells us that these outlines will form the foundation for our future ministry, either through sermons, Bible studies, or the ability to defend ones faith. The second assignment is to write a paper dealing with the Holy Spirit's impact on the New Testament. That should be interesting.

One of the greatest things about BTRA is that we work through it at our own speed. Sometimes life throws us curves that make studying difficult, but the only thing the course requires is that we continue to make some kind of measurable progress. I look forward to meeting with all the instructors and my classmates at Golden Valley in October at the LCMC National convention.

Until next we meet, here's wishing the Lord's blessings on you and your loved ones.

— Gary Truitt
American Lutheran Church
Kellogg, Idaho

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

“Grace and peace to you from the One who was, who is, and who is to come again. It is funny that I should be reading this email today, for earlier today, I was sharing with a group of pastors what a wonderful time I had at the LCMC NW District Meeting. My recommendation to all of them was that they should make every effort to attend next year!

My comments about the meeting were:

+ How wonderful it was to attend the meeting and not worry about being politically correct.

+ How wonderful it was to worship and fellowship with brothers and sisters whose primary objective was the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and not the advancement of some social agenda.

+ And that we would definitely attend next year's meeting if at all possible!

— Pastor Paul Berthelot
Good Shepherd Lutheran
Boardman, Oregon

While some business has already been conducted via email, the first actual meeting of the current Northwest District, LCMC council will meet on Saturday, July 31st.

Since the members are scattered from Puget Sound to the edge of the Great Plains, the meeting place will be at American Lutheran of Kellogg, Idaho.

If you have anything to bring to the attention of the council, feel free to contact any one of them. You can find contact information on page 11 of this newsletter.

PASTOR'S POINT

"Where is the church?" When asked that question I suspect most of us will answer either "Our Saviour's Lutheran" or "In Audubon." That is certainly understandable and mostly appropriate. However, as Martin Luther understood and even insisted, there is more.

Perhaps Luther was remembering what the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to Philemon. Philemon is both the name of a book in the New Testament and the person to whom Paul was appealing for help. At the time he wrote, Paul was in prison:

"Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home." Italics supplied.

Note that Paul is saying that the church "meets in your home." As Luther insisted and some others since have also said, the church is not confined to a building called by that name. The church is wherever believers gather together for worship.

In a very special way the family gathered for worship is also the church. Gracia Grindal has recently written:

"Luther taught that it was the duty of the head of the family to hold devotions in the morning and evening. The Lutheran pastor would make yearly visits to the families in his parish and examine the household to see if they knew the Small Catechism, hymns, and the basic stories in Scripture....At the end of his catechism, Luther gave his followers a very simple liturgy to follow-hymn, Scripture, catechism, hymn, and his morning or evening prayer. This made it easy for families to assure, through the daily routine of devotions, they were teaching the faith responsibly."

To assist you as you are the church in your home, you might want to look up and use some of the resources Luther mentions. Here is another one, what Luther suggested be done before eating:

"When children and all members of the household gather at the table, they are to reverently fold their hands and pray:

The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Then they are to pray the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

I hope these words will be of encouragement and help to you as you meet as the church in your home.

— Pastor Larry Lystig
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
Audubon, Iowa

The Northwest District gathering in Kellogg was such a welcoming occasion! Since Peace Lutheran Church is new, it was great to find that we belong with other congregations so committed to Christ and the Word of God! The keynote speakers were incredible! I agree wholeheartedly with the comment that was made, "LCMC got the cream of the crop from the ELCA." We look forward to becoming better acquainted and serving the Lord through LCMC's mission! Other congregations who are trying to get established may be encouraged to know that God has blessed our congregation with a church facility that we're leasing after only three months since we organized! We are starting in this new location in Coeur d'Alene with 141 Charter (founding) members! God is good!

- Pastor Kurt Wandrey
Peace Lutheran Church
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

In Favor of Dogma and Being Dogmatic

We live in a notoriously undogmatic age, so much so, in fact, that the very words “dogma” and “dogmatic” have taken on pejorative connotations. To be considered “dogmatic” is to be considered stubbornly narrow-minded and intolerant. Meanwhile, to be concerned with “dogma” is to be considered stiff, rigid, and cold. In the midst of a debate and disagreement with a former bishop of the Montana Synod of the ELCA in the presence of the collegium of clergy, I was arguing against the historic episcopacy on the basis of the Augsburg Confession, Article 7. My simple recitation of the Article was dismissed cavalierly with the comment, “Oh, I suppose now you are going to be a fundamentalist about the Confessions.” A fair share of the attending clergy chuckled at the putdown. However, when the long-established dogma and confession of the church can be so readily dismissed and when the clergy of the church sit smugly by, then we have arrived at a crossroads and a parting of the ways.

For many of us, our departure from the ELCA began a long time ago, long before the current crisis over human sexuality. It began with an unrelenting erosion of confidence in the dogma, the doctrine, the traditional confessions of the church. Beginning in our seminaries and then in our pulpits and classrooms, the doctrinal heritage of the church was deconstructed, treated with skepticism at first and with derision at the last. My mother is 98 ½ years old and still alive, mentally and spiritually sharp, even as her body wears out. When she was a spry 92 year old, she approached her pastor after an Easter morning sermon wherein he preached a vague and symbolic resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. She tried to pin him down about whether or not he actually believed that Jesus was raised bodily from the grave. He was elusive. She was relentless. Finally, he acknowledged his belief that the apostolic witness was to a hope for a resurrection and a hope for eternal life, not to an actual resurrection of which Jesus was the first-born from the dead. That was the last Sunday my mother worshipped in the congregation she had been a member of for over 40 years.

Reinhold Neibuhr spoke of this undogmatic trend even in the 1950’s when he said that the message of much of mainstream American Christianity was this:
²A God without wrath brought men without sin into a

kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.² Not much of a message, is it? A couple of weeks ago, our little LCMC congregation, Grace Lutheran Church, worshipped with an elder-led congregation of former Methodists from a neighboring town. They had gone through essentially the same process as we had. They had tried to reform the Methodist Church, but eventually separated from it. We worshipped together in a park on a gorgeous Montana summer morning using a liturgy that bespoke our common beliefs, that is, our common dogma or confessed faith. Meanwhile and entirely unplanned by us, the Montana Synod of the ELCA was holding its synod assembly and celebrating a full communion agreement with the United Methodist Church. Pardon me for being a bit cynical about such full communion agreements, but I recall G. K. Chesterton decrying the modern ecumenical movement as the conversation of those who “agree about more and more because they believe less and less.” I vastly preferred our little full communion worship in the park with fellow believers of a different fellowship. In the long-run, the ecumenism of the Holy Spirit will be between Christians who share common dogma, common confessions, common beliefs across denominational lines.

The clear truth is that we have a great dogmatic heritage to faithfully proclaim and faithfully transmit to the church of the next generation. We proclaim Christ for faith’s sake, and we teach the faith that proclaims Christ. Faith and the faith! Some years ago, I took a sabbatical leave for three months. I used that time to study the origins and use of the Apostles Creed. I discovered, among other things, that the early church fathers called the Apostles Creed the “deposit” of faith, by which they meant two things. First, they meant the distillation or very essence of the biblical witness, much as Luther described the Creed as “the very pollen from the bible to make the very best honey”. Second, they meant the treasure which must be safeguarded and passed on from generation to generation. We use the word “deposit” in this way to connote money or some valued property we place in the bank or in a safety deposit box. The Apostles Creed, which is a statement or confession of faith and thus very much “dogma”, is precisely that deposit of the faith and a treasure of inestimable worth to be safeguarded and transmitted.

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Toward that end, every LCMC congregation is called to be a preaching and a teaching institution. Though this culture is indifferent to dogma, we must not be. Though much of the modern church in western civilization is adogmatic, we can never be. Though we may be stereotyped and dismissed as dogmatic and intolerant, we must continue to preach and teach the faith entrusted to us as our unique calling. A speaker once challenged me by asking, "What does the church have that no one else has? What must the church do that no one else will do? Give that some exercise!" Indeed!

— Rich Jespersen
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church
Big Sandy, Montana

I so enjoyed the district meeting! The speakers were uplifting and encouraging and the fellowship was wonderful. There was a real sense of community and belonging that made me wish all of our folks back home could have been there to experience!

— Kim Wiest
Pondera Valley Lutheran
Conrad, Montana

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.



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A Prayer for Children

Loving God, you created us for life together
And placed in our midst the young who are symbols
Of both hope and vulnerability.

Hear our prayer for all our children:
To sustain their hope and joy and youth,
To comfort and console their vulnerability.
Hear us as we pray for that precious gift of life.

We pray for the children
Who put chocolate fingers everywhere, who like to be
tickled.
Who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,
Who sneak Popsicles before supper,
Who erase holes into their math workbooks,
Who can never find their shoes.

And, we pray for those
Who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
Who can't bound down the street in a new pair of
sneakers,
Who never "counted potatoes,"
Who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
Who never go to a circus,
Who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for the children
Who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions
Who sleep with the dog and bury goldfish,
Who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money,
Who cover themselves with band-aids and sing off key,
Who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink
Who slurp their soup.

And, we pray for those
Who never get dessert,
Who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
Who watch their parents watch them die,
Who can't find any bread to steal,

Who don't have any rooms to clean up,
Whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
Whose monsters are real.

We pray for children
Who spend all their allowances before Tuesday,
throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their
food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never rinse
out the tub
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool
who squirm in church or temple and scream in the
phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.

And, we pray for those
Whose nightmares come in the daytime,
Who will eat anything,
Who've never seen a dentist,
Who aren't spoiled by any body,
Who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
Who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children who want to be carried,
And for those who must,
For those we never give up on,
And for those who don't have a second chance,
For those we smother and for those who will grab the
hand
Of anybody kind enough to offer it.

We pray for our children, for your children, for all
children,
For childhood's dreams and nightmares.
In each child let us behold anew your promise of
creation.
Sustain these little and not so little ones. By your grace
may they live the lives for which they were created.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.