

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 Holiest Week of the Year"

In just a few weeks, we will enter the most important week in the Church Year. Holy Week is so named because, well, it is the holiest week of the year. Why? Because, during this week, we commemorate the Passion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by which He won salvation for us through His holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death. This is the week when we most fully meditate upon the mysterious and glorious work our Lord did in our place and on our behalf. This is the week when the reason for our celebration at Christmas finds its fulfillment, for the Baby born in Bethlehem came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and became man precisely to do what He does during Holy Week—to suffer and die on the cross to save us, and to rise on the third day to open for us the way to eternal life.

The whole world should stop everything during this week and take time to meditate upon its holy events. But, the whole world won't do that. This will just be another week for the world. Businesses will not close; sports events will not be put on hold; the television will not cease broadcasting its shows, and so on. The world will march through this week without giving its holy nature a second thought.

This is to be expected, of course. The world wants nothing to do with Christ and His salvation. There is nothing holy about this week in the eyes of the unbelieving, dead and dying world.

But, who would expect Christians to allow this week to come and go without embracing its holy nature? Indeed, how could Christians possibly let this week just pass them by? It seems unthinkable, and yet, this is exactly what many Christians do. They pay the holiest week of the year little attention, if any—and that is very sad.

I pray fervently that such will not be the case with the saints here at Peace. Do not let this week just pass you by, dear friends. You are Christians, and Holy Week is all about what your Lord and Savior did for you, so that you may receive the blessings which belong to Christians.

As has been our custom here for years now, we will have multiple Services daily during this Holiest of Weeks (see the full schedule on the next page). I pray that many will take advantage of them. At the very least, you should try to make the beautifully solemn Services on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. These set the stage for the joy of the Paschal Feast on Easter Sunday, and you will be blessed all the more having held the Passion and Death of Jesus in devout remembrance. Indeed, to that end, let the following prayer be said of the saints at Peace this Holy Week:

We implore You, O Lord, that Your abundant blessing may be upon Your people who have held the Passion and Death of Your Son in devout remembrance, that we may receive Your pardon and the gift of Your comfort, and may increase in faith and take hold of eternal salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Holy Week Schedule



Palm/Passion Sunday—March 24

9:30 a.m.—Divine Service w/Procession of Palms

To commemorate our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall and process into the nave together carrying palm branches and singing, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor." Divine Service with Holy Communion, including the responsive reading of the Passion of Our Lord According to St. Matthew, the Evangelist, will follow.



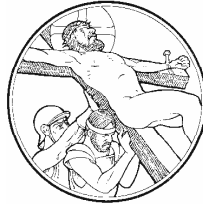
Holy Monday—March 25

7:30 a.m.—Matins

12:00 p.m.—Divine Service

5:30 p.m.—Vespers

7:00 p.m.—Divine Service



Holy Tuesday—March 26

7:30 a.m.—Matins

12:00 p.m.—Divine Service

5:30 p.m.—Vespers

7:00 p.m.—Divine Service



Holy Wednesday—March 27

7:30 a.m.—Matins

12:00 p.m.—Divine Service

5:30 p.m.—Vespers

7:00 p.m.—Divine Service

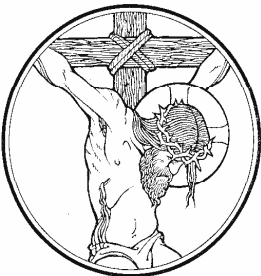
We will begin each day, throughout Holy Week, with the praying of Matins at 7:30 a.m. Matins will be spoken responsively, using the readings and prayers found in the Treasury of Daily Prayer, and will provide us the opportunity to begin each day during Holy Week prayerfully focused on our Lord and His Passion. Divine Service (spoken liturgy) will be held at both Noon and 7:00 p.m. (same Service) to allow everyone the opportunity to attend and receive the blessings of Word and Sacrament. We will also pray Vespers each day (Monday through Thursday) at 5:30 p.m.



Holy (Maundy) Thursday—March 28

7:30 a.m.—Matins 12:00 p.m.—Divine Service 5:30 p.m.—Vespers 7:00 p.m.—Divine Service

The focus on this Most Holy Day is on the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood, which He instituted on the night when He was betrayed. The Divine Service at 7:00 p.m. will be different from the spoken Divine Service at Noon, and will include the "Christian Questions with Their Answers," written by Dr. Luther for those who intend to go to the Sacrament, and will conclude with the Stripping of the Altar while Psalm 22 is being read.



Good Friday—March 29

7:30 a.m.—Matins

12:00 p.m.—Divine Service

3:00 p.m.—Devotion at the
Sacred Hour

7:30 p.m.—Tenebrae

The Sacred Noonday Good Friday Service will focus on the Seven Words of Christ from the Holy Cross, and will include the Procession of the Sacred Cross and the Distribution of Holy Communion. A short devotion will take place at the Sacred Hour (3:00 p.m.) in which our Lord gave up His Spirit and died. The evening Tenebrae Service will be completely different from the Noon Service. Please note the later start time, which will allow it to be a little darker in the church for the dramatic conclusion to this Most Holy and deeply profound Service.



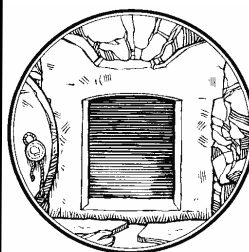
Holy Saturday—March 30

7:30 a.m.—Matins

10:00 a.m.—Divine Service

7:00 p.m.—Easter Vigil

After Holy Saturday Divine Service at 10:00 a.m., we will decorate the Church for Easter. Then, we will gather together at 7:00 p.m. for Easter Vigil, one of the most ancient and special Services within the tradition of the Holy Church.



Easter Sunday—March 31

7:30 a.m.—Matins

8:30 a.m.—Easter Breakfast

9:30 a.m.—Divine Service

With the Easter Vigil in place, there will be no Sunrise Service, but we will pray Matins at 7:30 a.m. Easter Breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m., and the glorious and celebratory Festival of the Resurrection of our Lord will be held at 9:30 a.m.

**HE IS RISEN!
HE IS RISEN INDEED!**



St. Romanos the Melodist

“Again to Paradise”

Pilate fixed three crosses on Golgotha: two for the thieves, and one for the Giver of life. When Hell saw it, he said to those below, “My ministers and powers, who has fixed a nail in my heart? A wooden lance has suddenly pierced me and I am being torn apart! My insides are in pain, my belly in agony, my senses make my spirit tremble, and I am compelled to disgorge Adam and Adam’s race. All men were given to me by the Garden’s tree—but now a tree is bringing them back again to Paradise.”

When he heard this, Satan, the cunning serpent ran crawling and said, “What is it, hell? Why do you groan for no reason? Why produce these wailings? This Tree, at which you tremble, I carpentered up there for Mary’s Child. I suggested it to his enemies for our advantage, for it is a Cross, to which I have nailed Christ, wishing by a tree to do away with the second Adam, just as I did away with the first one. So do not be afraid. It is dry and barren. It will not harm you. Keep hold of those you have. Of those we rule, not one will escape again to Paradise.”

Hell replied to Satan, “You have lost your senses—you, the cunning snake of old! All your wisdom has been swallowed up by the cross, and you have been caught in your own snare. Lift up your eyes and see that you have fallen into the pit you dug! Behold that Tree, which you call dry and barren, bears fruit: a thief tasted it and has become heir to the good things of Eden. Moses’ rod led the people out of Egypt, but this tree brings mankind back again to Paradise.”

Satan answered, “Wretched hell—cease this cowardly talk! Your words reveal your thoughts. Are you afraid of a cross and of the Crucified? Not one of your words has shaken me, for these deeds are part of my plan. I will also open a grave and entomb Christ, so that you may enjoy your cowardice doubly—from his tomb as well as from his cross. When I see you, I will mock you. For when Christ is buried I will come to you and say, “Who now brings Adam back again to Paradise?”

Then hell spoke back, “Now is the moment for you to listen, Satan. Now you will see the power of the Cross and the great authority of the Crucified. For you, the cross is folly. But the world sees it as a throne, on which, as though seated, Jesus is nailed and hears the thief cry to him, ‘Lord, remember me in your kingdom.’ Listen now as he answers, kingly, ‘Today, poor beggar, you will reign with me. For with me, you will go in again to Paradise.’”

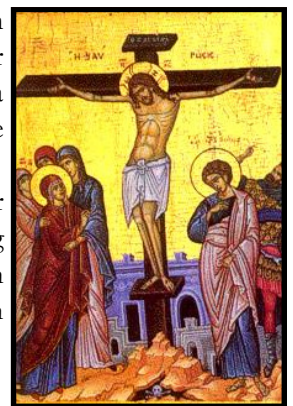
At these words, Satan began to wilt, and what he heard he saw: a thief witnessing to Christ crucified. And so, amazed, he struck his breast and said, “Christ did not answer his accusers, and yet he speaks to a thief? To Pilate he never spoke a word; but now he addresses a murderer, saying, “Come, live in pleasure”? What is this? Who has seen words or deeds done by this thief, by means of which he goes again to Paradise?

Again the devil called out, “Receive me, Hell. I turn to you; I submit to your views, I, who did not believe them. I saw the Tree at which you shuddered, made red with blood and water. And I shuddered, not, I tell you, at the blood, but at the water. For the blood shows Jesus’ slaughter, but the water shows his life, for life has gushed from his side. For it was not the first but the second Adam who carried Eve, the mother of all the living, again to Paradise.”

Now Hell and Satan cried out together, “Let us lament as we see the Tree which we planted transformed into a holy trunk, beneath which thieves, murderers, tax collectors and harlots will find shelter, and reap sweet fruit from what seemed barren. For they cling to the Cross as the Tree of Life. Pressed against it and swimming, through it they escape, and come again as to a harbor, again to Paradise.”

Hell said to Satan, “Swear, tyrant, finally to crucify no one.” And Satan replied, “You take an oath to kill no one. We have had our experience, let us draw back our hand. Let neither of us ever again tyrannize the race of Adam, for it has been sealed by the Cross, it has been given life, like a treasure of a precious pearl in a fragile pot; life, which a thief, well-suited to his trade, took on the Cross. For stealing he was nailed up to die ; and having thieved he was called again to Paradise.”

O most high and glorious, God of fathers and of youths, your willing outrage has become our honor. For in your Cross, we all may boast. To it we have nailed our hearts, that on it we may hang our instruments and sing to you, the Lord of all, from the songs of Zion. The ship from Tarshish once brought gold to Solomon; but to us your Tree gives back, every day and every moment, wealth beyond price. For it brings us all again to Paradise.





The Easter Resurrection Homily **of**

St. John Chrysostom, a.k.a. “Golden Mouth”

This classic Paschal or Easter Sermon on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is from Saint John Chrysostom, fifth century early church father and one of the greatest preachers of all time. This homily for Holy Pascha exhorts all, even those who have not kept the Lenten fast, to rejoice and enter into the Easter feast of the resurrection.

Let all Pious men and all lovers of God rejoice in the splendor of this feast; let the wise servants blissfully enter into the joy of their Lord; let those who have borne the burden of Lent now receive their pay, and those who have toiled since the first hour, let them now receive their due reward; let any who came after the third hour be grateful to join in the feast, and those who may have come after the sixth, let them not be afraid of being too late, for the Lord is gracious and He receives the last even as the first. He gives rest to him who comes on the eleventh hour as well as to him who has toiled since the first: yes, He has pity on

the last and He serves the first; He rewards the one and is generous to the other; he repays the deed and praises the effort.

Come you all: enter into the joy of your Lord. You the first and you the last, receive alike your reward; you rich and you poor, dance together; you sober and you weaklings, celebrate the day; you who have kept the fast and you who have not, rejoice today. The table is richly loaded: enjoy its royal banquet. The calf is a fatted one: let no one go away hungry. All of you enjoy the banquet of faith; all of you receive the riches of his goodness.

Let no one grieve over his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed; let no one weep over his sins, for pardon has shone from the grave; let no one fear death, for the death of our Savior has set us free: He has destroyed it by enduring it, He has despoiled Hades by going down into its kingdom, He has angered it by allowing it to taste of his flesh.

When Isaiah foresaw all this, he cried out: "O Hades, you have been angered by encountering Him in the nether world." Hades is angered because frustrated, it is angered because it has been mocked, it is angered because it has been destroyed, it is angered because it has been reduced to naught, it is angered because it is now captive. It seized a body, and lo! it discovered God; it seized earth, and, behold! it encountered heaven; it seized the visible, and was overcome by the invisible.





Ceremonial Catechesis

On the Use of Incense

Back in 1998, I was blessed to be in a position to purchase a 10-day journey to the Holy Land for my grandma and me. She and I had often talked about how it was our dream to one day visit Israel and walk in the footsteps of our Lord. And so, when I saw an advertisement posted on the bulletin board at my home congregation from a nearby LCMS congregation that was organizing a Holy Land trip, I inquired about it, put a deposit on it, worked lots of overtime during the summer, and paid it off. I surprised my grandma with it at Christmas, and we were off on our journey in January, 1999.

What does any of that have to do with the use of incense? Well, it was on that trip that I first experienced the use of incense in the church. There are churches built at just about every historic site in Israel, marking the travels of our Lord throughout His earthly pilgrimage. In every one of these churches, incense is used. You can't miss it. Even if incense is not being burned when you walk into these churches, the smell from its continued use is very noticeable. Even the sole Lutheran church in Jerusalem burns incense regularly.

I was very intrigued by this. So was my grandma and the rest of the group with us. It seemed odd to all of us, being the bunch of Lutherans we were, but, at the same time, it was beautiful. The churches throughout the Holy Land were all marked with this smell. If there had been a blind person with us on the trip, he/she would have known when we were in a church and when we weren't. I remember asking the Lutheran pastor who was leading our group about it and having him tell me, "This is what church smells like throughout the world, except among Protestants in America." I remember going back to our hotel room one night midway through the trip and looking incense up in the concordance of the Study Bible I had brought with me, and reading all the passages where the Lord commands the use of incense in the Tabernacle/Temple, and how the prayers of the saints were said to ascend to the Lord as incense in Revelation. Still a novice theologian, and having yet to learn church history, and especially the history of Lutheranism in America, I began wondering why in the world Lutherans weren't using incense back home. When I returned home, I asked my pastor about this and he gave me that all too familiar answer, "That's too Roman Catholic." I told him that I didn't understand that, as it wasn't just Roman Catholic churches in the Holy Land that used incense—all the churches did, even the Lutheran church. He said, "Well, yeah, but that's the Holy Land. We're here in America, and Lutherans decided long ago here that they didn't want to give the impression that they were like Roman Catholics, so they stopped using incense."

He's right. Now that I've spent years studying the history of Lutheranism in America, along with the broader history of the church catholic throughout the world, that is the reason. Like so many other beautiful, ancient ceremonies and practices, the use of incense among Lutherans was discontinued in America for no other reason than to distinguish themselves from Roman Catholics. The discontinued use of incense, like so many other ceremonies and practices, is a distinctly American phenomenon. American Lutherans would probably be shocked if they traveled anywhere else in the world and saw their fellow Lutherans using incense, but that is precisely what they would see in many places. Why? Because the use of incense is thoroughly Biblical and historical. There are no Biblical or theological reasons for Lutherans not to use incense. None. Which is why you will never hear a single Lutheran who is opposed to the use of incense give a Biblical or theological reason for that opposition. The only reasons you will ever hear are: 1) That's too Roman Catholic, 2) I don't like it, and 3) Some people are allergic to incense. The first reason is false, as is proven not only by history, but by current practice throughout the world. The second reason is meaningless, as what happens in Christ's church shouldn't depend upon what we may like or not like. The third reason is highly suspect, as the incense normally used in churches is free of any allergens.

Nevertheless, whether these reasons are valid or not, it is doubtful that the use of incense among Lutherans in America will ever become commonplace again. It is considered by many to be the absolute extreme in ceremonial, the highest of "High Church," and many simply have no interest in learning why it may be a good thing to reintroduce the use of incense. And, besides all of that, it is true that using incense is not necessary. We don't have to use incense. We are free in Christ to use or

not to use incense. Thus, this particular ceremony will have a very difficult time overcoming 150 years of American Lutheranism, which has become pretty cemented in the belief that Lutherans don't use incense, even though that belief is bogus.

At the same time, the use of incense is being reintroduced among Lutherans in many places and, while it may never again become commonplace among Lutherans in America, it will certainly find a home in more of our congregations over time. Both of our seminaries have begun using incense on High Feast Days as a sort of reintroduction to the practice. Theological articles have been, and will continue to be, written to educate people on the proper use of incense, and the Biblical, historical, and theological reasons for its use. I still don't think that these efforts will ever result in the use of incense becoming commonplace on Sunday mornings in our congregations here in America, but what I hope they will do is remove the false stigma and taboo which many unknowing Lutherans associate with the use of incense.

The purpose of the remainder of this article is to present the Biblical, historical, and theological reasons for the use of incense. At Peace, we've been using incense on Feast Days and Prayer Services for several years. In the fall of 2011, we were blessed to have a new thurible (that's the censer that hangs on a chain), boat and spoon (the boat is the small container where the incense is kept) donated for our use. Up until we received those, the incense we burned during Feast Days and Prayer Services was stationary upon the altar, and most often incense sticks were used, rather than the pure incense grains and charcoal we use now.

Before I begin, did you ever take a close look at the wallpaper behind our altar? I remember the first time I walked into our church back in 2005 and looked around. One of the first things I noticed was the symbol of incense burning in a thurible (censer) on that wallpaper. I thought it was a bit ironic for a Lutheran congregation to have such a symbol behind the altar, since I knew that incense wasn't being used in many Lutheran congregations, including ours. Still, it is a perfectly appropriate symbol to have, as you'll hopefully discover by the points made here.

Incense Is Commanded by the LORD and Marks His Presence Among His People

When the LORD leads the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert of Sinai, He not only gives them His Laws and forms them into a nation, He also gives them detailed instructions about how, where, and why He is to be worshiped among them. The entire second half of Exodus is devoted almost exclusively to the LORD's instructions on building the Tabernacle and what is to happen within that place of worship. The whole book of Leviticus is devoted to further expanding upon these instructions. The whole point of all of this is that the LORD is a God who locates Himself among His people. He tells them exactly where He will be among them, and tells them exactly how He is to be worshiped. He leaves nothing to the whims or opinions of the Israelites. He lays it all out before them in vivid detail.

Incense is a huge factor in all this. The LORD commands them to construct an altar overlaid with pure gold that will be exclusively devoted to the continual burning of incense within the Tabernacle (see Ex. 30). This altar of incense was placed right in front of the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant was placed, which is the very place of the LORD's Presence among them. The incense was used to mark the Presence of the LORD among them. By its sight and by its smell, the Israelites knew that their LORD was right there in their midst. Where that incense was, there was the LORD. Where the LORD is, His holiness dwells. Thus, incense and the holiness of the LORD's Presence went hand in hand.

Later, when the Temple is finally built in Jerusalem (and rebuilt again later), it followed the same pattern of the Tabernacle and included the pure gold altar of incense before the veil, again marking the LORD's Presence among them. The account of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, we read about in Luke 1, includes the altar of incense. The lot fell upon Zechariah, who was a priest, to enter the Holy Place and place the incense on the altar to be burned and mark the Presence of the LORD.

Then, we have the account of the wise magi from the east coming to pay homage to our Infant Lord Jesus Christ. One of the gifts they present to Him is frankincense. This is not by coincidence. The reason for this is that the very same LORD whose Presence was marked by incense in the Tabernacle/Temple is now Present in the Infant Flesh of Jesus. Thus, the incense. Where the LORD is, there is incense to mark His Presence.

For this reason, the Christian Church incorporated the use of incense in her worship from the beginning. She believes that her Lord Jesus Christ is Present among her in the Divine Service. Indeed, He comes among His people with His very Body and

Blood in the Holy Supper. Incense was used, then, to mark the Presence of Jesus.

This gets at something that a lot of people don't realize, namely that New Testament worship incorporates much of what constituted Old Testament worship. It is not as though God has changed. What He has done is bring to fulfillment that which foreshadowed the coming of Christ in the Old Testament. He still locates Himself among His people, as He has always done, but now His location is not in a physical Temple in Jerusalem, but wherever two or more Christians are gathered for Divine Service in Jesus' Name. The Church realized this very early on, which is why she designed her churches to reflect the Tabernacle/Temple, the main difference being that there is no longer any veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Through Christ, all Christians are priests and have access to the Holy of Holies, which is the sanctuary in a church, where the holy altar is located. Animal sacrifices are no longer necessary, since the once-for-all Lamb of God has been sacrificed. It is around that sacrifice that the faithful gather, and that sacrifice is located upon the holy altar, which takes the place of the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament. The lid upon the ark of the covenant was called the mercy seat, and we're told in the New Testament that the mercy seat is Jesus Christ Himself. So, the holy altar is the place of our Lord's Presence among us, and incense has always been used to mark the Lord's Presence.

Interestingly, where the use of incense has been discontinued among Lutherans, so has reverence for the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Supper. Remember, the purpose of ceremonies is to teach the faithful what they need to know about Christ. The LORD Himself established the ceremonial use of incense to teach His people to recognize His Presence among them. Indeed, as they saw the smoke visibly with their eyes and smelled the aroma of the incense with their noses, these became physical reminders that their LORD was Present among them, which is exactly what the LORD wanted. It should be no surprise that the more and more we have stripped away the salutary ceremonies surrounding the Holy Supper (elevating and genuflecting, the use of proper vessels, the reverent consumption of what remains of our Lord's Body and Blood, the discarding of the holy liturgy, the use of incense, and the like), the less and less Lutherans have revered this Holy Sacrament over the years. The Lord's Supper became for many Lutherans just something we did once in a while, rather than the beating heart of the Church's worship life, and the ever-present reminder of our Lord's awesome Presence in our midst. Indeed, the more we discarded these ancient ceremonies that were instituted to teach the people about the Presence of Christ among us and replaced them with the ceremonies of the Protestants in America, who DO NOT BELIEVE that our Lord Jesus Christ is Present among us, the more our people began adopting beliefs that were more in line with Protestant beliefs than with our Lutheran beliefs.

Other Reasons for the Use of Incense

Besides the fact that the use of incense marks the Lord's Presence among us, which is the biggest reason by far to use incense, there are other Biblical and theological reasons for its use:

1. **Incense represents the prayers of the church:** As the Psalmist says, "Let my prayer rise before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). Not only does incense mark the Presence of our Lord, but it represents our prayers, which are a pleasing aroma to our Lord. St. John gets to see the reality of this in Revelation. As he witnesses what's going on in the Heavenly Throne Room, he sees the angels holding golden bowls full of incense, which, he's told, are the prayers of the saints (cf. Rev. 5:8; 8:4). So it is that when incense is used in the Divine Service, it is used both to cense the holy altar, marking our Lord's Presence among us, but also to represent and accompany our prayers to our Present Lord. This is also why incense is used even during Prayer Services (Matins, Sext, Vespers, Compline, etc.), which do not have the Lord's Supper, for our Lord is still Present among us in those Services and our prayers are brought to Him with incense.
2. **Incense is mixed with the Sacrifice:** Not only was incense burned to mark the LORD's Presence in the Old Testament, but it was also mixed in with the sacrifices made and burned together with them (cf. Lev. 6:15; 24:5-7). In other words, incense was part and parcel with the Sacrificial System established by the LORD to atone for the sins of the people. Thus, it is perfectly appropriate for incense to be used in connection with the once-for-all Sacrifice of Christ in the Holy Supper.
3. **Incense is used for purification and protection:** Another reason the LORD commanded the use of incense was to purify and protect the high priest as he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Either he used that incense or he would die! (cf. Lev. 16:12-13). Incense is also spoken of as purifying and protecting the rest of the Israelites (e.g. Num. 16:17-18, 46-48). So it is that the Church also began the practice of censing the people before they approached the holy altar in the Divine Service, primarily to symbolize purification, as the threat of not being protected by incense has been removed by the coming of Christ. Thus, the censing of the people is done with the prayer that they approach the holy altar in repentance and faith, i.e. in purity.

4. Incense allows all five senses to be used in worship: This might seem like an insignificant point, but it's not. Our Lord designed holy worship so that all the senses—our whole person—would be involved. As you read through the detailed and vivid instruction He gave for the building of the Tabernacle and the how and why of worship, you simply cannot miss the very deliberate intent on His part to involve all of our senses. The beauty of the Tabernacle (and later, Temple), along with all of its art and furnishings, for which no expense was spared, engaged the sense of sight. The prayers and preaching heard engaged the sense of hearing. The physical aspect of the bringing of animals to be sacrificed, and their sacrifices, engaged the sense of touch. The ceremonial eating of the sacrifices engaged the sense of taste. And, of course, the burning of the incense engaged both the sense of sight and of smell. It is very clear that our LORD desired that our whole person be engaged in worship. As I noted at the outset of this article, during my trip to the Holy Land, you knew you were in a church, where the Lord's Presence dwells, simply by the smell. It was unmistakable, and rather beautiful.

Hopefully, that provides you with a brief introduction as to the Biblical, theological, and historical reasons for the use of incense. I read a quote in a book about the history of various ceremonies in the church a few years back that stated, "Where God is among men, there has always been incense." It was noted that this was a very familiar quote known in the Church for hundreds of years, but that the source of the quote had long been lost. So, we don't know who first spoke that quote, but given the revelation we have in Holy Scripture, we know that it's true. Even if Christians choose not to burn incense during Divine Service, the presence of incense is still there, for what Christians can't see with their eyes is the Heavenly Throne Room that is there in their midst, whether they realize it or not, and incense is most assuredly being burned there. Where our God is, there is incense. Always has been, always will be.

With all that said, we must remember that the use of incense is a ceremony that does not have to be employed in Christian worship. It has deep Biblical, theological, and historical roots, to be sure, as noted above, but these do not make it a matter of necessity. Whether or not incense is used, our Lord Jesus Christ is Present among us in His Word and Supper to bestow to us His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Given the history of Lutheranism in America, great caution must be exercised before the reintroduction of ceremonies like this, so that the faithful are properly catechized and prepared to receive them, rather than unnecessarily turned away from the Lord and His gifts. We did not begin using incense at Peace until a few years into my service as pastor here, and only after lots of teaching and discussion about it. And, we have kept our use of incense limited to the Feast Days and Prayer Services we offer throughout the year. We have members who would like for us to expand our usage to include every Sunday, and others who would rather us not use it at all. I think the balance we've struck in our usage thus far is a good one, and whether or not we'll ever expand upon that remains to be seen.

There will always be ceremonies like this that are liked by some and not by others. Such is life in the Church Militant! I completely understand the impetus many Lutherans have to dismiss the use of incense outright. Before I took that trip to the Holy Land fourteen years ago, I was the same way, believing, "Lutherans don't use incense!" Of course, I had lots of beliefs along those lines when it came to ceremonial matters. But, then I studied and learned that this is just another one of those beautiful, ancient, very Biblical ceremonies that Lutherans discarded for no good reason, and I'd challenge Lutherans to study the matter for themselves and prove otherwise. As I said above, I have yet to hear anyone put forth Biblical or theological reasons to avoid the use of incense, and in my conversations with many other Lutheran pastors, neither have they. The three reasons are always the ones I mentioned before: 1) It's too Roman Catholic, 2) I don't like it, and 3) Some are allergic. The only one of these three reasons that may hold any water is the third, but given the fact that the incense used is pure and almost entirely free of any allergens, that would have to be one very severe allergy to have. And, even if someone did have such a severe allergy, it could almost assuredly be relieved simply by sitting further toward the back of the nave during Divine Service. But, the Roman Catholic thing? No. The Israelites weren't Roman Catholics, and neither were the Christians in both the East and the West for the first eight hundred or so years of the church's history, and burning incense was part and parcel of their worship. And, the not liking it thing? Can you imagine the Israelites telling the LORD, "Sorry, we'll do all the other stuff You want us to do, but we're not going to burn incense, because we don't like it"? Not liking something is never a valid reason for Christians to use to reject something in the church's worship life. Whether we like it or not, our Lord is a big fan of incense, and we'll all be subjected to its continued use in heaven, as the prayers of the saints rise before our Lord on His throne as a pleasing aroma.

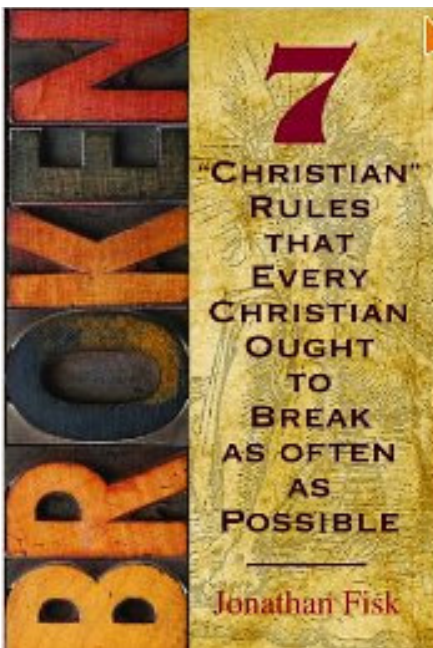
Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Messer

A Couple of Great Resources for Lutherans



Around the Word is a new theological journal for the curious Christian. With articles ranging from “Sanctification and Suffering” to a review of *Les Misérables*, along with three months worth of daily and weekly devotions to help families gather around the Word, there is something in these 108 pages for everyone. All Lutherans should seriously consider purchasing this excellent quarterly journal. To do so, go to www.aroundthewordjournal.com, where you can purchase an electronic pdf version for only \$5, or a print-on-demand version that will be sent right to your home for \$10. There is a copy of the print-on-demand version of the recently released Spring 2013 edition, which is the very first edition of this journal, on the table in our fellowship hall for you to review. Please take a look at it, but please return it to the table so that others can look at it as well. I cannot recommend this journal highly enough. It is outstanding, far exceeding my expectations for it. Please do check it!



“Broken”

Written by Pr. Jonathan Fisk, “Broken” is the best book I’ve read to date in tackling the many false notions of spirituality that have overtaken the Christian Church in America. He carefully explains, using modern day language and analogies, how all the lies that present themselves as Christianity among us all find their root in the one lie of the devil, which is always told for one purpose and one purpose only—to take our focus off of Jesus. What is that one lie of the devil, and what are the various ways in which he dupes Christians into believing it? Well, you’ll just have to read the book to find out! And, you should. All of you. Seriously, there hasn’t been a book this important come on the scene in some time. You can order it at www.cph.org, or search for it at Amazon or other book sellers. You really will want to break the seven rules put forth in this book as often as possible. All Christians should!

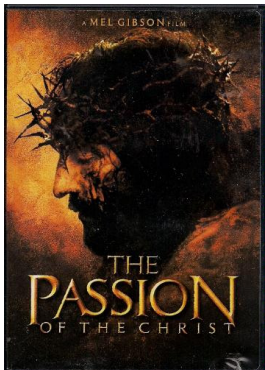
PEACE NEWS & NOTES

HOLY WEEK AND LAMENTATIONS

As noted on our Holy Week schedule, we'll begin each day praying Matins at 7:30 a.m. We started this a few years ago and it has been a real blessing to those who have been able to attend. There is just nothing like beginning each day of Holy Week in the Lord's House in quiet prayer and devotion. And, what makes our Holy Week Matins all the more special is the fact that we work our way through the entire book of Lamentations during the week. The laments recorded by the prophet Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem juxtaposed with the events of Holy Week are a spiritual treasure trove and really put things in their proper perspective. I would dearly love to have more of you join us to pray Matins this year, but if you are not able to do so, I encourage you to read through Lamentations during the week. Here is the schedule we follow:

Holy Monday **Lamentations 1:1-22**
Holy Tuesday **Lamentations 2:1-22**
Holy Wednesday **Lamentations 3:1-33**
Holy Thursday **Lamentations 3:34-66**
Good Friday **Lamentations 4:1-22**
Holy Saturday **Lamentations 5:1-22**

"This Book [Lamentations] shows us the consequence of ignoring the confession of our sins and daily repentance. Likewise, it firmly proclaims that the Lord's steadfast love never ceases, even amid the worst sufferings." (T LSB, p. 1295)



Please join us on Friday, March 22 for our annual viewing of "The Passion of the Christ." This has become a Lenten tradition for us at Peace, and it is the perfect way to prepare for our entrance into Holy

Week. Pizza and snacks will be served at 6:30 p.m., followed by the movie at 7:00 p.m. No matter how many times you watch this movie, it proves to be a vivid reminder of what our Lord Jesus did for us to win our salvation. Hope you'll consider joining us!

SALT NEWS

Next SALT meeting will be held March 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).

SECOND TIME AROUND SALE

SALT and the Ladies' Guild are planning another Second Time Around Sale. The dates are July 12 and 13. Please begin setting aside any items that you might like to donate to the sale. As the date gets closer, we will let you know when you can begin to bring items to the church.

Thanks for your support!

DON'T FORGET OUR MISSION BOX, LOCATED ON THE WALL BY THE BROCHURE TABLE IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL. DONATIONS ARE ACCEPTED YEAR ROUND, AND WE'LL SEND THEM OUT QUARTERLY TO THE VARIOUS MISSIONS WE SUPPORT. QUESTIONS? SEE CASSIE TENNANT OR PASTOR MESSER.

Lenten Midweek Suppers

During Lent we are having suppers at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, right after Vespers and before the 7:00 p.m. Divine Service. This year we will be having casseroles, salad and dessert for each of the Lenten meals. There is 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. See Coaline Luplow if you have any questions.

PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd



MARCH

Happy Birthday

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Tyrel Harwager | 20 Barbara Komar |
| 1 Zane Luplow | 22 Ken Hill |
| 5 Tina Schafer | 27 Ashleigh Rodriguez |
| 8 Ariel Row | 28 Donna Bebow |
| 11 Bob Wendt | 31 Debra Penzien |
| 20 Morgan Johnson | |

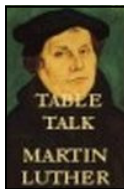
Happy Anniversary

19 Miguel and Sue Ortiz

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 in April. Check out next month's newsletter for info!



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.) |

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.

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF BABY PANTRY

As you know, the Peace Ladies' Guild collects items all year round which we then send to Lutheran World Relief for distribution. Until March 31 we are collecting for the BABY PANTRY. Items needed at this time include: shirts, gowns and sweaters size 6 month through 2 years old, washcloths, bath size soap in their original packaging, and diaper pins. If you can assist with collecting any of the above, it would be greatly appreciated.

Please help us help those in need! Questions may be addressed to Coaline Luplow or Dorothy Trgina. Thank you!

Ladies' Guild

Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies Guild will meet on **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6 at 12:15 pm.** with Sharyn Greening and Yvonne Elenbaas as hostesses. 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 chance!

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.



March

Carol Zeile



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

April

Altar Care

Coaline Luplow

Coffee Hostesses

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

May

Megan Brown

- 5 Carol Zeile
- 12 Peace Youth Group
- 19 S.Greening/M.Brown
- 26 Dorothy Trgina

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

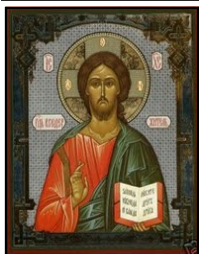
- We meet every **Thursday at 10:00 a.m.** We are currently studying *1 Kings*. All are welcome to join us!

Wednesday Bible Study

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

First Communion and Confirmation Classes

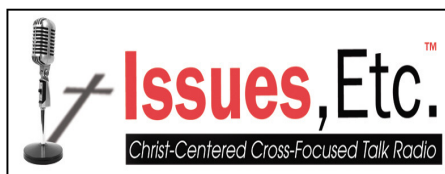
- First Communion Classes take place as arranged (see Pastor Messer if interested); Confirmation Class meets Thursdays, 6:00-7:30 p.m.



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 2/28/13)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 141; Confirmed - 118

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 0

Financial Report through 2/28/13

YTD Budgeted.....\$17,400.00

YTD Receipts.....\$12,798.25

Difference.....-\$4,601.75

Peace Book Club

The book club will meet at the home of Yvonne Elenbaas on **March 12 at 7:00 p.m.** At that time we will discuss *Cloud Cover* by David Iseminger. To quote from a review on Amazon.com:



"In the cloud, your most valuable secrets are open to the highest bidder. With its breakneck pace, David Iseminger's nimble writing and plot surprises make this page-turning suspense thriller impossible to put down. With the technical prowess of Clancy, the breakneck pace of Patterson, and the hairpin-riddled plotting of Grisham, Iseminger strikes a perfect balance among plot, characters, setting, and pace. On top of all that, his extensive experience at the world's largest software company – Microsoft – and his in-depth knowledge of networks, make this thriller as real as it gets."

If you have not joined us for a book club meeting in the past, please consider reading this thriller. It sounds like a page-turner that will be hard to put down.

For questions about the book club, feel free to ask any of the regulars: Pastor, Sharyn, Coaline, Yvonne, Mary G., Larry and Andrea and Carol. We all would love to have more people join us!



4TH ANNUAL CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION

WHEN: MARCH 30, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING OUR EASTER VIGIL

WHERE: FELLOWSHIP HALL

WHAT: CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING GRAPE JUICE, OTHER BEVERAGES, HOR D'OEUVRES, AND DELICIOUS DESSERTS SERVED AS WE CELEBRATE OUR LORD'S GLORIOUS RESURRECTION!

IF YOU HAVE NOT ATTENDED THE EASTER VIGIL SERVICE IN THE PAST, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING. COME FOR THE SERVICE AT 7:00 PM AND STAY FOR THIS WONDERFUL RECEPTION, HOSTED BY OUR LADIES' GUILD.

EASTER BREAKFAST

8:30 A.M. ON EASTER SUNDAY



AGAIN THIS YEAR THE LADIES' GUILD AND YOUTH GROUP WILL WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE A BREAKFAST AT 8:30 AM ON EASTER MORNING, BETWEEN MATINS AND THE DIVINE SERVICE. THE MENU INCLUDES: STRATA, FRENCH TOAST, SAUSAGE, SCRAMBLED EGGS, FRUIT, COFFEE CAKE, JUICE AND COFFEE. ALL ARE WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND. A FREEWILL OFFERING WILL BE COLLECTED.






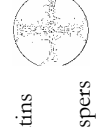








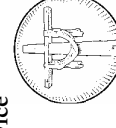

PLEASE JOIN US!



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

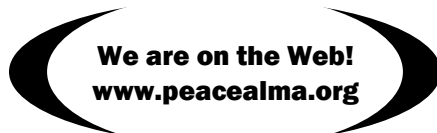
Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Drive
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 463-5754
contact@peacealma.org
www.peacealma.org

March 2013

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| 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 7:00 pm - Council | 6 Oculi Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 12:15 pm - Ladies' Guild 5:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Serv. 10 pm - Compline  | 7 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Sts. Perpetua & Felicitas</i> 5 pm - Weight Watchers 6 pm - Confirmation Class | 8 | 9 |
| 10 Laetare (Lent 4) 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 Lactare Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 5:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 10 pm - Compline  | 14 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus (Obs.)</i> 5 pm - Weight Watchers 6 pm - Confirmation Class | 15 | 16 10:00 am - Sewing/ Knitting Group |
| 17 Judica (Lent 5) 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC  | 18 | 19 6:30 pm - SALT meeting | 20 Judica Midweek 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Sext 5:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Lenten Dinner 7 pm - Divine Service 10 pm - Compline  | 21 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Annunciation of Our Lord (Obs.)</i> 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class | 22 6:30 - Pizza 7:00 - "The Passion of the Christ"  | 23 |
| 24 Palm/Passion Sunday 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC  | 25 Holy Monday 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Divine Service 5:30 pm - Vespers 7:00 pm - Divine Serv.  | 26 Holy Tuesday 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Divine Service 5:30 pm - Vespers 7:00 pm - Divine Service  | 27 Holy Wednesday 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Divine Service 5:30 pm - Vespers 7:00 pm - Divine Service  | 28 Holy Thursday 7:30 am - Matins NO <i>Together in the Word</i> Noon - Divine Service 5:00 pm - WW 5:30 pm - Vespers 7:00 pm - Divine Service  | 29 Good Friday 7:30 am - Matins Noon - Divine Service 3:00 pm - Devotion 7:30 pm - Tenebrae  | 30 Holy Saturday 7:30 am - Matins 10:00 am - Divine Service 7:00 pm - Easter Vigil <i>Champagne Reception</i>  |
| 31 Resurrection of our Lord 7:30 Matins 8:30 am - Easter Breakfast 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship  | April 1 | 2 7:00 pm - Council | 3 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7:pm - Divine Service Easter Monday (Obs.)  | 4 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Confirmation Class | 5 | 6 |

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 March

| | ELDERS | ACOLYTES | USHERS | GREETERS |
|--|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| March | | | | |
| 3 - 9:30 a.m. <i>Oculi (Lent 3)</i> | Gabriel Blair | Aaron Cross Morgan Johnson | Miguel Ortiz Tyrel Harwager | Penzien family |
| 10 - 9:30 am <i>Laetare (Lent 4)</i> | Larry Elliott | Natalie Penzien Aaron Messer | James Sager Daren Johnson | Miguel and Sue Ortiz |
| 17 - 9:30 am <i>Judica (Lent 5)</i> | Terry Luplow | Farrah Blair Myka Luplow | Chris Brown Jon Penzien | Sager family |
| 24 - 9:30 am <i>Palm Sunday</i> | Miguel Ortiz | Paige Harwager Sierra Luplow | John Lemmermann Gabriel Blair | Dorothy Trgina |
| 28 - 7:00 pm <i>Holy Thursday</i> | Gabriel Blair | Morgan Johnson Savannah Blair | Bill Hendrick Gary Miller | |
| 29 - 7:30 pm <i>Tenebrae</i> | Miguel Ortiz | Aaron Messer Farrah Blair | Terry Luplow Vern Jakolat | |
| 30 - 7:00 pm <i>Easter Vigil</i> | Terry Luplow | Aaron Cross Savannah Blair | Miguel Ortiz Daren Johnson | |
| 31 - 9:30 am <i>Resurrection of our Lord</i> | Gabriel Blair | Sierra Luplow Paige Harwager | Gary Miller Tyrel Harwager | Blair family |
| April | | | | |
| 7 - 9:30 am <i>Quasimodo Geniti (Easter 2)</i> | Larry Elliott | Myka Luplow Natalie Penzien | Jon Penzien James Sager | Dave and Carol Zeile |

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (Eph. 6:7)