

Messenger

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church & Day School

1343 Penniman Avenue

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Some Thoughts on the Church's Year

In this year's *Messenger* articles, I intend to share insight about the church year and the pattern it gives to our annual review of the whole counsel of God. This information will be drawn from a number of sources including *Christian Worship: Manual*, Northwestern Publishing House, 1993. This will be a four part series following the church's calendar.

The first half of the Christian year (Advent to Pentecost) has been termed the *Time of Christ*. This is the earthly time of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Annually the church recalls the great work of our redemption through Christ. The church proclaims the life and work of Christ—his incarnation, preaching and miracles, suffering, death, and resurrection, ascension.

The two dates that set the calendar for the *Time of Christ* are Christmas and Easter. In this article we will discuss the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons. This time has been termed the "cycle of light." The origins of the celebration of Christmas (December 25) and Epiphany (January 6) are not entirely certain. **Epiphany** is most certainly the older of the festivals, with written evidence of an Epiphany celebration from Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century. "*Epiphany*" comes from Greek and means "appearing", referring to the "appearance of Christ our Savior (Titus 3:4). Other eastern writers confirm January 6 as the birth date of Jesus. Although at the same time in various regions of the Eastern Church, the coming of Magi, the baptism of Christ, and Jesus' miracle at Cana were celebrated on that day. There is no definitive explanation why January 6 was chosen as the date for Epiphany.

The question of the date of Christmas (December 25) for the day of Christ's birth also has a number of explanations. One explanation is that Christians chose December 25 to counter the pagan Roman festival called *natalis solis invicti* (Birth of the Invincible Sun) tied to the winter solstice. The Christians celebrated the birth of their invincible *Son*, the Son of God. Recent scholarship has shown this to be inaccurate no matter what the History Channel may broadcast at that time of year.

It is more likely that the selection of December 25 resulted from an early computation that Christ's death on the cross took place on March 25. There was a theological belief held by some that the death and birth dates of religiously significant persons are the same. By this method, March 25 would not only be the date of Jesus' death, but also the date of his conception in the womb of Mary, making his birth nine months later. There is evidence that the birth of Christ was celebrated on December 25 in North Africa, even before the celebration of the festival in Rome. It is purely coincidental that this lines up with the winter solstice in the

Northern Hemisphere when it is the darkest. Yet at the darkest time of the year, we celebrate the coming of the Light of the world.

The *Advent Season* began as a preparatory season before Christmas as a time of penitence for the faithful and intense instruction for baptism of converts at Christmas in Gaul (modern-day France). The length of the Advent season was fixed by Pope Gregory the Great (died A.D. 604) by appointing the beginning of the season as the Fourth Sunday before Christmas. One custom often observed in churches is the use of an Advent wreath. The custom of an Advent wreath developed in Northern Europe. On each of the four Sundays of Advent a new candle is lighted, dispelling the darkness, as the church moves toward welcoming Christ, the true Light of the world.

Advent (Coming) has developed three emphases: 1. The advent of our Lord in glory at the end of time. 2. The advent of our Lord in flesh. 3. The advent of the Lord in His Word and Sacrament.

It is my hope you found this information beneficial and helps you understand why the church year is unique. It also serves to focus our hearts and minds on Christ's person and work of redemption. It helps us review the great acts of our saving God in a regular and systematic pattern. One other observation, note that the church year (as well as the liturgy, for that matter) is not uniquely German, Roman, African or Greek, but all parts of Christendom have added its own practices.

We will cover the Easter Cycle next time.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Schaefer

School Activities

The students at our school are busy with their regular academics, but are also working on other projects.

Grades 1-8 just finished NWEA testing. This is a new test for our school and will give the staff helpful information about a students' progress, what areas are strong and what areas need addressing. Grades K-8 are preparing for the Science Fair which will be on Sunday, February 23. Grades 5-8 have the opportunity to have their projects entered in the MLS Fine Arts Fair which in on Saturday, February 22. It will be interesting to see what awards we receive. All of the projects will be on display in the gym on Sunday, February 23. Please stop by after church and see what the students have done.

The weekend of February 7 and 8 our co-ed basketball team will be participating in the Michigan Lutheran Seminary Basketball Tournament. Our first game is at 9:40 on Friday morning. We are also hosting a B-team tournament on March 1. The A-team will be participating in the HVL Basketball Tournament on March 7 and 8.

Grades K-8 will also be attending two presentations at Huron Valley Lutheran on February 28. There will be a troop of Chinese Acrobats and an interesting presentation on scientific experiments. Pastor Nauman from Michigan Lutheran Seminary will be doing the chapel service on February 26 and then will tell the students about MLS. Any parents interested in talking with pastor Nauman are welcome to attend chapel and watch the presentations.

The school is also hosting parenting discussion groups lead by Mr. Pappenfuss. Parenting skills for children of various ages will be the next topic. The next two meetings are Wednesday, February 5 and February 26 from 6:30-7:45 PM. If you missed the first session you can still join and learn beneficial parenting skills.

Our school play will be on Friday, April 11. This is a change from the original calendar.

The staff and students are thankful for all of the parents and members who have donated time, money and energy for the school and its activities. May God continue to bless our educational efforts at St. Peter's.

Music Department

The wonderful seasons of Advent and Christmas have come and gone for 2013, but the message of Christ's coming to save us remains throughout the year 2014. The St. Peter's musicians hope your festivities were enhanced by the beautiful music that they prepared and presented for the edification of your faith. We appreciate our choir members setting up the fellowship reception that followed the Candlelight Service: the Brooke family and Chris Abbott; and Jim and Barb Cutler for recording the service. Sue Brooke also took charge of arranging the new candle lighting ceremony during the singing of "Silent Night." All of the school children participated in the service. Thanks to the teachers and parents for their extra effort. We had a good turnout of presenters and listeners.

The Senior Choir and Handbell Choir have started to prepare for Lent and Easter, which are rather late this year. Ash Wednesday will be observed on March 5, and Easter's date is April 20. The Handbell Choir started rehearsals on January 16 for ringing throughout the winter/spring season.

The Senior Choir will be singing for Pastor Schaefer's 25th anniversary celebration service on March 2 at 4 p.m. We hope there will be a substantial turnout from St. Peter's congregation members.

The St. Peter's school children will be traveling to Huron Valley Lutheran High School for their Palm Sunday concert on April 13 at 3 p.m. You are all invited to attend.

Other services to remember are The Ascension of our Lord at 7 p.m. on May 29, for which the school children are singing; and Confirmation on May 18.

Mommy @ Me

It is hard to believe that it has been over four months since the "Mommy and Me" program was launched. I wasn't certain if people would see a need for it, but through God's grace, it has started off on successful footing. We began the year with 11 toddlers, have had some turn-over, and currently stand at 15 with a short wait-list!

This is a free class intended to be an outreach to the community, with the hope of introducing the families to our preschool and day school. We currently have 2 members' children enrolled, one former member's child, one with an older sibling that was already in preschool, and 11 with no previous ties to St. Peter's. Of this group, five are Indian families and four of these are hindu and are hearing The Word for the first time. Given my background, this privilege is both humbling and gratifying, regardless of whether or not God chooses to guide some from this program on to our school. However, language is a bit of a barrier as my native tongue is not the same as theirs.

The class meets in the gym on Wednesdays from 9:00-10:30 and the 2-year-olds stay with a parent or adult care-giver. A change in the name may be coming, as we have one baby-sitter and one father that stay. If you have any suggestions, please pass them on to me. We have taken a field trip to the apple orchard, and filled our other days with Bible time, doing crafts, playing with building toys, sensory activities, tasks intended to build fine and gross motor skills, songs, finger-plays, stories and snacks. Some major goals of the program are

to develop listening skills, the ability to follow directions, and understand the concept of taking turns/waiting in line. It is a slow process, but there has been progress. I'll take what I can get!

I have been blessed to have Mrs. Katie Lehmann help with the class, but we could always use an extra set of hands! If any of you have a few hours to help out, please email me and let me know when you are available (smithville@sbcglobal.net).

Please tell others about this program and keep it, Mrs. Lehmann and me in your prayers as we strive to share the gifts and talents we have been given with our congregation and community.

In Christ,
Shenal Smith

25th Anniversary Celebration

Please join us on Sunday, March 2nd to celebrate Pastor Schaefer's 25th year in the ministry. There will be a special service at 4 PM, followed by a meal (ham, vindaloo chicken, potatoes, rolls and various salads) at 5 PM.

Please sign up in the narthex or school hallway if you will be attending the meal. Volunteers will be requested via SignUpGenius, or you can call Cheryl in the church office (734-453-3393).

If you wish to contribute towards a gift for Pastor, a door offering will be taken on February 16th, or you can designate an amount and write "Gift for Pastor" on your offering envelope. If you wish to help defray the cost of the celebration, please designate an amount and write "Celebration Costs" on your envelope.

Please contact Ron Bude with any questions (after any church service or at 734-451-1005).

Huron Valley Lutheran High School

The second semester is now underway during another busy year at HVL. This also means we are well into another sports season. The girls claimed another district title in Volleyball in the fall. Now they are tied for first place in basketball for their conference with an undefeated conference record. The boys are also making the most of their God-given abilities in basketball, although with a less successful record to show for their hard work. Homecoming will be held on Friday, February 14 with the JV boys playing at 5:30 and the varsity at 7:30.

Work also continues on our national accreditation through WELSSA. Thank you to all those who responded to the survey about the school a few months ago! Overall, respondents' opinions of HVL were very positive, and as our two greatest strengths pointed to the Christ-centered education offered as well as the fact that students are very well-prepared for college. At the same time, each person who responded was asked for suggestions

for making HVL even better, and those responses are being studied carefully and incorporated into a long-range strategic plan. As part of the accreditation work, the Faculty is also holding special meetings to do a comprehensive study of our curriculum. Although HVL's requirements already meet or exceed state requirements in all subject areas, they are looking at ways to increase course offerings and improve the classes that are already offered. An important part of that will be incorporating more use of technology to take advantage of the wireless capabilities that were added last summer.

The HVL auction is being brought back under a new format and will take place on Saturday, April 5, 2014. Information can be found by going to hvlhs.org and clicking on the large auction picture found on the home page.

On Thursday, February 20, HVL will host an Open House and begin registering Freshmen for the 2014-2015 school year. Potential students and parents who visit that night will receive free admission to basketball games and free pizza and pop from concessions. The HVL Faculty will be there to answer any questions about the school and help new students through the registration process. We are cautiously optimistic that we will have a larger Freshman class and increased enrollment for next year.

HVL also is excited to be able to offer a new outreach opportunity next year. With the help of some work by Kim Pappenfuss, approval has been received so that we can accept foreign students with F-1 Visas. Non-citizens can now attend HVL for four years, rather than just one. This provides an opportunity for non-citizens living and working in the area to send their children to HVL. We are also looking for families willing to host International students who want to visit the US for their high school education. A few years ago a Chinese student called "Jason" who attended HVL learned about his Savior and was baptized at the end of the school year. We are looking forward to more opportunities like this to do outreach with the message of the Gospel. Please keep HVL in your prayers as we continue instructing and training disciples of Christ.

Miscellaneous Item

A former member of Peace Livonia, and now a member of Living Savior in Asheville, North Carolina has two grave sites for sale at: Glen Eden Lutheran Memorial Park, 35667 W. Eight Mile Rd., Livonia, MI 48152. If you have any interest in purchasing these grave sites, contact:

Lee (Leora) Kowske
632 Goldview Dr.
Hendersonville, NC 28791
828-808-1547
llkowske@gmail.com

OWLS

Since the membership of OWLS (Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors) at St. Peter Chapter 49 has diminished from a peak of 36 to 3, the chapter is considered to be inactive. Efforts to add to our members have failed; it seems likely that this condition will continue. Why then include an item in the *Messenger* if this group is inactive?

The truth is that the OWLS, a national organization formed in 1984 and launched in 1985 is very active. Its adopted purpose is to "provide a national program for the life enrichment of older WELS Lutherans in service to their Lord and His church." This is accomplished in over 45 local chapters and by over 1200 members-at-large.

Throughout its existence the OWLS have taken on very meaningful projects beginning with the Prison Ministry whereby inmates are given bibles, served by area chaplains and extended the privilege of a corresponding pen pal. Presently the project is to enable a civilian chaplain in Europe by funding at least \$50,000 per year. This began when WELS was forced to end its funding of the chaplain due to financial constraints.

If you are a WELS member, 55 years of age or older, or retired, application for membership may be made to OWLS, P.O. Box 84, New Ulm, MN 56073. The yearly fee for members is \$15 for which you will receive the *New Horizons* newsletter four times a year, and an invitation to the annual OWLS convention each October. The 2014 convention will take place at the Dells and 2015 at La Crosse, both in Wisconsin.

If membership does not appeal at this time, you may wish to help in the support of the European chaplain. Contributions may be sent to OWLS, European Civilian Chaplaincy, P.O. Box 270196, Hartford, WI 53027. Whatever is your desire, please know that any action is appreciated.

Service Opportunities

We need your help. There are several board and committee positions that are currently vacant. Please consider offering your talents and time to serve in these vital roles. The time commitment for most of these roles is less than 2 hours per month.

Position	Description	Term
Budget Committee Chairman Prepare	Annual Budget	1 year
Compensation Committee	Review/revise staff salaries	3 year
Audit committee*	Audit church/school accounts	1 year
Endowment Fund Committee*	Create awareness of the fund, manage investments/disbursements	3 year
Financial Secretary	Count/report weekly church offerings	2 year
Board of Trustees Member	Manage church properties/assets	2 year

*These positions may be filled by any member (male or female) of the congregation.

If you or someone you know is interested in any of these positions please contact me, Terry Smith (Vice President), Pastor or Ron Bude (Chairman of the Board of Elders).

Tom Shelton (Congregation President)

Lent & Easter Worship Schedule

Unwitting Confessors of Christ

2014 Wednesday Lenten Series

Ash Wednesday Divine Service: (March 5)

Isaiah 59:12-20, II Corinthians 5:20b-6:2, Luke 18:9-14

Celebrant and Preacher: Rev. Paul Schaefer

March 12: John 11:45-52

Caiaphas: "Better for you that one man die for the people, and that the nation perish not"

Preacher: Rev. Guy Purdue

March 19: Matthew 27:31-36

Judas: "I have betrayed innocent blood"

Preacher: Rev. Paul Schaefer

March 26: Matthew 27:19

Pilate's wife: "Have nothing to do with that just man"

Preacher: Rev. James Frey

April 2: Luke 23:39-43

The malefactor: "This man has done nothing wrong"

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Schroeder

April 9: Matthew 27:54

The centurion: "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Preacher: Rev. Paul Schaefer

The Triduum (The Three Holy Days)

Maundy Thursday Divine Service (April 17)

Exodus 12:1-14, I Corinthians 11:23-28, John 13:1-15, 34

Good Friday (April 18)

Easter Vigil Divine Service (April 19)

The Feast of the Resurrection

Easter Dawn Divine Service (April 20)

Isaiah 12:1-6, I Corinthians 15:51-57, John 20:1-18

Easter Festival Divine Service

Jonah 2:2-9, Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 28:1-10