

The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

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Peace Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We believe, teach, and confess the doctrine of the evangelical, catholic faith as it is taught by Holy Scripture and faithfully confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580. We are committed to the pure preaching of God's Word and the right administration of the Holy Sacraments, catechesis of all people in the Christian faith, and liturgical worship consistent with our Reformation heritage. We are an evangelical, orthodox, and catholic congregation, proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and reigning for the salvation of the world!



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From the Desk of Pastor Messer

"The Holy and Penitential Season of Lent: A Review"

On Wednesday, February 13, we will begin the season of Lent. The season of Lent is a forty day Christian festival beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. There are actually forty-six days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, but the six Sundays are not counted in Lent, since every Sunday is a "mini-Easter," a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil on the cross, which is validated by the empty tomb on Easter morning. This does not mean that the Sundays in Lent are Lent-free, however. They are not. The liturgy during Lent reminds us that we are in a season of repentance and fasting as we fast from the "Alleluias" (already begun in Pre-Lent) and the "Gloria in Excelsis." On Judica Sunday (Lent 5), we begin yet another liturgical fast, omitting the "Gloria Patri" as well. So, while the Sundays in Lent are not counted in Lent, they are still Lenten in nature. Don't get too hung up on this; the Church has never been interested in being consistent in the way she numbers days, seasons, and time.

Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Christian Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for Holy Baptism. Though we are not certain how it developed, by 350 A.D., the forty day season we still observe was already well established in the Church.

The early Christian Church took the season of Lent very seriously. It was observed as a penitential season in which Christians took stock of their sinful lives and recognized their desperate need for Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Lent was a time for fasting and repentance; a time for analyzing one's life in relation to God's commandments, realizing the profundity of one's sin and inability to stand before God on one's own. Thus, Lent was a time for self-awareness, which led to self-denial and sole reliance upon the sinless Son of God, who completely fulfilled the Law of God by living the perfect life sinful human beings are incapable of living and then, graciously and mercifully, submitted Himself to torture and execution on a cross to pay the price for the sins of all people of all time.

The Christian Church today observes the penitential season of Lent for the same reasons. Or, at least she should. Our sinful condition has not changed. We

are, from the moment we are conceived, sinners in desperate need of salvation (cf. Psalm 51:5). Likewise, the way of salvation has not changed. We cannot save ourselves. We are “dead in sin” (Rom. 5:12) and completely incapable of fulfilling God’s Holy Law, which demands perfect obedience to God in thought, word, and deed. Our only hope for salvation is to trust in Jesus Christ, the Holy and Righteous Son of God, who came down from heaven and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary in order to live the perfect life we cannot live and to die on the cross for our sins. There is no other way of salvation. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

So, because our sinful condition has not changed (and will not change) and because faith in Jesus Christ alone will remain the only way of salvation until the Last Day, the penitential season of Lent continues to provide Christians with an opportunity to recognize their sinfulness and to renew their trust in the Savior who takes their sin away. During this holy season, we journey with our Lord to the Cross, where He finishes our salvation by taking all the wrath and punishment of God we deserve for our sins upon Himself, paying for them all with His holy and precious blood. While our focus is on Christ and His Cross year round, it is during the season of Lent that this focus becomes all the more magnified.

But, sadly, many Christians fail to see Lent for what it is. Many do not observe the season at all. Many others see Lent as nothing more than a time for them to give up a personal vice or habit, or to deny themselves of something they love (“I’m giving up chocolate for Lent”). But, the season of Lent, which is not just an old, worn-out tradition the Church used to observe, calls for Christians to give up something far greater than a personal vice or habit. It calls for them to give up themselves and rely solely on Christ. That is not to say that there is anything wrong with giving up some personal vice or habit during Lent. If you want to fast from chocolate or soda or sugar in your coffee or whatever, fine. Go for it. As Dr. Luther says in the Small Catechism, “Fasting and bodily preparation are, indeed, fine outward training.” And, our Lord Jesus Himself expects His disciples to fast (cf. Matt. 6:16). But, such fasting is rather pointless and will do you not a bit of good if it is not accompanied by self-examination and repentance. In fact, fasting done purely for the sake of fasting, as if the act of giving this or that thing up during Lent is what the season is all about, can be very dangerous to your spiritual welfare, for if it is not anchored in self-examination and repentance, your self-denial can lead to self-righteousness, the very thing this holy and penitential season pleads with you to avoid.

Dearly beloved, I pray that you will allow the upcoming Lenten season to have its way with you. Heed its call to examine yourselves and recognize your sinfulness. As crazy as it sounds, this is the way to true Christian growth, for the more you realize how sinful you are, the more you will come to rely upon the One who took on your human flesh to live and die in your place, for your salvation. To that end, I leave you with the Ash Wednesday Address and Prayer, which will be the first words we hear as we embark upon the holy season of Lent:

Dear brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day the Church begins a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection. Our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope.

Let us pray that our dear Father in heaven, for the sake of His beloved Son and in the power of His Holy Spirit, might richly bless this Lententide for us so that we may come to Easter with glad hearts and keep the feast in sincerity and truth.



Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Messer

Lenten Discipline

The holy and penitential season of Lent provides Christians the opportunity to refocus, rededicate, and recommit themselves to Gospel-motivated holy living. There are six particular areas of discipline Christians can concentrate on during this holy season for self-examination and improvement: 1) Prayer, 2) Almsgiving, 3) Fasting, 4) Confession, 5) Commitment to be in the Word, 6) Service and Support. These disciplines are not given as works to be performed to merit God's favor or as a checklist Christians can check off so that they can feel better about themselves. God forbid! Rather, they are given as gifts Christians can unwrap to examine themselves and strive for improvement. I pray that each of us will prayerfully consider embracing these disciplines this Lententide.

To that end, there will be additional opportunities provided to the saints at Peace this year to exercise these disciplines. On **Ash Wednesday**, we will have an additional **Divine Service at Noon**. This will be the same Divine Service offered in the evening, which includes the Ash Wednesday Address, the Litany, the Imposition of Ashes, and Corporate Confession and Absolution. The only difference will be that the Noon Divine Service will be spoken, while the Divine Service in the evening will be sung. This additional Ash Wednesday Divine Service is being offered for those who may not wish to get out in the evening, although anyone wishing to attend both is certainly welcomed to do so.

The remainder of the **Wednesdays in Lent** will be full days set aside for Lenten Discipline. Each Wednesday will begin with the praying of **Matins at 7:30 a.m.**, will continue with the praying of **Sext at Noon**, followed by the praying of **Vespers at 5:30 p.m.**, our **Lenten Casserole Suppers at 6 p.m.**, and **Divine Service at 7 p.m.** We'll conclude each Wednesday with the praying of **Compline at 10:00 p.m.** (added this year). Matins, Sext, Vespers, and Compline on these Wednesdays will be short, spoken, Prayer Services. The Divine Service each Wednesday evening will be sung. For those desiring **Private Confession and Absolution**, Wednesdays would be a good day for that. Just let me know when and I'll be there (whether on Wednesdays or other days). Wednesdays would also be a good day to practice fasting.

We'll also observe several **Feast Days** during Lent with Divine Services on **Thursdays at Noon**. When we get to Holy Week, we'll follow the same schedule we've followed in years past, which includes multiple Services daily (full Holy Week Schedule will appear in next month's edition of *The Peace Post*).

I pray that these additional opportunities to be in our Lord's Holy House to pray, give, fast, confess, be in the Word, serve, support, and receive our Lord's Gifts, will be a blessing to you!

Your Servant in Christ,
Pastor Messer



Ceremonial Catechesis

Making the Sign of the Cross

Thus far in this series we have looked at the ceremonies of Elevating and Genuflecting at the Words of Institution, and at the ceremonial act of Bowing. This month, we take up what may be the most ancient of all the ceremonies we'll be considering throughout this series: Making the Sign of the Cross. Interestingly, this is also the ceremony that gets the most "That's too (Roman) Catholic" accusations hurled at it (again, refer to December's Ceremonial Catechesis article for a discussion on the "too Catholic" stuff).

Making the Sign of the Cross, or Crossing oneself, was practiced by Christians from the earliest centuries and almost assuredly goes back to apostolic times. We know that it was already a common ceremony used daily in A.D. 200, for the early Church Father Tertullian writes: "In all undertakings - when we enter a place or leave it; before we dress; before we bathe; when we take our meals; when we light the lamps in the evening; before we retire at night; when we sit down to read; before each task - we trace the sign of the cross on our foreheads." St. Augustine (A.D. 431) speaks of this custom many times in his sermons and letters. Indeed, this custom is referred to time and time again by the early Church Fathers (1st—4th centuries), long before Roman Catholicism ever arrived on the scene.

Making the Sign of the Cross is one of the ancient and traditional ceremonies that was most definitely retained by Luther and the Lutheran Church in the 16th century Reformation. Luther prescribed this ceremony in his Small Catechism under the heading: "How the Head of the Family Should Teach His Household to Bless Themselves in the Morning and in the Evening." He says, "In the morning when you get up (In the evening when you go to bed) you shall bless yourself with the sign of the holy cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Again in his Large Catechism he recommends that parents should instruct their children to cross themselves for the purpose of recalling their divine Protector in moments of danger, terror, and temptation. Luther was big on Making the Sign of the Cross, because Luther believed, taught, and confessed that the Cross is the whole of our salvation. Like St. Paul, Luther desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Indeed, of all the Christian denominations in existence today, the ceremony of Making the Sign of the Cross fits better within Lutheranism than any other, for Lutherans, like the apostles and early Church Fathers, center all their theology upon the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and all the Protestants, add works into the equation of salvation, to one degree or another, but Lutherans rest all their hope, faith, trust, and life on the Cross of Jesus, recognizing that He finished the work of their salvation completely with His sacrificial death in their stead.

This is what Making the Sign of the Cross means for Lutherans: I have been redeemed by Christ the Crucified. It is a reminder and a confession of what happened at Holy Baptism, when the pastor made the sign of the Cross both upon our foreheads and upon our hearts to mark us as redeemed by Christ the Crucified. Making the Sign of the Cross is not a show of being "holier than thou" or a superstition, as if doing it will merit blessings from God, but a declaration of being saved by Christ and a continual recognition that you remain in Christ by virtue of your Baptism into Christ and the ongoing cleansing you receive in Christ's Word and Supper. As the Lutheran theologian Paul H.D. Lang writes in *Ceremony and Celebration*:

The holy cross is the symbol of our salvation. We were signed with it when we were baptized. It is the sign by which the church blesses people and things. By it we become part of the wonderful history of our faith and companions in the company of the saints. It is right that we should make the sign of the cross frequently and that we should glory in it, saying with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14)

With all of that said, and before we get into the how and when of Making the Sign of the Cross, it must be made clear that this ceremony, like all others, is a matter of Christian liberty. As I noted last month in my article on bowing, our Lord Jesus Christ is not looking down upon us counting the times we practice this or that ceremony. Making the Sign of the Cross will not make you any more Christian or Lutheran or faithful or blessed than those who do not practice this. But, this cuts both ways, as it is equally true that not Making the Sign of the Cross will not make you any more Christian or Lutheran or faithful or blessed than those who do. I note this because many Lutherans in America were taught to believe that not Making the Sign of the Cross was a laudable custom that marked them as being distinctly Lutheran. Not Making the Sign of the Cross became a confession for them. How that tradition was ever allowed to gain a foothold among Lutherans is a true mystery to me, but it was, and it still has many lifelong Lutherans gun-shy and hesitant about this particular ceremony. Hopefully, that will change over time, since,

as mentioned above, this is one of the most ancient of all the laudable customs practiced by Christians. There is already a good indication that this is changing, as this ceremony is slowly but surely becoming more common among Lutherans again. But, even so, it will always remain a matter of Christian liberty. And, as you have already heard me say repeatedly, and will continue to hear me say repeatedly, the purpose of ceremonies is to teach the faithful what they need to know about Christ, not to prescribe a set of rules or works Christians must perform. What the faithful are taught with this ceremony is that the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the whole of our salvation and the source of all our spiritual blessings. When the Sign of the Cross is made, whether by pastor or people, let this be the proclamation: Christ has died for your sins upon the cross; in Baptism He shares that cross with you; because you share in His cross you are a child of God and are precious in His sight.

How to Make the Sign of the Cross

How one Makes the Sign of the Cross is a matter of Christian freedom, and there is no absolute right or wrong way to do it. But, the traditional way of Making the Sign of the Cross is done by placing the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand together as a reminder of the Holy Trinity, then bringing those fingers to the forehead, to the breast, and to the left and right shoulders in a continual motion. This is the way I do it, as this has the most ancient precedence. But, other Lutherans like to reverse the order, going from the right shoulder to the left, which is equally fine, as is the practice of some, who are left-handed, to use their left arm when doing it.

When to Make the Sign of the Cross

When one Makes the Sign of the Cross is also a matter of Christian freedom. Some do it more frequently than others, and that's perfectly okay. What follows here is a quick summary of all the places in the Divine Service where Making the Sign of the Cross has been traditionally practiced by Christians throughout the ages. Our *Lutheran Service Book* hymnal has been helpful in this regard, placing the symbol of the Cross (✝) at some of the appropriate and traditional places in the Divine Service. Those who worked on the hymnal were deliberate in their attempt to move us Lutherans back in the direction of restoring this ancient and laudable custom, but they also knew that those places they marked as appropriate and traditional places to Make the Sign of the Cross in the Divine Service were but a beginning. Thus, what follows is far more detailed and includes many other places where Making the Sign of the Cross is appropriate and traditional.

Upon entering or leaving the pew: As noted last month, many Lutherans will either bow their heads or bow at their waists, and some will even genuflect, toward the altar upon entering or leaving the pew. It is also a laudable custom to include Making the Sign of the Cross when entering or leaving the pew.

During the Processional and Recessional: As included in our Service Bulletins whenever we have a Processional and Recessional, it is a laudable custom to bow your head and Make the Sign of the Cross when the Processional Crucifix passes your pew, since the Crucifix is the symbol *par excellence* of your salvation.

At the Invocation: This is one of those occasions that is noted in our hymnal: ***“The sign of the cross ✝ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.”*** Here, and in all other places (e.g. the Absolution, the beginning and end of the sermon) where the full Invocation is spoken (In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit), it is certainly a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Cross, as it is the very Name of the Triune God that you received when you were adopted as God's own precious child at Holy Baptism. Also, do note the location of the Cross symbol (✝), which is placed right next to the word, “Son.” While some Christians like to begin Making the Sign of the Cross at the word, “Father,” going to the breast at the word, “Son,” and going from one shoulder to the other at the words, “Holy” and “Spirit,” the more traditional practice is to begin Making the Sign of the Cross at the word, “Son,” since it is the Person of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross for our sins. If you watch me, you'll notice that I do not begin to Make the Sign of the Cross either upon the people or upon myself (or upon items to be blessed) until the word, “Son.” But, again, as noted above, Christian freedom rules here.

At the conclusion of the Gloria in Excelsis: It is a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Cross at the conclusion of the Gloria in Excelsis, which, had the authors of LSB included a Cross symbol, would look like this: “. . . Thou only, O ✝ Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen” (Divine Service 3), or “. . . You alone are the Lord, You alone are the Most High, Jesus ✝ Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen” (Divine Service 1). The reason for this is because you have just sung with the angels about the glory of Christ's Incarnation and salvific work in the Gloria, and you are reminding yourself that His salvific work, completed at the Cross, has been applied to you.

At the Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Gospel: When the pastor says, “The Holy Gospel according to St. _____, the _____ chapter,” it is a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Cross, as what you are about to hear are the very Words of your Savior Jesus Christ. However, the traditional way of Making the Sign of the Cross at this point is a little different, as the Sign of the Cross is made with the hand closed, using the tip of the thumb to trace a Cross upon the forehead, then the lips,

and then the breast, as an indication that you pray that the Cross of Jesus Christ always dwell in your mind (forehead), proceed from your mouth (lips), and reside in your heart (breast).

During the Creeds: As discussed last month, during the Nicene Creed, it is a laudable custom to genuflect or bow at the words, “. . . and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man,” making the Sign of the Cross at the words, “and was made man.” The reason our Lord assumed our human flesh was to fulfill the Law in our place and then go to the Cross to pay the full price for all of our sins with His precious blood. Thus, it should be pretty apparent why this would be a most appropriate time for the faithful to Cross themselves. It is also appropriate and customary to Make the Sign of the Cross at the conclusion of both the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds, as indicated in the hymnal, since doing so is a reminder and confession that you were brought into the faith you just confessed by the fruits of Christ’s Cross.

At the Introduction and Conclusion of the Sermon: As the pastor invokes the full Name of our Triune God, it is a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Holy Cross for the reasons already mentioned in the section on the Invocation. Crossing yourself before and after the sermon is also a reminder and confession that it is Christ Himself who is preached to you, sustaining you in the faith.

During the Sanctus: At the words, “. . . Blessed is He,” it is appropriate and customary to Make the Sign of the Cross, for the One who cometh (comes) in the Name of the Lord is Jesus to give you the very Fruits of His Holy Cross in the Holy Supper.

During the Lord’s Prayer: I was kind of surprised that the hymnal committee didn’t include a Cross symbol at the appropriate place here, for Making the Sign of the Cross at the words, “. . . but ✠ deliver us from evil,” is a very ancient custom. But, again, I know that they were being carefully selective when choosing where to place that symbol, realizing that they were just beginning to re-introduce this ceremony among us. Anyway, this is a most appropriate time to Make the Sign of the Cross, for it is only Christ’s Cross that can, and does, deliver us from evil—the evil of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

During the Words of Institution: As marked in our hymnal, it is a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Cross at our Lord’s Words, “this is My ✠ body” and “this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood.” The pastor Makes the Sign of the Cross over the sacramental vessels at this time, indicating that what is contained in them is now the very Body and Blood our Lord Jesus gave and shed upon the Holy Cross for our salvation, and it is certainly appropriate for the faithful to Cross themselves in unison with the pastor.

At the Pax Domini: Many Lutherans Make the Sign of the Cross as the pastor holds the very Body and Blood of Jesus before them, reciting, “The peace of the ✠ Lord be with you always,” again indicating that it is this Body and this Blood that was given and shed upon the Cross for your salvation.

At the Distribution and Dismissal: It is a laudable custom to Make the Sign of the Cross after you have received both the Body and the Blood of Jesus at the altar, as well as when the pastor blesses you after all have communed with the Dismissal, as you have just received that which won your redemption.

At the Benediction: This is another place that is marked in our hymnal as a laudable time to Make the Sign of the Cross. Having been forgiven, fed, and strengthened by Christ in the Divine Service, you leave in His peace, as one redeemed by Him and ready to face the many crosses that come your way in the wilderness of this sinful world.

There may be other places and times when Christians choose to Make the Sign of the Cross during the Divine Service, but those listed here are the places and times when Christians from the days of the apostles forward traditionally did so. Hopefully, this will prove to be a helpful guide to you. To wrap things up, I’ll leave you with a nice summary, written by my friend and colleague, Pastor Todd Pepperkorn:

When we make the sign of the cross, what we are doing is A) Remembering our Baptism; B) Remembering Jesus’ death for our sins; C) Confessing to the world that we are not ashamed to be known as disciples of Jesus; and D) Holding up the cross of Christ as the central core of our identity.

Or, as I summarized earlier, what it should mean when a Lutheran Makes the Sign of the Cross is simply this: I have been redeemed by Christ the Crucified.

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Messer

2013 March for Life and LCMS Life Conference



The LCMS held its first annual “LCMS Life Conference” on January 25-26. The conference was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Crystal City, VA, located just minutes from Washington, D.C. I was blessed to attend this conference with my son, Andrea Elliott, her parents and brother, and hundreds of other Missouri Synod Lutherans.

We gathered for Divine Service at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, January 25 in a conference room within the Hyatt that had been converted into a sanctuary for the duration of the conference. Pr. Christopher Esget served as the Celebrant, Pr. Charles McClean served as the Liturgist/Lector, and Pr. Matthew Harrison, President of the LCMS, served as the Preacher. We were richly fed upon our Lord Jesus in Word and Sacrament and strengthened for the day which lay ahead of us.

After the Divine Service, we changed into warm clothes and headed for the Metro to take us over to the National Mall for the March for Life. Arriving at the Mall and seeing hundreds of thousands people gathered there (estimates have the group at around 500,000) was rather surreal and very moving. We made it to the Mall by about Noon and stood there with our fellow Lutherans, surrounded by people of all walks of life, listening to the Pro-Life speeches being given by several politicians and pro-life advocates. About 1:30 p.m., we began the March for Life.



It was cold. Very cold. But, we were warmed by the fact that so many were there to march with us and protest the legalized killing of babies for the past forty years in our country. I was amazed by the diversity I witnessed within the massive group of protestors. There were Christians of many different denominations. But, there were also Muslims, Jews, members of other world religions, and even atheists among us. There was even a group called “Gays for Life” marching alongside of us.

I mention this because this event is often billed by the media as an exclusively Christian event, as if

backward, old-fashioned Christians are the only ones who take a stand against legalized abortion. Not true. Not true at all. And, speaking of the media, where were they? Half a million American citizens march in protest up the hill of the National Mall, by the Capitol, and to the Supreme Court, and the media reports next to nothing about it. A football player is found to have had an imaginary girlfriend, and Beyoncé gets caught lip-synching at President Obama's Inauguration, and these things get massive media coverage for weeks, but almost nothing is mentioned about the March for Life. It is more than a little mind-boggling. But, I digress.



A couple of other things that kind of shocked me about the event: 1) The peacefulness of this massive group. Wow! Half a million citizens gathered tightly together, shuffling up the hill toward the Supreme Court, and there was nary a cross word among them, neither was there any pushing or shoving as the massive group merged from every side to fit down the narrow street leading up the hill; 2) The near non-existence of pro-abortion advocates protesting the March. I had expected to see many pro-abortion advocates there, lined up on either side of the street, protesting our protest. In years past, I had read media reports about large contingents of pro-abortion protestors attending the March and, while I knew that those reports had been largely overblown, having heard from friends who were there, I still expected to see more than I did. I did not see a single pro-abortion advocate until we finally made it to the Supreme Court. Then, I saw about five women standing in front of the Supreme Court holding signs that read, "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology." Five. That's it. I'm sure there were more than that. I heard from a few others that there were a couple other small groups of pro-abortion advocates standing in front of the Supreme Court, but I didn't see them. Whatever the case, the number of the pro-abortion advocates protesting the March was extremely minute.

I was blessed to be asked to help carry the "Lutherans For Life" banner during the March. I carried it



proudly for about 3/4 of the way up the hill, until someone else stepped up and wanted to take my place. When we finally made it to the Supreme Court, many of the LCMS contingent gathered together for prayer. After one of our pastors lead us in a moving prayer, we all prayed the Lord's Prayer together, which was heard by all who surrounded us, many of whom joined in, so that the prayer our Lord gave us to pray became increasingly louder right there in front of our nation's highest court—an experience I shall never forget!

We made it back to the Hyatt shortly

after 5:00 p.m., changed our clothes, and headed down for dinner. We were blessed to have Pr. Jonathan Fisk sit with our group over dinner, discussing with us his excellent new book, “Broken,” and other theological matters. After dinner, Pr. Fisk led a Bible Study for the youth in attendance at the conference (there were a great many more youth present than I had expected), which Aaron and I attended, along with Andrea’s mother, Diane. Great Bible Study! Then, everyone gathered for Evening Prayer and heard a most excellent sermon from one of my favorite seminary profs, Prof. John Pless.

Having the rest of the evening free, we gathered in the hotel lounge to discuss the day over some “Lutheran” beverages. We were joined by a good friend of mine, Pr. Ben Ball, and later by Pr. Fisk and Dr. Peter Scaer, a professor at our seminary in Fort Wayne. It was like the little Table Talks we have at our congregation (which I dearly wish more of you would attend) on steroids, as these great theological minds shared with us their thoughts on many subjects. What a fabulous way to end a most profound day!



Saturday morning began with the praying of Matins at 8:00 a.m., followed by breakfast, and then a host of excellent speakers throughout the day, including President Harrison, leaders of other Lutheran denominations, Pr. Fisk, Dr. Scaer, Mollie Ziegler Hemingway, Steve Macias, Scott Klusendorf, and was concluded with a panel discussion, which included LCMS Lutherans serving in a variety of vocations. I wish I had the time and space to delve into each of the presentations, but suffice it to say that we were given much to ponder about being pro-life in a culture that has increasingly become a “culture of death.” At the risk of over-simplifying things, the basic gist of the message received via all these excellent speakers was that we confront this “culture of death” through prayer, catechesis, raising our voices in the public square, and always holding forth the forgiveness, life, and salvation won by our Lord Jesus Christ for all sinners. We are a people who have “Joy over Life” in the midst of a culture that has increasingly devalued life over the years, and we offer that joy to all—the joy that comes from being redeemed and forgiven people in Christ—especially to those who have been hurt by and bear the scars of having had an abortion, as well as those who have participated in, or been affected by, the tragedy of abortion. We ended the conference early Saturday evening by praying Responsive Prayer 2 together, and hearing a tremendous sermon by Pr. Christopher Esget. A great and blessed way to conclude this excellent conference!

Anyway, I realize that this little report is greatly insufficient and woefully over-simplistic, but it will have to do for now. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with Aaron, Andrea and her family, and a great many Lutheran brothers and sisters from around the country at this first-ever LCMS Life Conference, and I hope that next year will see even more Lutherans gathering together for this important event. It would be great to have more members of our congregation join us next year, and I pray that some of you will prayerfully consider doing so.

In Christ,
Pastor Messer

PEACE NEWS & NOTES

SALT FUNDRAISER

Please support our Evangelism Committee by attending our...

Spaghetti Dinner & Peace Game Night!

Friday, February 22, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.



Menu

Spaghetti	Applesauce
Meat Sauce	Salad
Marinara Sauce	Cake
Garlic Bread	

A freewill offering will be taken to help support the work of SALT (suggested amounts: \$6/adult, \$3/child), but please do not feel like you cannot attend if you cannot give—everyone is welcome!

Following dinner we will have Game Night fun! There will be games and cards available to play and all in attendance should bring their favorite games also. It will be an informal time where all ages can come together and have fun. Please come and enjoy games and fellowship.

Lenten Midweek Suppers

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 13, we will be having suppers at 6:00 p.m., before the 7:00 p.m. Service. This year we will be having casseroles, salad and dessert for each of the Lenten meals. There will be a sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall so that you may choose what and when you would like to contribute to the meal. Please come and enjoy fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Please see Coaline Luplow if you have any questions.

SALT NEWS

Next SALT meeting will be held February 19, 2013, 6:30 p.m. at the church. We welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Please see our Meeting Minutes on the SALT Bulletin Board

SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS

This is an ongoing outreach for the SALT Committee. Please get in touch with Carolyn if you know of a person in the armed forces who is serving abroad. (email ckj1969@yahoo.com).

LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

We will meet on Monday, February 18 at 1:00 pm at the Farmer's Home Tavern in Downtown Hemlock (215 W. Saginaw Street). Please join us. The more the merrier!

Altar Flowers

The new altar flowers' chart for 2013 is posted on the Fellowship Hall bulletin board. If you would like to donate the flowers for a given month, please enter your name and a brief message that will be used for the bulletin insert. We purchase two arrangements for each month and they cost \$25 each. You may pay for one or both arrangements. It's your choice. Give your money to Carol Zeile or Coaline Luplow and be sure to indicate that it is for altar flowers. Please consider making a donation to help beautify our chancel. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Zeile.

PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd



FEBRUARY

Happy Birthday

1 Sierra Luplow	21 Coaline Luplow
3 Katie Logan-Dinco	24 Sally Pease
6 Dorothy Wisner	24 Melanie Penzien
12 Yvonne Elenbaas	24 Jeffrey Sager
15 Gabriel Blair	25 Craig Bebow
17 Gabriel Blair II	28 Rebekah Rodriguez

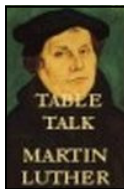
Happy Anniversary

28 Chad and Wanda Bebow

If we ever miss your birthday or anniversary, please let us know so that we can update our records.

Table Talk

Our Table Talks are informal and informative discussions with Pastor Messer on various topics decided by the group in attendance. Table Talk is a great time to take advantage of the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Our next Table Talk will be held on **Thursday, February 28 at 7:30 p.m.** Hope to see you there!



WEDNESDAYS DURING LENT

7:30 a.m.	Matins (Prayer Service)
12:00 p.m.	Sext (Prayer Service)
5:30 p.m.	Vespers (Prayer Service)
6:00 p.m.	Lenten Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Divine Service
10:00 p.m.	Compline (Prayer Serv.)

On Ash Wednesday, Divine Service at Noon and 7

The Lord Bless Our Lententide!

REMEMBERING OUR SHUT-INS

We all love to receive greetings from people who care for us. What better way to remember our shut-ins (when it is difficult for us to make a personal visit) than to send a note or a card periodically to let them know we are thinking of them and to give them something to look forward to in the mail, and especially at this time of the year! Please consider dropping a few lines to our shut-ins during the course of each month.

Marlene Wiltshire
Warwick Living Center
842 W. Warwick Dr.
Alma, MI 48801

Vivian Strom
Masonic Pathways
1200 Wright Ave.
Alma, MI 48801

Joan Burch
Schnepp Health Care Center
427 E. Washington
St. Louis, MI 48880

Also, while correspondence is not requested for him, please remember our dear brother in Christ, Dick Wisner, who is at Pine River in St. Louis, in your prayers.

The Peace Outdoor Sign

Have you noticed that the sign out front has been changing every week recently? Have you been reading it? Do you know the significance of the Bible passages on the sign? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you get points for being observant! The sign is being changed each week and the passage is an excerpt from the Gospel lesson for the coming Sunday. If you are in the neighborhood and get a chance to read it, you will get a sneak-peak of what is to come. And, maybe that little glimpse will somehow enhance your devotions during the week. Or maybe you will see it as you enter each Sunday and get a picture of the sermon you are about to hear. Either way, hopefully you will be a little better prepared to receive the gifts of the Service each week.

Ladies' Guild

Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies Guild will meet on **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6 at 12:00 pm.** with Carol Zeile as hostess. All Ladies of the congregation are invited to attend our Guild meetings. If you are a confirmed female member of Peace, you are a member of Guild. We would sincerely encourage you to participate and be an active member of the Guild.

PLC Women's Prayer Chain

The current list is posted on the Ladies' Guild Bulletin Board. All participants should have a copy. If you wish to be added to the prayer chain as a caller, or if you wish to have yourself or someone else "sent through the chain," please see or call Marlene Miller at 463-3710.

Altar Flowers

There is a flower calendar for 2013 is posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. We are now working toward ordering altar flower arrangements that coordinate with and enhance the liturgical colors of each Season of the Church year. Depending on the dates, flowers may not always be displayed for a calendar month. Some Seasons of the Church year cross calendar months. If you wish to place flowers on the altar sometime during the year, please put your name on the calendar. A bouquet costs \$25. We encourage two persons (families) to purchase flowers each month, one for each plant stand. Please make checks payable to Peace Lutheran Church, attach a note marked "Altar Flowers" and place in the Financial Secretary's envelope in the church office. Any questions may be directed to Carol Zeile or Coaline Luplow. Thank you for helping to beautify our chancel.

PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES GUILD



The Ladies' Guild is collecting the following items to send to Lutheran World Relief:

BABY CARE KIT

- 2- LIGHTWEIGHT COTTON T-SHIRTS
- 2 -LONG OR SHORT-SLEEVED GOWNS OR SLEEPERS (without feet)
- 2 -RECEIVING BLANKETS
- 4- CLOTH DIAPERS
- 1- JACKET, SWEATER OR SWEATSHIRT WITH A HOOD
- 2- PAIRS OF SOCKS
- 1- HAND TOWEL
- 2- BATH-SIZE BARS OF GENTLE SOAP
- 2- DIAPER PINS OR LG. SAFETY PINS

COLLECTION DATES:

January 1 - March 31

PEACE LADIES GUILD COOKBOOK

Cookbooks are available for \$13.00 and can be purchased during fellowship time from any member of the Guild. Please see Coaline Luplow with any questions.

LADIES GUILD SELLS CUTLERY

Rada cutlery is on display the 3rd Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall during the coffee hour., We have seven different items in stock: Paring Knife, Large Slicer Knife, Tomato Slicer, Serrated Steak Knife, Spatula, Pie Server, and Veggie Peeler. A product catalogue is available for viewing and orders may also be placed through the catalog.



February

Carolyn Johnson

- 3 S. Greening/M. Brown
- 10 Dorothy Trgina
- 17 M. Miller/C. Dargie
- 24 Carolyn Johnson

March

Altar Care

Carol Zeile

Coffee Hostesses

- 3 Jenny Baughman
- 10 Lisa Messer
- 17 Jo Wendt
- 24 Coaline Luplow
- 31 Easter

April

Coaline Luplow

- 7 Amy Blair
- 14 Cassie Tennant
- 21 Lois Ramsey
- 28 Y. Elenbaas/M. Girard



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

- Sunday School and Adult Bible Class (currently studying *Revelation*) is offered on **Sundays at 11:15 a.m.**

Together in the Word

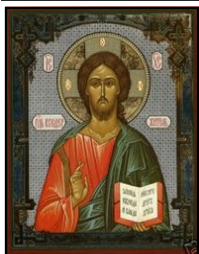
- We meet every **Thursday at 10:00 a.m.** We are currently studying *1 Kings*. All are welcome to join us!

Wednesday Bible Study

- Meets every Wednesday at 6 pm for a study of *Acts*.

First Communion and Confirmation Classes

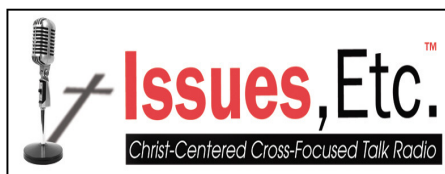
- First Communion Classes take place as arranged (see Pastor Messer if interested); Confirmation Class meets Thursdays, 6:00-7:30 p.m.



PASTOR MESSER IS BLOGGING!

www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

*Check in from time to time
to see what's on his mind.*



TALK RADIO FOR THE THINKING CHRISTIAN!

Listen to what you want, when you want, at:
www.issuesetc.org

PAROCHIAL REPORT

(as of 1/31/13)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 141; Confirmed - 118

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 0

Financial Report for 2012

Total Budgeted.....\$113,208.00

Total Receipts.....\$113,433.18

Difference.....+\$225.18

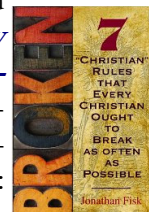
Peace Book Club

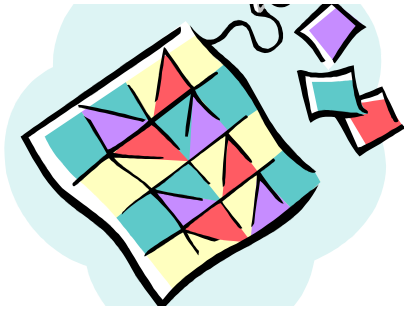
The book club met in January at the home of Yvonne Elenbaas. We enjoyed yummy treats and a lively discussion of our two books for the month; *An Advent for Religious Liberty: A Stephen Grant Novel* by Ray Keating and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* by Seth Grahame-Smith. Both of these authors are familiar to the Book Club members from previous selections.

Using our rating system, *Advent for Religious Liberty* received a 3. We all enjoy the Stephen Grant novels and this was no exception. The topic certainly is timely and generated discussion. This novel was shorter than some of the previous ones and that, perhaps, limited the plot and character development. We all look forward to the next time we can share in Pastor Grant's escapades.

Abraham Lincoln came in at a rank of 2.8. While we all thoroughly enjoyed Grahame-Smith's *Unholy Night, Lincoln* was a little too vampire heavy for most of us. The historical accuracy was enjoyable, but some of the fantasy was just a little too fanciful to be captivating. If you favor vampire novels, this might be the right one for you!

For our next meeting, the Book Club will read *Broken: 7 "Christian" Rules That Every Christian Ought to Break as Often as Possible* by Jonathan Fisk. Pastor Fisk serves as Associate Pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church, Naperville, Illinois. To quote from the book: "There are only two kinds of spirituality in the world. One is false, and one is true. But which is which?" This will be a fantastic book to discuss and is one that is sure to challenge us. It's 280 pages and very readable. Get a copy and join us on **February 12, 7:00 p.m.** at the home of Coaline Luplow. It promises to be a fun and educational evening.





Sewing/Knitting Group



The Ladies' Guild is starting a new activity to encourage everyone who enjoys sewing, knitting or any other handwork to come together for a monthly, informal day of working on projects for the church and other ministries. Projects will be up to the people who attend each time. It will be very informal, beginning at 10:00 a.m. on a Saturday and continuing for as long as attendees want to stay. There will be a break midday and all should bring a sack lunch. All ages are invited—the more the merrier. The next meeting will be on Saturday, **February 16, beginning at 10:00 a.m.**










Some supplies will be available. If you are currently working on a project, bring it with you.



Rev. Thomas C. Messer
(989) 463-3093—Home
pastor@peacealma.org
pastormesser@gmail.com
www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

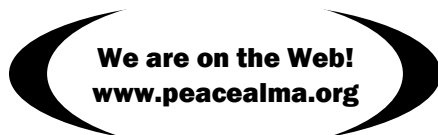
Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Drive
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 463-5754
contact@peacealma.org
www.peacealma.org

February 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Sexagesima 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 	4	5 7:00 pm - Council	6 12 pm - Ladies' Guild 6 pm Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Divine Service Pur. Of Mary / Pres. Of Lord (Obs.) 	7 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers 6 pm - Confirmation Class	8	9
10 Quinquagesima 8:00 am - Elders Meeting 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 	11	12 7:00 pm - Peace Book Club	13 Ash Wednesday (Lent begins) 12 pm - Divine Service 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 	14 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class	15	16 10:00 a.m. - Sewing/ Knitting Group
17 Invocabit (Lent 1) 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 	18 1:00 pm - Ladies' Lunch Bunch	19 6:30 pm - SALT meeting	20 Invocabit Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 10 pm - Compline	21 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Martin Luther (Obs.)</i> 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class	22 6:00 p.m. -Spaghetti Dinner and Game Night	23
24 Reminisce (Lent 2) 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 	25	26 7:00 pm - Stewardship Committee meeting	27 Reminisce Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 10 pm - Compline	28 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Matthias (Obs.)</i> 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class 7:30 pm - Table Talk	March 1	2
3 Oculi (Lent 3) 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 	4	5	6 Oculi Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 10 pm - Compline	7 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas</i> 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class	8	9

Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Dr.
Alma, MI 48801

Church: 989-463-5754
E-mail: contact@peacealma.org
Mary's Home: 989-463-3067
Pastor's Home: 989-463-3093
Pastor's Cell: 989-388-2037



The mission of Peace Lutheran Church is to welcome all people into the fellowship of God's love by proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and to nurture our members with God's Holy Word and Sacraments.

Serving in February

	ELDERS	ACOLYTES	USHERS	GREETERS
February				
3 - 9:30 a.m. <i>(Sexagesima)</i>	Gabriel Blair	Farah Blair Aaron Cross	Chris Brown John Lemmermann	Terry & Coaline Luplow
10 - 9:30 am <i>(Quinquagesima)</i>	Larry Elliott	Morgan Johnson Natalie Penzien	Daren Johnson Gabriel Blair	Lillian Manns/Lois Ramsey
13 - 7:00 pm <i>(Ash Wednesday)</i>	Larry Elliott	Aaron Messer Savannah Blair	Bill Hendrick Gary Miller	
17 - 9:30 am <i>Invocabit (Lent 1)</i>	Terry Luplow	Paige Harwager Myka Luplow	Troy Cross Vern Jakolat	Lisa Messer
24 - 9:30 am <i>Reminiscere (Lent 2)</i>	Miguel Ortiz	Paige Harwager Sierra Luplow	James Sager Jonathan Penzien	Helen Meyers
March				
3 - 9:30 am <i>Oculi (Lent 3)</i>	Gabriel Blair	Aaron Cross Morgan Johnson	Miguel Ortiz Tyrel Harwager	Penzien family