

Messenger

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Day School
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May 2016

On Christ's Ascension I Now Build the Hope of My Ascension

I have trouble even imagining it. I can picture it like a special effect in a movie. I have no problem there. The disciples are walking along talking with Jesus, and all of a sudden He begins to rise up in the air. Okay, He was standing still at that moment, blessing them, but still . . . I can see the special effects - I have seen them in the occasional old movie, complete with bright lights and soft focus and cheesy music, but to actually witness it still gives one pause. What must it have been like to be there and watch?

We do not know if Jesus was still speaking as He ascended. We have no information on how quickly He rose into the air, or how high He was before the cloud hid Him from their sight. All of our best imaginings are just guesses, usually based on our wishes of how it would have been. All we really have is a short account and the knowledge that Jesus was taken from our sight on that day. Ever since then, we must walk by faith rather than sight, just as it says in 2 Corinthians.

And that is entirely the point of the Ascension. Jesus ascended to remove His visible presence from the Church so that it could live by faith and not wait to see. Of course, there have always been those in the Church who do not want to walk by faith alone. They want to see with their own eyes. They are the sorts of people who invent the vision, the mysterious, out-of-the-way appearances, the miracles that no one can really verify, but everyone is supposed to just accept as real, and the new revelations throughout the ages. We have the visions of Mary and the crying statues, the bleeding paintings, and whatever so-called manifestation of God.

Jesus warned us that such things would follow - that people would cry out that "Here He is!", but that we were not to listen to them, or even go look. We are supposed to live out the lives God gives us, and do the work He places in our lives to do - all to His glory. He promises that when He returns, He will do so in a way that no one will miss or mistake. Rather than searching for a sign or for His coming quietly in a corner, somewhere, we are to expect Him at any time, and be busy about living in the confession of the Gospel.

Jesus understands human nature better than anyone else. He knows we would want to see, sense, hear, taste, and whatever. He planned His Word to satisfy our ears and the Holy Supper to satisfy our need to touch and taste and sense. But He knows many would want more, so He took His visible presence away. He did not leave us, **"Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the middle of them"** He is with us always, as He promised, just not open to our senses to perceive. That task He has left to our faith.

You see, if we could see Jesus at any time, we would need to see Him all of the time. People would say, "Why listen to the Pastor? Let's go hear Jesus." Because Jesus is not here to be seen and heard in His person, due to the Ascension, we must seek Him where He has promised to be. If you want to hear Jesus, you want to gather and listen to the faithful pastor preach. His voice is the voice that God has chosen to use to speak to you in each community. Each faithful pastor is the voice of Jesus in His congregation.

Again. If you could see Jesus, you would need to see Jesus to accept that your prayers have been heard and answered. You might satisfy yourself with prayers about things you consider less important when Jesus was not there, but for the critical and vitally important issues of your life, you would need to see Jesus listening and nodding, and hear His answer to be satisfied. Since the Ascension, however, none of us has ever had that experience, and we have no reason to expect it, so we pray in faith and the possibility of seeing Jesus does not get in the way. We must trust His promises that our prayers are heard and answered, and believers do!

Jesus took His visible presence from us to make faith possible, and to remove the stumbling block of sight and sense verification from the faith. Someone might ask, "How did the disciples have faith while Jesus walked the earth?" The answer would be in the short-term and unique nature of those circumstances. They had to have faith that Jesus was the Son of God, that He had the abilities He actually possessed, and that His will was for their good and welfare. If Jesus had been a visible, tangible fact of life for two thousand years, that sort of faith would be established as knowing by constant experience, while the sort of faith that simply trusts God's promises would likely be overshadowed by the expectation of experience. Just consider the technological things we take for granted today that were hardly dreams a generation or two ago! We human beings become jaded very quickly!

In the wisdom of God, faith works best where it does not require constant verification by the test of the senses. We must believe that the one who preaches faithfully preaches not only his words but the very Word of God, that he who administers the gifts of God does so as His hands among us. When we pray, we must trust that God is faithful to the promises He has spoken in His Word to hear our prayers and answer each one of them. And when we gather together, we believe His Word that He is actually there among us, even though we cannot see Him, hear Him move about the room, or feel His presence with our senses. In other words, **we walk by faith, and not by sight.**

So, the Ascension serves us by serving the cause of faith as contrasted with sense. We must say, "I believe", because we cannot say, "I see Him." The Ascension also reminds us that the day of seeing Him is coming. One day, we will again see Jesus. He will come and divide all of mankind up into those that are His and those that rejected Him, and we who are His shall see Him and rejoice and shall never be deprived of that sight again. On that day, we the culmination of hope will be true. We will see Christ, our Savior and Lord, face to face. Meanwhile we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus."

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The school year is swiftly coming to a close.

- ✓ Fourth quarter mid-term was last Friday.
- ✓ Thank you to all for attending and helping out with the plays.
- ✓ Softball is Friday May, 6 at Hamlich Park, **3001 E. 13 Mile Rd. Warren, MI.**
- ✓ HVL track is on Friday, May 13.
- ✓ Confirmation is Sunday, May 15.
- ✓ The School Picnic and Graduation are on Thursday, June 2.

Thank you to all of you who are helping out in these upcoming events.

Kim and I would like to thank all of the members at St. Peter's for all of the blessing that have been showered on our family as we served here for the last three years. Our tentative plans are to load a moving truck on Saturday, June 11 and head out that afternoon hoping to arrive at my brothers in St. Joe that evening. We would appreciate any help we can get loading. We hope to make it to Peoria, Arizona on June 14th.

Bd. of Elders

The Board of Elders authorized a monetary gift from our Benevolence fund for the family of Oliver Shmyr to help defray medical expenses. As a further means of assisting with the expenses, there was also a special door offering taken on April 17th and 24th.

Member attendance, now being tracked using the pew registries, has been compiled for review by the Elders. The plan of action developed for contacting those members whose names have not been recorded for four or more weeks will be followed. All members are encouraged to regularly enter their attendance in the registry so that we have the most accurate information.

We will be asking our new male confirmands if they would be willing to serve as ushers on two of our teams which are currently short-handed.

It is again the time of year when we ask eligible male members to submit their names for nomination to serve on one of the church boards. The list of nominees will be posted in the Sunday bulletin for two weeks prior to the election which will take place during our Voters Assembly meeting on May 17th.

Mark Castellese
Chairman, Board of Elders

Music

Lent and Holy Week have meant an intensified singing schedule for the St. Peter's musicians. We were happy to serve St. Peter's for this time of repentance, meditation, and joy. Our next festival celebrations are The Ascension of Our Lord at 7:00 p.m. on May 5 (with the school children singing), Pentecost on May 15, and Trinity Sunday on May 22. The summer singing schedule will once again feature our soloists: Lois Bude, Mark Castellese, Jim Cutler, Joan Kalish, and Doris Tomlin. We all appreciate their fine voices.

The St. Peter's teachers and staff are planning music for school graduation on Thursday, June 2, at 7 p.m. All are welcome to this event, which includes a reception after the service.

I would like to thank all the members of our Senior Choir and the Handbell Choir for their faithful service this past year. Please give prayerful consideration to join us in singing and/or ringing next fall! We are sad to lose Michele Diener and Kim Pappenfuss, as they will be relocating; and Katriana and Kai Pearce who will be attending school out of the area.

Thanks to Michele Diener, Kim Pappenfuss, and Laura Schroeder for teaching music to our school children. The students are singing beautifully! We will miss their voices when the school suspends operation.

Jan Jacobi
Music Director

Preschool

Hosanna! What a joy it was to hear the preschool children join with the K-8 children to sing praises to the Lord on Palm Sunday. We talk often of Holy Week and that Jesus died on Good Friday to save us from our sins. He lived a perfect life, died a perfect death and rose from the dead so that we may have eternal life. We are also talking about His ascension into heaven and how He said that He was "going there to prepare a place" for us! We have learned that God wants us to share this good news of salvation with others.

On April 22, Preschool through 2nd grade performed "The Three Nanny Goats Gruff". The children worked hard learning the songs, recitations and actions. They gave a fantastic performance! The K-2 students were so kind and helpful working with the younger students. Everyone enjoyed time playing outside together after our long rehearsals!

We are currently enrolling for the 2016-2017 school year. We have two day, three day and five day options. Our sessions will run from 8:30am to 11:30am. Our Monday, Wednesday and Fridays are nearly full. (If you know anyone that might be interested in three or five days, encourage them to enroll soon, or they might end up on a waiting list!) We still have room for our Tuesday/Thursday session. We also have a Parent and Tot program for two-year-olds that meets on Wednesdays. Anyone interested in more information may call the school office at 734.453.0460 or email me at stpeterspreschool@hotmail.com.

In Christ's Service,
Rebecca Lohrmann

Board of stewardship

Recent Activities of The Bd. of Stewardship:

1. Postcards were printed and mailed to prospects inviting them to The Easter Services. Additional cards were given out to the congregation for handing out to family and friends .
2. On February 20th The Board of Stewardship hosted a chili/game night in the Church basement which was well attended.
3. On Palm Sunday we hosted a Fellowship Hour following church and served refreshments.

Upcoming Board of Stewardship Activities:

1. On May 15th in honor of the Confirmands, The Board of Stewardship will be serving cake, coffee and juice.
2. The Board of Stewardship will be hosting a pasta/game night on May 21st at 6 pm. Bring your favorite pasta dish and game. Come join us for a night of fun and fellowship, if you don't want to play games join us for pasta and fun anyway we will be providing salad and drinks.
3. May 29th will be the beginning of lemonade on the lawn with the Board of Stewardship hosting the first one. There will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for the rest of the dates.

The Wels Connection is being shown monthly before the start of Bible Class.

LWMS

The LWMS Alpha Circuit Spring Rally was held Saturday, April 23, at the historic St. Jacob Lutheran Church in Grass Lake. (St Jacob is the oldest church building still in everyday use in the WELS.) There were 58 in attendance. After an opening devotion in the sanctuary by Pastor Uhlenbrauck, we returned to the fellowship hall for the rest of our meeting.

The rally's speaker was Vivian Gierach, of St. John's, Ann Arbor, a former missionary, with her husband, in Zambia, Africa. Vivian had spent two years planning her trip to Peridot, AZ, a two hour drive from Phoenix, to visit the Apache Reservation and the Lutheran school and churches there. An invitation is required to visit the reservations. Our Savior's Lutheran school has an enrollment of about 75 students in grades K-8. The children and their parents make quite a commitment to send them there as social and cultural pressures from others on the reservation can be quite overwhelming. Alcoholism and danger from bootleggers and drug cartels is also a concern. The WELS has had a strong presence within the Apache community since the first missionaries were able to make inroads there in 1893. At one time, in the 1930's, one third of the Apache people were WELS Lutherans. The congregations' members are generally blessed with employment in an area where the unemployment rate is around 75%. Vivian was able to introduce us to the pastor, the teachers, and some of the members of the reservation through her talk and video. Please keep them in your prayers!

The mite box funds collected from all congregations was \$2378.24. Of this, St. Peter's contribution was \$200. 25% of the funds will go to the National LWMS to be distributed after the National Convention in June. The remainder is divided equally between the two projects, World Mission: WM2014-26 Apache Leadership and Maintenance Project and Home Mission: HM2014-09 Campus Ministry New Starts. The details on these projects can be found at lwms.org under the "Projects" tab.

The Fall Rally will be October 15 at St. John's, Riga.

The National Convention is June 23-26 in St. Charles, Illinois. The theme is "Christ Alone, Our Cornerstone". The registrations will be closed on May 1. Walk-in registration at the convention may be possible if space permits.

As always, check out the LWMS website www.lwms.org for more information about our missions and missionaries, mission resources, ways to donate, prayer requests, and daily devotions.

Lois Bude – LWMS Reporter

Focus: Future Update

We recently completed our fourth “Focus: Future Meeting” and I wanted to recap the results of our meetings for those that haven’t been able to attend. We started out by cataloging what we do at St. Peter’s and how we interact with each other and the community at large. We also examined our strengths and weaknesses. From there sorted things into four categories represented by this figure:

Diagram Omitted

The rectangles represent the things we do and the circles represent the entities with whom we interact. The category of ‘place making’ may require some explanation: this is the concept of our church as a physical and audible presence in the Plymouth community.

Next, we discussed how we can use our strengths to overcome our weaknesses. We also examined, in light of our suspending operations of the K-8 school, what might we want to add to what we are doing currently at St. Peters. We vetted and prioritized issues that were discussed and came up with three interrelated focus areas:

Diagram Omitted

There was a clear desire to put our focus on younger families and youth. We also noted that our facilities are a great strength, but need to remain supportive of our mission, which means we may need to take a fresh look at our physical assets. Finally, there was the notation that our administration and structure need to be aligned with these priorities, and that may mean we need to undertake a review of our bylaws and constitution.

Our fourth meeting focused on taking the learnings from this journey and developing a plan for action. After a brief review of a satirical church election video (Programs! Crayons! Praise bands!) we were reminded that we live in an era where spending a Sunday morning at church is no longer a societal expectation, but rather we are viewed by the world as an oddity for attending church. There is a recognition that the preaching of the Word is and must be at the heart of all we do.

The consensus of the group from this most recent meeting was to recommend to St. Peter’s Church Council, that we look to call an additional pastor to help with our ministry. We did note reports from the Synod which indicate there are currently far more open calls for Pastors than there are graduating candidates. We also noted that we are not currently in a position to take on additional financial commitments. However, we do anticipate that will change in the coming months.

Additionally, it was shared at the last Focus: Future meeting that the Church Council has offered the Auburn Parsonage to the Pastor HVL has called. This would be a short-term (one year) commitment which allows St. Peter’s to support the work of HVL through a significant non-monetary contribution. The short duration of this arrangement still maintains considerable flexibility for us as we look at potentially calling an additional Pastor in the not-to-distant future. Moving forward, the recommendation from the Focus: Future committee will be reviewed by the Church Council and discussed at our upcoming Voter’s meeting.

I want to thank everyone who attended the meetings and shared their thoughts. I believe we had thoughtful and candid deliberations which will be helpful as we look ahead and seek to serve God through our ministry at St. Peters.

Pastoral Acts

Baptisms

Jennifer Moore
Michael Moore

Burials

Greg LaManna (non-member)
Donna Trapp
Betty Pyndynkowski (memorial service pending)
Beatrice Ponto (committal Glen Eden Cementary 4/30/2016) (non-member)

Loss of Member by Removal

Bill Fitzpatrick
Tekla Bude

Loss of Member by Release to Heterodox

Sharon Strebbling
Rachael Laycock (children: Madelein & Colin)

Loss of Members by Transfer to Sister Congregation

Dillon Moyer to Risen Savior Ev. Lutheran, Pooler, GA
Carly Moyer to Risen Savior Ev. Lutheran, Pooler, GA

Roster Updates

Delete

Donna Trapp
Betty Pyndynkowski
Sharon Strebbin
Rachel Laycock (children: Madelein & Colin)
Bill Fitzpatrick
Tekla Bude

New Address

Ruth Moyer
5145 Englewood Dr.
Liberty Twp., OH 45011

Ben & Sherry Adlof
14709 Anchor Ct.
Holland, MI 49424
616-298-7786

New Telephone Number

Randy Eschelbach – 734-347-3160
Ed Carr – 734-845-2368
Deb Carr – 734-709-1579