

THE NEWSLETTER OF
BETHLEHEM
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
(THE LUTHERAN
CHURCH-MISSOURI
SYNOD)

Bethlehem Star



PALESTINE, TEXAS
REV. DAVID L. ADLER

JULY 2016
(903) 728-6362

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT: Steadfast in the Word, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shares Christ and serves people with friendship in His love in all God's world.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.
(Isaiah 40:30-31 ESV)

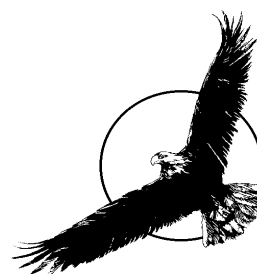
Grace and peace be yours in abundance, fellow sojourners!

Here's another in our current series:

Eagle Facts – Part 10 (Final) – “Boldness”

One of the remarkable qualities that Eagles possess is that of boldness. In Russia and Asia we find fearless Eagles who are used to hunt wolves. The Harpy Eagle is reported to be the most powerful of all Eagles. “Harpy” is an Aztec word which is translated “winged wolf”. It is as much as three feet tall, weighs over 20 pounds, and has a wingspan of over 7 feet. Because of its size, strength, and razor sharp talons, the Harpy Eagle is able to hunt and kill prey three times its size and weight. Eagles are not known to surrender to enemies or give in to obstacles... They are NOT easily discouraged!

How would you describe yourself? Timid? Fearful? Worrisome? Afraid to speak to people? Even more important still, how do you approach God? Could you answer that question with the word BOLDNESS? Listen to the writer of Hebrews:



“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb. 4:16 NIV)

If you know of your position before God, then (and only then) will you have the conviction to speak out and live out what you believe to be from God. So, let's consider the issue of speaking out as a Christian with a sense of conviction by listening also to St. Peter:

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Pet. 3:15-16 NIV)

I have an increasing concern that the church (I am using the term here to describe the whole community of Christian people) has become so absorbed by and molded into the image of a godless culture that it is, in many places, no longer able to be distinguished. Yet the Bible says...

“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.” (Rom. 12:2 NIV)

I am challenging you to join me in a self-examination: 1) Do I have enough Biblical knowledge to be able to go one-on-one with an atheist, agnostic, or cultist (such as a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness?) with confidence and boldness (not arrogance)? 2) Am I able to direct my children, family & friends to the truth of Scripture as ABSOLUTE? 3) would I be known as a BOLD witness for Christ? 4) Is my life and conversation so distinct from the world around me that people observe this and speak of it?

“but in your hearts regard 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.” (1 Peter 3:15 ESV)

Perhaps it's time to recommit ourselves to the on-going & systematic study, private & corporate, of the Word of God, so that we might be reminded of our position and of our purpose as the bold people of God!

Remember, you were (re)Born to Soar!



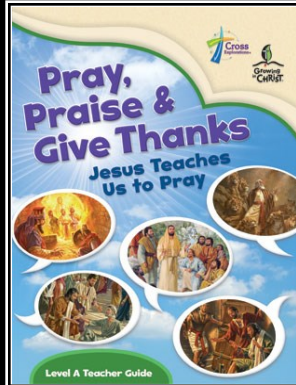
I look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning ... worshiping and studying with you ... lifting up and exalting our great God with you! Come with a smile on your face, a bounce in your step, your Bible in hand, and that friend you personally and intentionally invited. Also, bring a joyful, eager attitude to be touched by the Living Risen Christ, together with a hungry heart for spiritual vitality and victorious living that comes each time we encounter God's renewing presence in Word & Sacrament!

שלום עליכם

(Peace [Shalom] be with you)

Rev

Church Happenings ...



SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

With a fun county fair theme intertwined, Pray, Praise and Give Thanks helps students search thirteen Old & New Testament Bible stories to learn about the Lord's Prayer.

Your help is needed to give our regular teachers a break over the summer. For more information talk to Melanie Jackson.

If you missed a Sunday, you can visit Bethlehem's web-site at www.belctx.org to hear past sermons.



HIGHER THINGS "BREAD OF LIFE" VBS LOCK IN JULY 7th 7 PM - 7 AM

Join us for a night of faith, friendship and fun with dinner, a scavenger hunt, Bible study, games, movies, snacks and time to be with your friends. AND sleep, if you feel like it!



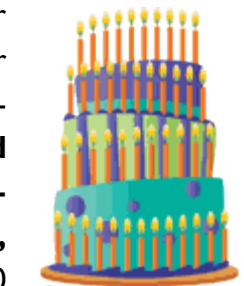
You may have noticed the line of **American flags** in front of the Church. These Flags will fly 5 times a year: Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Veterans Day. This is a fund raising service project of the Kiwanis Club of Palestine.

Thank you to the following who donated funds for this Flag project: Pastor & Peggy Adler, Lana Bowden, Jim & Neva Broad, Gil & Mary Lou Daughtrey, Roberto & Juanita Garcia, Albert & Yanneth Harris, Devin & Melanie Jackson, and Paul & Jo Ann Tugwell. We need 2 more donors for 2 flags (the cost is \$40/year).

ALSO, many thanks to those who participated in the purchase of our **highway signs**: Lana Bowden, ladies of the LWML, Ray & Karen Southard, and Paul & Jo Ann Tugwell.



Former Member of Bethlehem, **Ed McKenzie**, turns 80 years old on June



30th. You can send birthday greetings to him at:

5804 Cherokee Lane
Malakoff, TX 75148-3363



Tuesday, July 26th-Splash Kingdom Trip

Tuesday, July 26th through Friday, July 29th-Higher Things Youth Gathering

Saturday, July 30th- Annual Youth Garage Sale 7:00 AM—2:00 PM

For more information, see Mary Bowden or Melanie Jackson



"THE LUTHERAN HOUR RADIO MINISTRY"

The Lutheran Hour can be heard on the radio Saturday at:
6:30 AM on 91.9 FM KAVX Lufkin, TX
Sunday at: 10:30 AM on 97.5 FM KTTB Tyler, TX
Sunday at 12:30 PM on 91.5 FM KHCB Madisonville, TX

Online at www.lutheranhour.org

DATE: July 3, 2016
TITLE: "Freedom in Action"
TEXT: Galatians 6:1-18
SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

In Christ, you are free from being ruled by your burdens, free to serve others for the glory of God.

DATE: July 10, 2016
TITLE: "Extreme Neighborliness"
TEXT: St. Luke 10:25-37
SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

Through His love and sacrifice, Jesus is the extreme neighbor to you and all people.

DATE: July 17, 2016
TITLE: "The One Thing You Really Need"
TEXT: St. Luke 10:38-42
SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

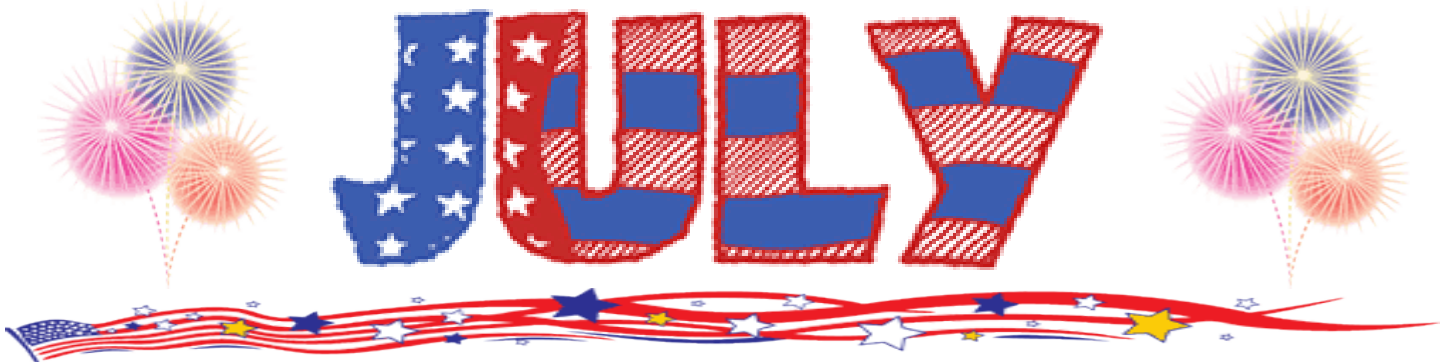
The story of Mary and Martha is not so much about Mary or Martha--or us. It's really about Jesus.

DATE: July 24, 2016
TITLE: "Never to See Them Again"
TEXT: St. Luke 9:51-62
SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

Opportunity knocks; Christ invites us to receive the gift of faith.

DATE: July 31, 2016
TITLE: "Bullies"
TEXT: Acts 5:27-34
SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

When bullies pressure Christians to keep quiet, we can retreat, push back, or choose to endure.



REMEMBERING IN PRAYER

**“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.”** (Philippians 4:6)

HEALTH NEEDS

MEMBERS:

George Nelson - recovering from a stroke

Pastor Roy Southard - treatment for cancer

FRIENDS:

Mike & Kathy Abrahamson - [Jackson's friends] - Kathy's health

Michael Brummerhot [Marcy Hogan's cousin] - accident

Shirley Carnahan [Steve & Mary Unk's friend] - health concerns

Melvin Fogle [Jo Ann Tugwell's brother-in-law]

Cookie Howell [friend of Marcy Hogan] - cancer

Gena Lawense [Albert Harris's sister]

Steve & Katie Lund [former members] - ongoing health concerns

Clarence Mindrup - [Patti Lestig's father] - cancer treatment

Shannon and Thomas Nicholson [friend of Marcy Hogan] - needs job

Gaile Nivens [Alicia Hutton's aunt]

Debbie Noonan [friend of Marcy Hogan] - ongoing health concerns

Bonita Randall [Neva Shugart Broad's niece] - ongoing health concerns

Floyd Ruhnke [Marjorie Smith's cousin] - health concerns

Ruben Salazar [friend of Leo Markwardt]

Rebecca [Randy & Sandy Teets daughter]

Tim Walther [Melanie Jackson's brother] - stroke

Michelle Warren [Mike Smith's niece] - recovery from auto accident

Orville & Cookie Wilbanks [friends of the Hughes']

Gene & Patsy Worsham [Tim's parents] - ongoing health concerns



COMFORT

Family of Frank Jones [Neva Broad's brother] who passed away June 23rd. Funeral is June 27 in Tennessee.

HOMEBOUND

Opal Garber, Benjamin Garcia [Robert Garcia's brother], Nicki Hightower, Dorothy Jackson, Martha Kaudelka, Neva Kosted, Ardelle Samford, Dean Sands, Johnnie Weaver, Connie Wunderlich

THOSE SERVING IN OUR NATION'S ARMED FORCES

Members Kyle Lawson and Kyle Shepherd, as well as Robert Garcia [Robert & Juanita's son], Jason Payne [Kay Wickliffe's son] and Jeremy Stafford [Marcy Hogan's nephew]

Please inform the Pastor and the Church Office regarding the status of submitted prayers so we may be timely and up-to-date in petitions to our gracious God.



Church Council Meeting - June 14, 2016

Present: Devin Jackson, Mary Lou Daughtrey, Jim Broad, James Taylor, Steve Unk, Lea Rosier, Jerry Hartenberger, Donna Hughes, Melanie Jackson, Pastor Adler.

Devin called the meeting to order. Pastor opened with devotion and prayer. Minutes were read. **Motion by Melanie, 2nd by Lea to accept. Motion carried.

REPORTS

VP- absent

Financial Secretary- Lea reported May income \$14,043, expenses \$11,038. Loan balance \$66,443 & CEF report.

Treasurer- Mary Lou gave income report, local flood relief donation \$997. Account balances, budget performance for May and year-to-date. Mary Lou will check on donations for 7 flags placed on property 4 times a year; may order more. **Motion by Melanie, 2nd by James to accept financial reports. Motion carried.

Elders- James reported average attendance of 74 in May. Added by profession of faith Liz Vernon, Anne Yarbrough and Nicki Hightower in May. Four confirmed; released by transfer Sauberts and released 10, moved away or no address.

Christian Education- Melanie working on summer Sunday school and subs; July 7th will be Lock In.

Evangelism- Jerry reported 100 Hospice bags are printed, Thrivent paid for bags. Delivered 10 to hospital. Two 4X8 signs were made, one installed on Highway 84E and second will be put up on Highway 19N soon. Plans for 4 more signs. Discussed changing Evangelism to "Outreach." Planning Fish Fry in October with proceeds for an outreach project. Talked about beginning Handy Man Care & Concern program, small projects within congregation; would help those in need also try to get more people involved. Want to bring before congregation to see if there is interest.

Stewardship - Steve checking on a grant from Oncor to help costs of upgrading lights with more energy efficient lights that also last longer. New CEF payment \$323.92 @3% interest beginning June 15, 2016 (was \$592.24.)

Property - Jim reported 2-stage thermostats in Luther Hall; no cooling on Wednesdays; mowing changed to every other Friday.

Social Concerns - Donna reported June 26th potluck will be at Tugwells, plan to cook burgers, members bring fixings, sides & desserts. Graduates Turner Hutton and Brice Harrington (Unk's grandson.)

Youth - Devin reported everything is ready for Higher Things July 26-29th. Will have lake outing later.

Pastor - Installation August 7th, baptism in June. Communion changes. Circuit meeting August 18th at Bethlehem. Encourage every member to become involved in some way.

OLD BUSINESS

Nominating committee- Sandy Teets, need slate of officers.

Aaron Jackson has completed his Eagle Scout project, would like to award it here.

NEW BUSINESS

Lutheran Hymnfest on October 16th. *(ed. Note: Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas)*

Thanks from Devin for all support

Correspondence

Melanie asked about commissioning young people before they leave for youth gathering.

Jerry mentioned how church can help the community with immediate needs in times of crisis/emergencies.

Jerry mentioned Billboard costs, \$700, minimum 4 weeks, will wait.

**Motion by Jerry, 2nd by James to purchase 4 more signs. Carried.

**Motion by Lea, 2nd by James to adjourn. Motion carried.

Pastor closed meeting with the Benediction.



LWML members have reported seeing one of Bethlehem's new large signs on US Highway 84, about 1-1/2 miles from the Loop, as part of our Evangelism efforts. Negotiations are ongoing to place more signs on roads leading into Palestine.

The signs contain our LCMS logo, church name, address and contact information.



The Youth of Bethlehem (age 10 and up) will participate in a "Higher Things Event" here on Thursday, July 7 in the form of a LOCK-IN. On the wall just inside Garber Hall, there is a poster with several Post-it-Notes specifying items needed for a successful event. Contact Ann Worsham for more details. LWML has made a donation toward expenses.

New Women's Bible Study from **Donna Pyle**, entitled "Peter: From Fisherman to Fisher of Men." It will be taped at Salem Lutheran Church, Tomball, Texas, July 12, 19, 26 and Aug 2, 2016, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. (2 sessions per night with break). See the color brochure in the Narthex.

The **Garber Hall Kitchen** is in need of a new look, in the way of changing cabinet door fronts, painting walls, etc. Permission from the Church Council has been received. If anyone is interested in helping with this project, contact Lana Bowden or Donna Hughes.



Grocery Shopping? Your KROGER CARD is part of Kroger's "Community Rewards" Program and is linked to Bethlehem's LWML. The proceeds are used by LWML to fund various projects. Contact Donna Hughes for information on how to sign up.

HEADS UP! LWML - November - Annual Bazaar – Look for craft ideas to make and sell at the Bazaar. Don't forget to find some really good recipes for the dessert table and for baked goods to sell.

CARD FRONTS - for the children of St. Jude Ranch to use in their fundraising efforts. Look for the collection box in Garber Hall. Be sure to trim any kind of cards (no larger than 5" x 7"), remembering that no personal messages should appear on the front or back. (Please note: Because of copyright laws, Hallmark, Disney or American Greetings cards will NOT be accepted.)

REMEMBER THESE DATES!

- LWML 39th Biennial Convention: Lubbock, Texas, June 24-16. 2016. **FLASH!!** Information about the ingathering collection was received too late for our LWML meeting. Jo Ann Tugwell contacted our officers and received permission to donate \$50.00 and Donna Hughes volunteered to purchase items for Sandy Smith to take with her to convention.
- Sun., July 10, 2016, LWML meeting immediately after church.



Our society is open to all women of Bethlehem. We usually meet after church on the second Sunday of the month. There are no dues, but we collect donations for MITES and for our general fund. The Annual Bazaar is our major fundraiser.

Go to www.lwml.org and sign up for "The Time is Now," a 2-Minute Tuesday email for timely tips, insight and wisdom to share God's Word, missions, service and fellowship.

Web site: <http://lwmltxdist.org>



Serve the Lord with gladness! Psalm 100:2

KIDS KORNER

Garrett Bowden made the A Honor Roll for the year. Garrett was also inducted in the National Junior Honors Society.

Jessica Bowden made the A Honor Roll for the year. She also had perfect attendance for the year. On field day, Jessica won 4 first place ribbons in the 50 yard dash, the standing long jump, the 400 meter relay and the 800 meter relay. She was also in the production of "The Table" by Steps of Faith performing a tap dance and a jazz routine.

WE WANT TO RECOGNIZE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR TALENTED KIDS! Please submit pictures and write-ups to Yanneth Harris or the church office.

On July 4, 1776, the thirteen colonies claimed their independence from England, an event which eventually led to the formation of the United States. Each year on July 4th, also known as Independence Day, Americans celebrate this historic event.

Conflict between the colonies and England was already a year old when the colonies convened a Continental Congress in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776. In a June 7 session in the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall), Richard Henry Lee of Virginia presented a resolution with the famous words: "Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."



Lee's words were the impetus for the drafting of a formal Declaration of Independence, although the resolution was not followed up on immediately. On June 11, consideration of the resolution was postponed by a vote of seven colonies to five, with New York abstaining. However, a Committee of Five was appointed to draft a statement presenting to the world the colonies' case for independence. Members of the Committee included John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Robert R. Livingston of New York and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. The task of drafting the actual document fell on Jefferson.

On July 1, 1776, the Continental Congress reconvened, and on the following day, the Lee Resolution for independence was adopted by 12 of the 13 colonies, New York not voting. Discussions of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence resulted in some minor changes, but the spirit of the document was unchanged. The process of revision continued through all of July 3 and into the late afternoon of July 4, when the Declaration was officially adopted. Of the 13 colonies, nine voted in favor of the Declaration, two -- Pennsylvania and South Carolina -- voted No, Delaware was undecided and New York abstained. John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, signed the Declaration of Independence. It is said that John Hancock's signed his name "with a great flourish" so England's "King George can read that without spectacles!"

Today, the original copy of the Declaration is housed in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and July 4 has been designated a national holiday to commemorate the day the United States laid down its claim to be a free and independent nation.

I Am A Disciple Of Jesus Christ!



I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ...



may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 1:17



I am a part of the fellowship of the unashamed.

The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I will not look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present directed, my future secure. I

am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, myopic vision, mundane talking, mediocre giving and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, position, promotion or popularity. I don't have to be first, recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded.

I now live in His presence, learn by faith, love by practice, lift by prayer and labor by His power. My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven. The road is narrow, the way

is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, lured back, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, back up, let up or hush up till I have preached up, prayed up, paid up, stood up and stayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go 'til He returns, give 'til it hurts, preach 'til I drop, tell all I know, and work 'til He comes.

When He comes to get His own, He'll have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear.

—authorship unknown



**"WE WILL
SERVE
THE
LORD
OUR
GOD
AND
OBEY
HIM."**

JOSHUA 24:24, NIV

Discipleship



Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses

July 6 - Isaiah - Isaiah son of Amoz is considered to be the greatest of the writing prophets and is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament prophet. His name means "Yahweh *the Lord+ saves." Isaiah prophesied to the people of Jerusalem and Judah from about 740 B.C. to 700 B.C. and was a contemporary of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Isaiah was a fierce preacher of God's Law, condemning the sin of idolatry. He was also a comforting proclaimer of the Gospel, repeatedly emphasizing God's grace and forgiveness. For this he is sometimes called the "Evangelist of the Old Testament." No prophet more clearly prophesied about the coming Messiah and his saving kingdom. He foretold the Messiah's miraculous birth (Is 7:14; 9:6), his endless reign (Is 2:1-5; 11:1-16), and his public ministry (Is 61:1-3), but most notably his "Suffering Servant" role and atoning death (52:13-53:12). The apostle John's description of Isaiah, that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him (John 12:41), is an apt summary of Isaiah's prophetic ministry.

July 16 - Ruth - Ruth of Moab, the subject of the biblical book that bears her name, is an inspiring example of God's grace. Although she was a Gentile, God made her the great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17), and an ancestress of Jesus himself (Mt 1:5). A famine in Israel led Elimelech and Naomi of Bethlehem to emigrate to the neighboring nation of Moab with their two sons. The sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, but after about ten years, Elimelech and his sons died (Ruth 1:1-5). Naomi then decided to return to Bethlehem and urged her daughters-in-law to return to their families. Orpah listened to Naomi but Ruth refused, replying with the stirring words: "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). After Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, Boaz, a close relative of Elimelech, agreed to be Ruth's "redeemer" (Ruth 3:7-13; 4:9-12). He took her as his wife, and Ruth gave birth to Obed, the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:13-17), thus preserving the Messianic seed. Ruth's kindness and selfless loyalty toward Naomi, and her faith in Naomi's God, have long endeared her to the faithful and redounded to God's praise for his merciful choice of one so unexpected.

July 20 - Elijah - The prophet Elijah, whose name means, "My God is Yahweh *the Lord+," prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel, mostly during the reign of Ahab (874-853 B.C.). Ahab, under the influence of his pagan wife Jezebel, had encouraged the worship of Baal throughout his kingdom, even as Jezebel sought to get rid of the worship of Yahweh. Elijah was called by God to denounce this idolatry and to call the people of Israel back to worshiping Yahweh as the only true God (as he did in 1 Kgs 18:20-40). Elijah was a rugged and imposing figure, living in the wilderness and dressing in a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt (2 Kgs 1:8). He was a prophet mighty in word and deed. Many miracles were done through Elijah, including the raising of the dead (1 Kgs 17:17-24), and the effecting of a long drought in Israel (1 Kgs 17:1). At the end of his ministry, he was taken up into heaven as Elisha, his successor, looked on (2 Kgs 2:11). Later on the prophet Malachi proclaimed that Elijah would return before the coming of the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6), a prophecy that was fulfilled in the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist (Mt 11:14).

July 21 - Ezekiel - Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was a priest, called by God to be a prophet to the exiles during the Babylonian captivity (Ez. 1:3). In 597 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army brought the king of Judah and thousands of the best citizens of Jerusalem—including Ezekiel—to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:8-16). Ezekiel's priestly background profoundly stamped his prophecy, as the holiness of God and the Temple figure prominently in his messages (for example, Ezekiel 9-10 and 40-48). From 593 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied the inevitability of divine judgment on Jerusalem, on the exiles in Babylon, and on seven nations that surrounded Israel (Ezekiel 1-32). Jerusalem would fall, and the exiles would not quickly return, as a just consequence of their sin. Once word reached Ezekiel that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, his message became one of comfort and hope. Through him God promised that his people would experience future restoration, renewal and revival in the coming Messianic kingdom (Ezekiel 33-48). Much of the strange symbolism of Ezekiel's prophecies was later employed in the Revelation to St. John.

July 28 - Johann Sebastian Bach, Kantor - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is acknowledged as one of the most famous and gifted of all composers past and present in the entire western world. Orphaned at the age of ten, Bach was mostly self-taught in music. His professional life as conductor, performer, composer, teacher, and organ consultant began at the age of 19 in the town of Arnstadt and ended in Leipzig, where for the last 27 years of his life he was responsible for all the music in the city's four Lutheran churches. In addition to his being a superb keyboard artist, the genius and bulk of Bach's vocal and instrumental compositions remain overwhelming. A devout and devoted Lutheran, he is especially honored in Christendom for his lifelong insistence that his music was written primarily for the liturgical life of the church to glorify God and edify his people.

July 29 - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany were disciples with whom Jesus had a special bond of love and friendship. John's Gospel records that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:15). On one occasion Martha welcomed Jesus into their home for a meal. While she did all the work, Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to his Word and was commended by Jesus for choosing the "good portion which will not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:38-42). When their brother Lazarus died, Jesus spoke to Martha this beautiful Gospel promise: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25-27). Ironically, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the death, the Jews became more determined than ever to kill Jesus (John 11:39-54). Six days before Jesus was crucified, Mary anointed his feet with a very expensive fragrant oil and wiped them with her hair, not knowing at the time that she was doing it in preparation for Jesus' burial (John 12:1-8; Mt 26:6-13).

July 30 - Robert Barnes, Confessor and Martyr - Remembered as a devoted disciple of Martin Luther, Robert Barnes is considered to be among the first Lutheran martyrs. Born in 1495, Barnes became the prior of the Augustinian monastery at Cambridge, England. Converted to Lutheran teaching, he shared his insights with many English scholars through writings and personal contacts. During a time of exile to Germany he became a friend of Luther and later wrote a Latin summary of the main doctrines of the Augsburg Confession titled "Sententiae." Upon his return to England, Barnes shared his Lutheran doctrines and views in person with King Henry VIII and initially had a positive reception. In 1529 Barnes was named royal chaplain. The changing political and ecclesiastical climate in his native country, however, claimed him as a victim; he was burned at the stake in Smithfield in 1540. His final confession of faith was published by Luther, who called his friend Barnes "our good, pious table companion and guest of our home, this holy martyr, Saint Robertus."

July 31 - Joseph of Arimathea - This Joseph, mentioned in all four Gospels, came from a small village called Arimathea in the hill country of Judea. He was a respected member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious council in Jerusalem. He was presumably wealthy, since he owned his own unused tomb in a garden not far from the site of Jesus' crucifixion (Mt 27:60). Joseph, a man waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went to Pontius Pilate after the death of Jesus and asked for Jesus' body (Mk 15:43). Along with Nicodemus, Joseph removed the body and placed it in the tomb (John 19:39). Their public devotion contrasted greatly to the fearfulness of the disciples who had abandoned Jesus.

Core Values in Ministry

Rev David L. Adler, Pastor-Elect

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42 ESV)

1. "THE APOSTLES' TEACHING" – The Word of God

It is particularly important in a church that people take a personal responsibility to each other in group Bible study. Such personal responsibility to one another is impossible to be achieved in a worship service. The dynamics of studying God's Word together and fellowshiping together are important for the continued involvement of every Christian. God works in and through your fellow believers to benefit the Bible students in their participation.

- The example of the Church in Berea *"For they received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."* (Acts 17:11)
- Jesus confronts and challenges the Jews and all men, even people of today: *"He who is of God hears the words of God; the reasons you do not hear them is that you are not of God."* (St. John 8: 6,47)
- Jesus said: *"If you continue in my Word, **then** you are truly my disciples."* (St. John 8:31)

Every member is encouraged to be faithful in group study of God's Word. In this way the Body of Christ can mature and grow.

2. "THE FELLOWSHIP – Service in the Congregation

Every member needs to be involved in at least one activity within the Body of Christ. There is opportunity to serve in so many ways that most people's talents and gifts can be used. It is also expected that each member financially support the ministry which is being performed by all the members of the Church. This means an annual "Faith Promise" (a commitment, or pledge) of financial resources that God provides to you so that you can prove the earnestness of your love (2 Corinthians 8 & 9). Offerings and gifts to the Lord are not optional but are expected of every Christian as the Scriptures clearly indicate. There are examples in Scripture as well as direct demands to be generous and supportive of the Lord's work. Such offerings are to be sacrificial gifts and provide a means of praising Him for His generous sustenance.

Being in fellowship also demands integrity in inter-personal relationships. This means that we reject gossip and slander in our midst.

- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* (Ephesians 4:25 ESV)
- *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* (1 Corinthians 13:7 ESV)
- *Do not slander one another.* (James 4:11 NIV)

We also hold each other to our Lord's directives in dealing with any confrontation, differences, or need for discipline that may arise in our spiritual community.

- *"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."* (St. Matthew 5:23-24 ESV)

- *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."* (St. Matthew 18:15-17 ESV)

3. "THE BREAKING OF BREAD" and "THE PRAYERS" – Our Worship Life

It is expected of every member to be faithful in worship and in receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Faithfulness is to be defined as being present every Sunday among God's people unless there is a providential reason such as sickness, accident, and the like which would prevent it. The Third Commandment demands it and Scriptures throughout expect the faithful people of God to be present in worship. It has become the habit, custom, expectation of many to think that God is satisfied with half-hearted commitment or a token participation. Neither God nor your fellow members of the Church are satisfied with that kind of participation. *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Hebrews 10:25 NIV)

Traditional, liturgical worship is valued above all. The basic pattern of our worship is drawn from the services that have been used by Christians for many centuries all across the world. The components of the Liturgy come from the Bible and serve to focus our worship on God's Word and our response to His Word in faith. As Martin Luther once said, "We worship to hear God speak and to speak to the God who hears us." If you are new to our worship format let it serve as a witness of our response to God who reaches out to us. In time, we pray that you, too, will celebrate the rich spiritual rewards of our heritage in Worship. [A full explanation of core values for Worship may be found in the link "Theses for Worship" included in "Core Values" at <http://belctx.org/about>]

Closed Communion is valued. This faithful practice, although different from all Protestants, is consistent with the historic practice of the Christian Church, which has regarded unity in doctrine as a prerequisite for admission to the Sacrament ("oneness at Communion demonstrates oneness in doctrine"). Closed Communion is the Scriptural and historic practice of limiting participation in the Lord's Supper to those who have been...

- catechized (instructed),
- formally admitted to the Sacrament, after having been examined in the truths of the Christian faith, and
- who have promised to believe, teach and confess all that the church in which they will commune believes, teaches and confesses.

Holy Communion (the Eucharist) is a special gift of God to His church. This Sacrament is celebrated in the confession and glad confidence that, as God says, He gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but the actual Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with Him and with one another.

BRIEF INSTRUCTION FOR THOSE PREPARING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

Each communicant should put this question to himself before he approaches the Table of the Lord. Many go to the Lord's Supper either quite thoughtlessly or with a wrong intention. Some go from mere force of habit; others only because their parents compel them to go; others again, because they consider it a meritorious deed to partake of the Lord's Supper; still others because they wish to acquire or retain before men the appearance and name of pious Christians. It is not surprising that such communicants derive no blessing from the Sacrament of the Altar but grow worse as time goes on.

A communicant who wishes to receive the Lord's Supper to his salvation must, in the first place, fully realize what the Lord's Supper is and for what purpose it was instituted by Christ; and in the second place, he must be well prepared to receive it as a poor sinner who is yearning for forgiveness.

There are those who have an entirely wrong conception of the Holy Sacrament, who consider it merely an empty memorial, instituted only for the purpose of remembering the sufferings and death of Christ. Holy Communion is that exalted, blessed mystery by means of which Christ, in the consecrated bread, gives us His body to eat and in the consecrated wine His blood to drink. This is the very body He assumed from the Virgin Mary and gave into death on the cross for the remission of our sins. It is true, we cannot see this with our eyes, taste it with our mouths, or grasp it with our minds; but we are to believe it, for our Lord and Savior says: *"Take, eat; this is My body. Drink of it, all of you; this is My blood."* Our Savior is faithful and true, and He will certainly bring to pass what He has promised in the words of His statement. He is all-wise and knows ways and means to fulfill His promises, even though this is beyond our understanding. He also is almighty; with Him nothing is impossible. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. If we earnestly believe that we receive the true body and blood of our Savior—true God and man in one person—in Holy Communion, and not mere bread and wine, we shall then approach the Table of the Lord, not thoughtlessly and lightly, but in deepest reverence and humility of heart, saying as did the centurion, *"Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof"* (St. Luke 7:6).

The benefits derived from Holy Communion are threefold in nature. First, by worthily receiving Holy Communion we receive forgiveness of sins and the assurance that such forgiveness imparts. God, rich in love, has provided the means that poor sinners need to render them certain of the forgiveness of their sins. These means are the preaching of the Gospel, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. Do not be sinfully inquisitive, asking why God has instituted three means instead of one for the purpose of conveying to us the forgiveness of our sins and making us sure and certain of this, but rather thank Him for these rich provisions. He who knows from personal experience how hard it is for a soul under conviction of sin to believe that his sins are forgiven will realize the greatness of God's grace and providing care in giving us not merely one, but several means of becoming certain of the forgiveness of sin. As surely therefore you take the Lord's body into your mouth and drink the Lord's blood, shed for the remission of your sins, so certain you are to be of having forgiveness of sins, of being the undisputed possessor of this divine gift.

The second benefit of Holy Communion is life—not the natural life we received at birth and sustain by food and drink, but the new, spiritual life which begins in regeneration through Holy Baptism. It consists of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the love of God and our neighbor. Our Lord has designated His Holy Supper as a spiritual nourishment for the strengthening of this spiritual life. Of this Luther writes:

"Holy Communion is aptly called a food for the soul, as it nourishes

and strengthens the new man; for while we are born again by Baptism, man retains his old nature in his flesh and blood, and there are so many obstacles and temptations on the part of the devil and the world that we often grow faint and weary and at times even falter. So the Lord's Supper is given for a daily food and nourishment, that faith may be refreshed and strengthened and not repulsed in this battle, but ever grow stronger and stronger. The new life is of such a nature that it must constantly grow and progress. This new life has a great deal to endure, since the devil is an enemy who has great wrath. If he finds that he cannot take us by a bold stroke, he tries all his wiles, presents all his allurements, and does not stop until he has tired us out, so that we either abandon our faith or become listless and impatient. But when our heart is in this condition, being about to succumb, we have the comfort that in this Sacrament it can be again strengthened and refreshed." (Large Catechism V 23-27)

The third benefit of Holy Communion is eternal salvation; for even as unforgiven sins bar us from heaven, so forgiveness of sins opens the door to eternal salvation. "For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation."

Now all depends on communing worthily and being well prepared in order to receive this threefold benefit. This, however, is not a unworthiness according to the Law but according to the Gospel. It does not consist in absolute freedom from sin and perfection of life. Worthiness is realizing our unworthiness and sinfulness, in having a contrite heart that is spiritually poor, in earnestly desiring the forgiveness of sins, and in taking comfort in this forgiveness and depending solely on our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, those are unworthy and ill prepared who either, in their conceit of self-righteousness, fancy they need no forgiveness of sins. Consider the Pharisee, who prayed: *"God, I thank You that I am not like other men"* (St. Luke 18:11). Consider also those who wholly despair of the forgiveness of sins, as did Cain, who said: *"My punishment is greater than I can bear"* (Genesis 4:13), and who will not let one relieve them of their thoughts of despair.

There is another class of unworthy communicant, namely, those who persist in their wicked purposes and continue to serve sin knowingly or live in a state of relentless enmity with their neighbors.

Unworthy communicants going to the Lord's Supper also receive the body and blood of Christ, but they receive it in judgment and to their great damnation. For this very purpose St. Paul adds the earnest warning: *"Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the [Lord's] body eats and drinks judgment on himself"* (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). Whoever recognizes in himself these marks of an unworthy communicant should not presume to go to the Lord's Table in such condition. We do not mean that he should stay away permanently but he should immediately repent and become a truly penitent sinner.

Are those of weak faith to be classed with the unworthy communicant? Not at all. It is these very guests who are welcome and belong at Christ's Table. The Lord will surely not cast out those who are weak in faith and frail in their walk but who feel their weakness and desire to become stronger. These He invites, for it is for the weak and the frail that He instituted His Holy Supper, that they might gather strength from this spiritual food. To them He says: *"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (St. Matthew 11:28), and again: *"Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out"* (St. John 6:37).

(from Lutheran Book of Prayer)

