

The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

Vol. 8, No. 5 May 2012

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 Being Disciples of Jesus

By William Harmon and Pastor Messer

The following article is the finished product of an original article written by Bill Harmon, after being fleshed out and expanded by me, in consultation with Bill. I am thankful to Bill for sharing the original article with me, which revealed his keen theological insight into an oft-misunderstood subject. He deserves the vast majority of the credit for what follows; I merely expanded upon what he so excellently presented.

"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'" (Matt. 16:24).

What deep and profound words our Savior utters to His disciples, which includes us. His call to discipleship includes what seem to be burdensome, even impossible, demands. But, to understand this call from our Lord Jesus Christ, we must look carefully at His words. What does He mean that we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him?

Deny Yourself

Our Lord first points out that, if we are going to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves. This is a most difficult thing for us. We put ourselves before God, our families, and our fellow Christians all the time. Selfishness is part of our sin nature; it's hard-wired into us from the moment we are conceived. We want what we want and we want it now. We want our way first and foremost and we put our wants before the wants of anyone else. That this is part of our sin nature from conception is easily proved. We just need to look at our children's behavior, even when they are newborn infants. When they want something (to be fed, to be held, to have a dirty diaper changed, to sleep, etc.), they are relentless and will cry, whine, and throw a fit until their want is satisfied. Any parent is well aware of what I am talking about. We are conceived and born as selfish sinners. And, as we grow older, the same selfish sinner remains in each of us—it just matures and becomes more cunning. We may not continue to cry, whine, and throw fits as we did when we were infants—although sometimes we'll still resort to those old tactics—but we're still just as determined to get what we want when we want it, and we'll employ whatever methods work to get it.

So, according to the first demand of our Lord, we fail. He tells us that we must deny ourselves if we are to be His disciples, and we don't even come close to doing so. We are helpless in fighting our selfish, sinful nature. We are too weak. As Dr. Luther points out, even at those times when we do seem to put the wants and needs of others before ours, we often do so for selfish reasons—to make ourselves feel good or to look good to others.

Take Up Your Crosses

When we look at the second demand of our Lord regarding discipleship, we see much the same. The same sinful selfishness that keeps us from denying ourselves fights hard against taking up our crosses in this life. To take up our crosses means to willingly and gladly endure the pain and suffering we experience in this life; to even rejoice in those times of pain and suffering, counting them as glory. But, who among us does that?! We are more prone to throw ourselves our own little pity parties when pain and suffering comes our way and, in our weakest moments, we even resort to doubting and questioning God. Rather than willingly and gladly taking up our crosses, rejoicing and counting as glory those times we are faced with enduring pain and suffering, we want nothing more than to put those crosses down and get free from them.

As Christians, the crosses we must bear in this dead and dying world come in all shapes and sizes: Illnesses, diseases, broken relationships, loss of loved ones to death, slander, persecution, injustice, hatred, and so on. We can expect the crosses for Christians to become even heavier and more burdensome to carry as time goes on, even in our own country, as historic and traditional Christian beliefs are becoming less and less tolerable to those who claim to be against intolerance. The atheists who control the press want Christians to keep their religion to themselves, but have no problem forcing their “religion” upon Christians. With the widespread acceptance of Darwinism, abortion-on-demand, homosexuality, cohabitation, and a host of other social evils, the tenets of Christianity are not only being pushed to the side, but done away with completely. The day is coming when those who wish to live by, and uphold, their Christian beliefs will do so under threat and to their own peril; indeed, in many ways, that day is already here.

And so, whether we like it or not, the crosses we must bear in this life will come. That is not in question. What is in question is, “Do we take them up willingly and gladly, rejoice in them, and count them as glory?” All too often, the answer to that question is, “No.” We do not take up our crosses in this life as we should, but try to avoid them and, when they are unavoidable, try to put them down as quickly as possible. So, according to this second demand of our Lord regarding discipleship, we fail again.

Follow Me

The third demand of our Lord Jesus Christ to us, if we are to be His disciples, is to follow Him. This third demand is bound up in the first two demands, to be sure. Following Jesus involves denying ourselves and taking up our crosses. It also means complete submission to the Father's will, honoring Him always in thought, word, and deed, keeping the Holy Law perfectly and without error, always avoiding temptation, and never wavering one iota from the path of righteousness. In other words, to follow Jesus is to be perfect, just as His Heavenly Father is perfect. And, once again, we see all too clearly how we fail to meet this demand of our Lord, for we are far from perfect. Our selfish, sinful nature gets in the way, so that we do not follow Jesus as we ought.

The Good News

So far, we have heard nothing but bad news. We do not deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus. That's the painful reality. But, does this mean that we cannot be His disciples? Not at all! What it means is that we're reading this verse wrong. We're reading it as Law, rather than Gospel. We're reading it as demands from our Lord, rather than promises. If what our Lord says here is Law; if these are qualifications we must meet in order to be His disciples, then we are indeed doomed. But, this is Gospel, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself fulfills these demands of discipleship. He has denied Himself in our place, leaving His place of glory and humbling Himself to be born into our flesh, that He might live and die to save us from ourselves. He lived for His Father and for His neighbors (all people) with a selfless love, always putting His Father's will and our needs first. He gladly and willingly bore all the crosses life in this world threw at Him, right up to taking up *the* Cross to which He was nailed and upon which He died for our sins. He followed the eternal plan of salvation He developed with His Father and the Holy Spirit from before the foundation of this world was laid. He never wavered an inch from the path that would bring that plan to fulfillment. He has done all the work necessary for us selfish, sinful disciples.

When I was a Nazarene, I was taught to interpret verses like this one as all Law. I was misled into believing that it was up to us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus, if we are to be His disciples. I was taught that we could only finally be His disciples when we mastered these demands He puts before us; that we must strive for, and reach, perfect sanctification in this life. It was all Law—not a hint of Gospel to be found anywhere. Jesus did His part, but now it was up to us to do our part if we are to follow Him and be saved.

But, now that I am a Lutheran, I know differently. I feel a little bit like Dr. Luther felt when he first discovered the Gospel, like the gates of heaven itself have been opened up to me. I have learned the key to interpreting the Scriptures, that they are not written as a set of guidelines or rules I must follow to merit salvation, but as the revelation of what Jesus has done for me to save me. Scripture must interpret Scripture, and all the Scriptures testify of Jesus and His work for our salvation.

So, when we are confronted with a verse like the one here, we need to consider it in light of other Scriptures, which touch upon the same subject. Jesus is here talking about what it means to be His disciples. Where else does He talk about this?

Perhaps the most well-known passage where Jesus talks about discipleship is the passage that has become known as the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), where Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Here we learn that disciples are made under Jesus' authority through Holy Baptism, ongoing catechesis, and through the reception of the Divine Gifts Jesus gives us in the Divine Service, where He fulfills His promise to be with us always. Clearly, then, discipleship is something given, not something merited. Discipleship is a gift, not a work; a promise, not a demand.

Other passages bear this out further and help us connect the dots to better understand how it is that

we deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus when we are baptized into Him, catechized in the faith, and fed upon His Holy Word and Sacraments. In Romans 6:1-11, St. Paul teaches us that we have been baptized into Christ's death. There is where we deny ourselves, for our sinful selves are drowned, and a new man in us emerges, who gladly and willingly takes up his crosses and follows Jesus perfectly. In John 8:31-32, Jesus tells us that, if we abide in Him and His Word, we are truly His disciples, and in John 15:5, He fleshes this out further by telling us that He is the Vine and we are the branches, and that, as we abide in Him, we bear much fruit, for apart from Him we can do nothing.

Thus we see from these, and a host of other passages we could consider, what Jesus means when He tells us that we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him if we are to be His disciples. This is not Law, but pure Gospel. It's not a list of demands, but a declaration of who we are in Jesus. Baptized into Him, we have denied ourselves, taken up our crosses, and we continue to follow Him to where He locates Himself to feed us and strengthen us and guide us as we make our way through the valley of the shadow of death in this sinful world—in His Holy House, where He promises to be with us whenever two or more are gathered together in His Name (Matt. 18:20).

None of this means that we are free to indulge our sinful selfishness, ignore our crosses in this life, and follow our own way, however. As St. Paul says, "Shall we sin so that grace may abound? Absolutely not!" That we are made disciples of Jesus apart from our own works and merit is not a license to sin. As disciples of Jesus, we strive against sin. We do our best to deny ourselves and put the needs of others before our own. We accept the crosses we must endure in this life, knowing that they will not last, since our Lord Jesus bore *the* Cross in our place. We follow Jesus where He bids us come that we may hear the voice of our Good Shepherd and be fed at the Table He prepares for us. Being in the Vine, we branches bear fruit. But, notice the order: We *are* disciples and the fruit *follows*. First faith, then works. And the fruit our faith bears is "fruit in keeping with repentance" (cf. Matt. 3:8). In other words, our baptismal lives are lives lived in daily repentance and faith; lives in which we strive against sin, repenting of our failures, and trusting in Jesus who has secured our salvation with His perfect life and sacrificial death. As Pastor Messer has taught us many times, we are *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time, saint and sinner).

Thus, disciples of Jesus are not those who have managed to master the demands for discipleship Jesus lays forth and have reached a state of perfect sanctification, which is quite impossible this side of heaven, but rather they are saved sinners, who continue to abide in, and rely upon, Jesus, who denied Himself, took up His Cross, and followed His Father's will and Laws perfectly in their place. The Divine irony is that it is that is precisely those who recognize their inability to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Jesus on their own who are His perfect and eternal disciples. For they live under the glory of His Cross and have the fruits of His Cross given and applied to them when they are baptized into Him, taught His Word in preaching and catechesis, and fed upon the very Body and Blood He gave and shed for them in the Holy Supper.

Therefore, dear friends, "praise the LORD in His sanctuary . . . praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness" (Ps. 150:1-2), for it is in His sanctuary that He makes, and keeps, you His disciples. Let your hearts leap for joy!

+ Soli Deo Gloria +



The Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord

(By Rev. Randy Asbury, Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO)

At Christmas, we celebrated God the Son coming down to us and taking on our human flesh and blood. In Lent and Holy Week we celebrated Jesus' descent into suffering and death, humbling Himself further, to rescue us from sin and give us life with Him. On Easter Sunday, and for several Sundays since, we have celebrated His rising to life again and His victory over the grave.

On **Thursday, May 17** we will celebrate Jesus' enthronement, His victorious reign, and our abundant life in Him as we celebrate ***The Ascension of Our Lord*** at **7:00 p.m.** Jesus' exaltation began when He descended into hell and continued with His rising to life. But it did not stop there. Jesus' Ascension completes His Father's mission to accomplish our salvation.

Sad to say, though, Jesus' Ascension doesn't get as much attention as do Christmas or Easter. Perhaps it's because we celebrate it on a Thursday. Why a Thursday? In our hectic world we want a pretty good reason for adding yet one more thing to our frantic schedules. We're so frazzled from shuttling the kids to school and sports and juggling our own schedules that a Thursday evening is prime time for "vegging out" in front of the "boob tube."

Why celebrate Jesus' Ascension on a Thursday? Because it marks 40 days after Jesus' Resurrection. After He rose from the dead Jesus remained on earth 40 days (see Acts 1:3), teaching His apostles and others what His dying and rising meant (also read Luke 24 and John 20-21). Jesus had to put all the puzzle pieces together for His followers—what kind of Savior He is, what kind of life He gives through His Gospel and Sacraments, and how they were about to be sent out to teach others.

Another reason Ascension Day may not be a big deal is that we've lost its meaning. We may think that once we've celebrated Easter, we've finished the salvation story. But that's like leaving a baseball game at the seventh inning stretch! Your team may be ahead by one point on the scoreboard, but you haven't seen the exciting conclusion. Your favorite player may yet hit a grand slam to clinch the victory. To echo Paul Harvey, Jesus' Ascension gives us "the rest of the story."

On Christ's Ascension...

The Formula of Concord says: *Now He has ascended to heaven, not merely as any other saint, but as the apostle testifies (Ephesians 4:10), above all heavens. He also truly fills all things being present everywhere, not only as God, but also as man* (FC, VIII, 27). What does this mean?

First, Jesus' Ascension means that His work of saving all people is done. When Jesus died on the cross, He said, "*It is finished.*" When He ascended into heaven, Jesus showed that everything for our salvation is accomplished. Our eternal life with God is a "done deal." Love came down at Christmas, accomplished forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation on the cross, rose victorious over death, and then returned to God the Father. Jesus finished His journey. Our life with God, now and into eternity, is safe and secure. What a comfort when doubts annoy, temptations assail, and sorrows come crashing in!

Second, Jesus' Ascension means that a perfect human being has entered heaven and sits at God's right hand. We can try all we want to get to heaven on our own steam, but we cannot get there. The people at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) tried to get up to heaven, but their pride was their downfall. We try to impress God with our good lives, but then our pride leads us to ruin too. No human being can enter God's glorious presence and live. Until now! Jesus not only breaks the bonds of death, but He also opens the barrier between God and human beings. Our ascended Lord gives us the hope of entering God's glorious, eternal presence.

Third, Jesus' Ascension means that He rules over all things. Without this step in Jesus' exaltation, we in the Church would wander through life aimless and scared. Terrorist attacks, political scandals, or economic bad news would lead us to despair. We would vainly try to create some kind of heaven on earth. Without Jesus' Ascension, we might think that we should mould and shape the Church like a wax nose—make it look and act differently with every passing fad of "popular" teaching.

But with Jesus' Ascension, we have peace. Jesus rules all things for the good of His Church. Everything from terrorist attacks to church struggles to personal tragedies takes on new meaning. Jesus uses everything—even the conflicts and wars, even our personal trials and stresses—to strengthen us in faith toward Him and in fervent love toward one another. Nothing is out of Jesus' gracious control. He works it all for the good of His people.

Faith comes by hearing...

How does this good, Biblical teaching of Jesus' Ascension help us in faith and life? Why is it important for the Church to hold on to Jesus' Ascension as one of its prime teachings?

First, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit for His followers. While Jesus goes away from physical sight, He does not leave His Church. He promises to be with her “in, with, and under” the work of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 Jesus says, “*He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*” In John 15:26, our Lord says, “*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me.*” Jesus promises the Holy Spirit who, in turn, keeps our focus on Him.

Then in Acts 1:9 we read, “*When He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.*” Notice: this key verse does not say that Jesus is gone! The great joy of the Ascension is that while Jesus may be out of sight, He is not out of mind, and He most certainly is not absent. He's still with His forgiven, precious people!

Here's an illustration. A mother and her six month-old baby are playing together on the living room floor. Mom has to get up and go into the kitchen. The baby looks around but doesn't see Mom. She starts to fuss, fearing that she is alone. What does Mom do while she is in the kitchen? She speaks. She speaks so her baby can hear her: “It's alright, my dear. Mommy's still here.” The baby is comforted. How? Not by the visible presence of Mom, but by hearing her voice.

That's what the Ascension of Jesus means for us Christians. A cloud hid Him from the disciples' sight, but He was not absent. Instead, Jesus comforts His disciples, then and now, with His voice. So Jesus' Ascension teaches us something very important: the Church does not live in the time of seeing, but in the time of hearing. Faithfully hearing the Word of God read, preached, and sung is the most important thing any Christian can do in life. As St. Paul says, “*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Romans 10:17).

Based on this clear, comforting Ascension teaching from the Bible, we in the Church must, and can, trust our ears more than our eyes. Too often our eyes lead us astray. If pews look empty, we despair and don't trust Jesus' eternal care for His Church. If pews look full, we gloat and pat ourselves on the back for how we ingeniously brought people into “our” church. Instead of relying on our eyes—and the common, worldly standards of success and failure—our Lord calls us to rely on our ears. After all, the more we *hear* the Gospel of Jesus' gifts of forgiveness and life, the more we are comforted and strengthened in faith. The more we *hear* the Gospel, the better equipped we are to give “*a reason for the hope that is in [us]*” (1 Peter 3:15).

Supposedly Dr. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was once asked about a preacher who had distracting mannerisms in the pulpit. The upset church member complained to Dr. Luther, “I just can't watch him and get anything out of the sermon.” Dr. Luther replied, “Well, then, take your eyeballs out of their sockets, put them in your ears, and listen!” Jesus' Ascension ushers us into the time of hearing God's Word. After all, hearing God's life-giving Word is the fountainhead of our life with God.

So, set aside Thursday, May 17 to attend the Divine Service. When Jesus ascends to God's right hand, so do we. And Jesus promises to rule all things for the good of His body, the Church. As we sing in the Ascension Day hymn:

***On Christ's ascension I now build
The hope of my ascension;
This hope alone has always stilled
All doubt and apprehension;
For where the Head is, there as well
I know His members are to dwell
When Christ will come and call them.
— LSB 492:1***

PEACE NEWS & NOTES



NEWS

May

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Location</u>
Monthly Meeting	5/20	5:00 PM	7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall
Fellowship	Sundays	10:45 AM	11:15 AM	Youth Classroom

Greetings in Christ,

We are continuing to prepare for the Higher Things conference. Thanks to everyone for their support and assistance in getting these youth there (see info on Bake Sale below).

We are looking at ideas for service and fellowship activities. Please share any ideas you may have with Jonathan Penzien. And keep an eye on the Youth Board for updates and events.

Thanks to everyone for your continuing support of the Pop can and Spartan label collections. Here is a list of items now being collected for the 'Green' drive of recyclables (please save the following items): plastic tape dispensers or cores, plastic diaper and baby wipe packaging, shampoo/conditioner bottles, body wash/liquid soap bottles or dispensers, lotion bottles and tubes, hair gel tubes and hair paste jars, mascara and concealer tubes, chapstick tubes, drink pouches (not boxes), shredded cheese and string cheese packages, grated cheese packages, cottage cheese tabs, individual cheese wrappers and packages, ziplock bags and produce bags, candy bar wrappers, plastic lunchables/lunchkit containers. New items will continue to be added. These recyclables should be placed next to the pop can collection can.

May the Spirit of the Lord be with you.

Jonathan Penzien

MAY BAKE SALE

The Higher Things Conference in Canada is fast approaching! Excitement is building as the kids prepare for their trip. We did well with our last bake sale. Thank you to everyone who donated baked goods. The kids worked well together preparing their own items to sell. They can probably make Chex Mix with their eyes closed! We raised \$375 and we received a matching contribution of \$375 from Thrivent Choice Dollars. It was a good day!

We still need to raise more money for our transportation costs.

On Saturday May 19th we will be having another bake sale at the Alma Walmart from 10-3. With less time to prepare for this sale your donations will be greatly appreciated! I will be posting a sign up sheet on the PYG bulletin board. Last time the pan brownies and the chocolate chip cookies were a big success! Thanks in advance for your help!

Amy Blair

SALT NEWS NEXT MEETING

Thursday, May 31 at 6:30 p.m.

We welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Please see our Meeting Minutes on the SALT Bulletin Board

The Ladies Guild and SALT Committee will be having a **Second Time Around Sale**. The dates are **July 20th and 21th, 2012**. All Peace members and others, please start collecting/saving your items for this sale.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

This is an ongoing outreach for the SALT Committee. If you know of a person in the armed forces who is serving abroad, please contact Carolyn Johnson (email ckj1969@yahoo.com).

Join us for a Spring Tea

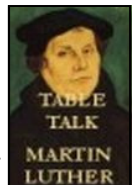
Peace Lutheran Church Ladies Guild and SALT Committee will be putting on a Spring Tea in honor of Mother's Day. Please invite your mothers, grandmothers, or any other women in your family to the Tea. We will be enjoying good food, fellowship and music. It will be held **May 12th at 11:00 am**. Please RSVP to Cassie Tennant, radar1214@yahoo.com or 989-481-3027, by May 6th.

LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

The Ladies Lunch Bunch will have lunch at 1:30 pm on Monday, May 14 at the China Garden in Mt. Pleasant. We will meet at the church at 1:00 pm to carpool. All ladies of Peace are welcome, and guests are invited as well.

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. Plus, THEY'RE FUN! All are invited to our next Table Talk, which will take place **Thursday, May 24 at 7:00 p.m. at the Church**. We hope you're able to join us!



PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd

If you ever have a change of address or telephone number, please notify Mary Jakolat. Following are a couple of new changes that were reported:

Ken and Phyllis Hill (Florida address)
Red Oaks RV Resort
5760 SW 18th Terr. Lot #135
Bushnell, FL 33513
Delete the Florida email address and use
1845@ispmgt.com for all email

Kyle and Jillian Stahl
1617 E. Gaylord St. Unit A
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

YOU'RE INVITED MEMORIAL DAY LUNCHEON SUNDAY MAY 27, 2012

The Anniversary Planning Committee is holding a fundraising luncheon during fellowship on May 27. The menu will include hot dogs, chips, a variety of salads, and yummy desserts! A freewill donation will be collected to help defer the costs of our 50th Anniversary Celebration. If you cannot make the luncheon, but would like to donate, please see Carol Zeile.



Peace Movie Night
Friday, May 25
6:30 pm—Pizza
7:00 pm—Movie
“The Help”
Freewill donation
collected to help defray
the cost of pizza and
support future Movie
Nights.
Come join us!



Volunteers needed to help clean the church weekly! Any chore is greatly appreciated. We particularly need help with vacuuming. This work could be done by one person, a family or a group of members. Please give serious consideration to this request and contact Marlene Miller with questions or to volunteer. **THANKS!!**

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 Avenue
Alma, MI 48801

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

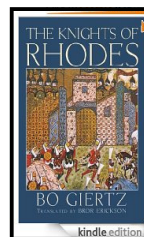
Marion Greening
1025 Vassar Street
Alma, MI 48801

Joyce Kohler
2700 Marfitt Road, Apt. 213
East Lansing, MI 48823

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

PEACE BOOK CLUB

Our choice for the May Book Club meeting is “The Knight of Rhodes” by Bo Giertz.



This novel combines narrative with history, theology, and worship to create the story. Giertz shows an understanding for human beings and teaches the reader something about him or herself in the process.

The story is set in the Eastern Mediterranean in the early 16th century in the fortress on the island of Rhodes and begins with details of preparations to do battle with the Turkish invaders. Many of the characters are true historic figures who provides us with a view of how people work together and try to resolve issues of everyday life. Please consider reading the book and joining in the conversation. Our conversations are always lively! We will meet on **Tuesday, May 15 at 7:00 p.m.** at Pastor Messer’s home.

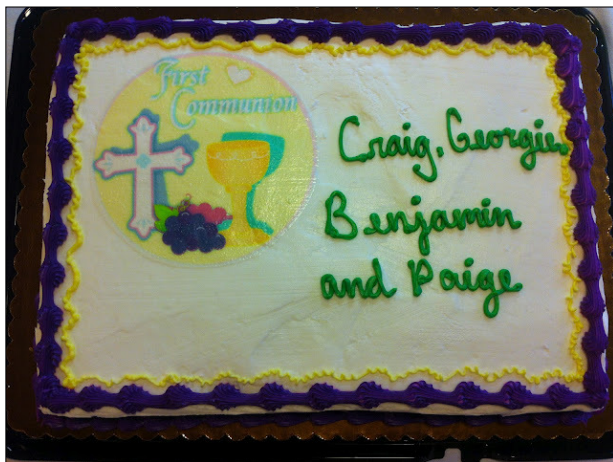
PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd



First Holy Communion

In addition to the many joys associated with our Palm/Passion Sunday Divine Service this year, we were also blessed to witness four of our children receive the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's very Body and Blood for the first time. This was our third group of children to receive First Communion prior to Confirmation since we adopted our policy in July of 2010, and included our youngest member thus far, Benjamin, who will turn five in May, as well as Craig (8), Paige (11), and Georgie (13). After several hours of classroom instruction and at-home study with parents, they showed themselves well prepared, reciting for our elders the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer, and answering several questions about basic Christian doctrine (Law and Gospel, sin and grace, etc.) and the Holy Sacraments. They even fielded a few unknown questions from the elders and nailed them! They were examined and absolved of their sins, confessed their faith in the Holy Sacrament and their desire to receive it. The Lord is good!

Here are a few photos to commemorate the day:



Each child received a certificate and gifts!



Ladies Guild

Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies Guild will meet on **Monday, May 7, at 12:00 pm.** Hostess will be Carol Zeile. 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 2012 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 and contact the church office with any information that you wish to have included in the bulletin. If there is a specific date in the month that commemorates an occasion, please also enter that date. 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 Amy Blair. Thank you for helping to beautify our chapel.

PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES GUILD

The Ladies' Guild is collecting the following items for Personal Care Kits to send to the Lutheran World Relief:



1 Bath sized towel (approx. 52" x 27"), dark color preferred

1 Bath-sized bar of Soap (4-5 oz.)

1 Adult-size toothbrush

1 Sturdy comb

1 Metal nail clipper

COLLECTION DATES: April 1 - June 30

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.



May

Coaline Luplow

6 M. Miller/C. Dargie
13 Gretchen Harrison
20 M. Isaksson/H. Meyers
27 Amy Blair

June

Altar Care

Amy Blair

Coffee Hostesses

3 Carolyn Johnson
10 Peace Youth Group
17 Lois Ramsey
24 S. Greening/M. Brown

July

Lois Ramsey

1 Carol Zeile
8 Peace Youth Group
15 Dorothy Trgina
22 Coaline Luplow
29 Amy Blair



PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES - MARCH 6, 2012

Call To Order & Opening Prayer

- Elder Luplow called the meeting to order at 6:40pm. Pastor Messer opened with reading Psalm 39 and prayer. The following members were present: Carol Zeile, Sharyn Greening, Carolyn Johnson, Larry Elliott, Amy Blair, Terry Luplow and Cassie Tennant. Pastor Messer was also present.

Approval of Agenda

- Motion made by Larry Elliott, supported by Sharyn Greening to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion made by Larry Elliott, supported by Carolyn Johnson, to approve minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously

Report(s)

- Pastor** – Full report attached; **Treasurer's Report** – Verbal reports given due to printer being down; **Financial Secretary** – Full report attached; **Board of Elders** –continuing to visit shut-ins, next meeting is Wednesday March 14th; **Board of Trustees** – No report; **Board of Christian Education** – Sharyn Greening has been elected to serve as the chair. VBS will be held the week of June 17th from 9-noon. The theme this year is “In The Name”; **Board of Evangelism** – Next meeting is on March 22. A spaghetti dinner and Movie Night are planned for March 23rd, second time around sale is being held in July; **Board of Stewardship** – trying to find a time to meet

Business

- Printer/Copier** – The office printer is currently down and not functioning. Cassie Tennant is going to bring in her printer to be used until a replacement can be found. Larry Elliott presented information to Council about our current contract on the copy machine and also a new copier contract was presented along with pricing options for various printers. Motion made by Carol Zeile, supported by Larry Elliott, to move forward with replacing the current copy machine.

General Comments

- Youth group bake sale coming up

Adjournment & Closing Prayer

- Motion made by Carolyn Johnson, supported by Sharyn Greening to adjourn at 7:45pm. Motion carried unanimously. Pastor Messer closed with Prayer and Benediction

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Tennant, Secretary

Thank You!

A huge thank you to all who donated food, gave a freewill offering and ate at the lasagna dinner put on by the Ladies' Guild on April 22! The meal was delicious and the fellowship wonderful. As you know, the goal of this fundraiser was to replace money taken from the Memorial Fund and used to help one of our families in need over this past winter. We collected \$250 from donations and were able to receive \$250 matching funds from the Thrivent Choice Dollars, so the entire \$500 that was borrowed is now repaid. Thanks for your generosity!

Those of you who have been routinely designating your **Thrivent Choice Dollars** to Peace know how the process works. Earlier this year, Thrivent made some internal changes to the technical process of sending funds to charitable organizations. If you have set up “recurring” donations, online or by telephone in the past, you will need to go online and set this up again. All of the funds available to be directed are still there, you just need to tell Thrivent again that you want to designate funds for Peace.

Designating Choice Dollars to Peace is an easy process and doesn't cost you anything. This program and the Scrip Program are both wonderful ways to give to Peace and help further our mission in this world while continuing your normal purchasing patterns.

If you have any questions about how Thrivent Choice Dollars works, please contact Carol Zeile. Thank you for all you do for Peace!

Holy Week Thoughts

by Carol Zeile

During my years growing up in a German Lutheran home in the '50s and '60s, Holy Week to me was Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We had the traditional midweek Services and potluck dinners during Lent. There was a Maundy Thursday Service, but it was in German only. I attended with my grandparents when I was young, but that tradition fell away as I got older. We attended a 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Service and Easter Sunday at 11:00 a.m. That was it. No Stripping of the Altar, or Matins, Vespers, etc. So, 26 services during Holy Week is a big change for me! And what a blessing to have the opportunity this year to be in my Lord's House four times a day, Monday through Friday. The first three days of the week followed the same format and were a wonderful preparation for the "bigger" events to come. A group of faithful gathered for each of these Services to begin and end the day with the Lord.

In years' past, Good Friday Services have had the most impact on me personally. Seeing Pastor Messer carry the cross down the center aisle always brings home to me the struggle and suffering Jesus endured because of me. Although Maundy Thursday Stripping of the Altar is also a very moving experience, I think that other years I have been too distracted by the details to really take in the significance of emptying the chancel. There were many women helping this year and the process went very smoothly. That allowed me to appreciate Bill's marvelous reading of Psalm 22, Mary's organ playing and the visual depiction of what was to come. Easter Vigil Service is becoming more familiar to me, since this was our third time celebrating it, and it I did not look at my watch once! I love the readings (even though I understand that they are long for the readers) and the singing. It is a wonderful preparation for the majesty of Easter morning.

It is very easy at this busy time of year to get carried away with preparations for the Champagne Reception, Easter Breakfast and family dinners and not concentrate on the true importance of Holy Week. I was indeed busy this year, but also, through Pastor Messer's example, was able to meditate on my Lord's Passion in a way I have never done before. It certainly was a time of deep regret for me—regret that I am such a wretched sinner, that my Lord had to suffer as He did because of me, that my efforts can never be enough, and a time of repentance and asking for forgiveness. I was actually sorry to see Easter morning arrive. I did not want this wonderful week to be over. I can be comforted, however, in the knowledge that as long as our Lord allows Pastor Messer to be with us, there will always be next year...

Financial Secretary Report

January 1-March 31, 2012

Checking Account Receipts:

YTD income/offerings (collection plate and rent) = \$24,133.00

YTD # of Sundays = 13

YTD average per Sunday = \$1,856.38

Budgeted:

YTD = \$28,301

YTD # of Sundays = 13

YTD average per Sunday = \$2,177.00

Difference:

Total = -\$4,168

Average per Sunday = -\$320.62

Christian Care Fund March receipts: \$12

Christian Care Fund YTD receipts: \$61

Firstbank Savings receipts: \$0

Memorial Fund March receipts: \$0

Memorial Fund YTD receipts: \$70

Peace 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee



The 50th Anniversary Committee is hard at work making plans to celebrate this blessed event. If you know any past members of Peace or others who you know would like to attend the celebration, please contact Jo Wendt or Mary Jakolat. They are working along with Marion Greening to prepare as complete a guest list as possible. Also, if you have any pictures of past events at Peace and would like to share them for decorating purposes (you will get them back), please date them and give them to Coaline Luplow or Sharyn Greening.

In order to make the Anniversary Event a fitting tribute to 50 years of our life together, the Committee is asking for contributions to help defray the cost. If you are willing/able to contribute, please contact Carol Zeile or Pastor Messer as soon as possible. Thank you in advance for your participation.

The next meeting of this group is **Tuesday, May 22, at 7 p.m.** at the church. Please join us to help plan to commemorate this important event in the life of our congregation. If you are not able to attend this meeting, but are interested in helping, contact Pastor Messer.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

- Sunday School and Adult Bible Class is offered on **Sundays at 11 a.m.**

Together in the Word

- We meet every **Thursday at 10:00 a.m.** We are currently studying *2 Samuel*. All are welcome to join us!

Wednesday Bible Study

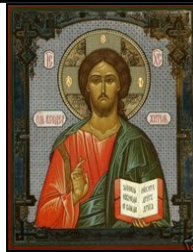
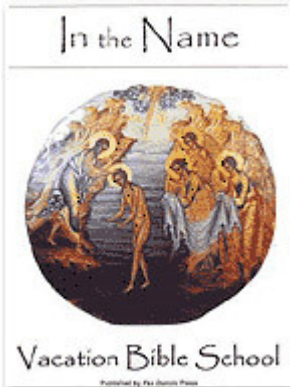
- Meets every Wednesday at 6 pm for a study of *Acts*.

First Communion and Confirmation Classes

- First Communion Classes take place as arranged (see Pastor Messer if interested); Confirmation Class for our 1st-year Confirmands takes place on Wednesdays at 5 pm (no 2nd-year confirmands this year).

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

The Board of Christian Education has chosen the program "In The Name" provided by Pax Domini Press for Vacation Bible School this year. VBS will take place June 18-22 from 9:00-12:00 for preschool children through age 12. Many have already volunteered to help, but a couple more teachers are still needed. Please see Sharyn Greening with any questions you may have or to volunteer. Also, be thinking about any children who you could invite to join us for a week of learning and fun.



PASTOR MESSER IS BLOGGING!

www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

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



MAY

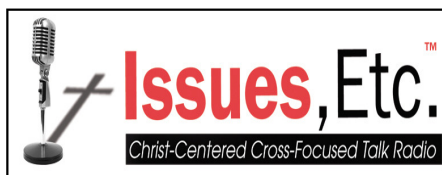
Happy Birthday

2 Natalie Penzien	22 Chad Bebow
4 LeRoy Isaksson	29 Brandy Pease
4 Daren Johnson	29 Gordon Slick
10 Mary Girard	30 Benjamin Elliott
21 Paige Harwager	31 Aaron Messer

Happy Anniversary

10 Dick and Dorothy Wiser

If we ever miss your birthday or anniversary, please let us know



TALK RADIO FOR THE THINKING CHRISTIAN!

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

PAROCHIAL REPORT

(as of 4/30/12)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 137; Confirmed - 117

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 3

Richard and Joyce Kohler transferred to St. Luke's Haslett - 3/28/2012

Bruce Bebow called home by our Lord - 4/30/2012

Financial Report as of 4/30/2012

YTD Budgeted..... \$ 34,832.00






YTD Receipts..... \$ 30,608.65

Difference..... \$ -4223.35

Rev. Thomas C. Messer
(989) 463-3093—Home
(989) 388-2037—Cell
pastor@peacealma.org
pastormesser@gmail.com
www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

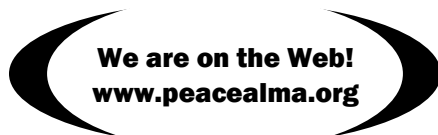
Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Drive
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 463-5754
contact@peacealma.org
www.peacealma.org

May 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:30 pm - Council	2	3 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Philip & St. James</i> 5 pm - WW	4	5
	<i>Pastor Messer at Gottesdienst Workshop in Chicago, IL</i>		<i>NO Confirmation Class, Bible Study, or Divine</i>			
6 <i>Cantate (Easter 5)</i> 8:30 - Choir 9:30 - Divine Service 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC, SS	7 12:00 pm - Ladies' Guild 	8	9 5 pm - Confirmation Class 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Div. Ser. <i>C.F.W. Walther Doctor</i>	10 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers	11	12 11:00 am - Spring Tea
13 <i>Rogate (Easter 6)</i> 8:30 - Choir 9:30 - Divine Service 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC, SS	14 1:30 pm - Ladies' Lunch Bunch 	15 7 pm - Peace Book Club (at Pastor Messer's house)	16 5 pm - Confirmation Class 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Div. Ser. <i>Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Bishops</i>	17 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers 7 pm - Divine Service <i>The Ascension of Our Lord</i>	18	19 10am-3 pm - PYG Bake Sale at Wal-Mart
20 <i>Exaudi (Easter 7)</i> 9:30 - Divine Service 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC, SS 5-7 pm - PYG	21 <i>Newsletter articles due</i> 	22 7 pm - 50th Anniversary Committee	23 5 pm - Confirmation Class 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Div. Ser. <i>St. Bede the Venerable</i>	24 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - WW 7 pm - Table Talk	25 Peace Movie Night 6:30 pm - Pizza 7:00 pm - Movie "The Help"	26
27 <i>Whitsunday (Feast of Pentecost)</i> 9:30 - Divine Service 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC, SS	28 	29 7 pm - Stewardship	30 5 pm - Confirmation Class 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Divine Service <i>Penecost Mon. & Tues. (Obs.)</i>	31 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - WW 6:30 pm - SALT		

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 May

May	ELDERS	ACOLYTES	USHERS	GREETERS
6 - 9:30 am <i>Cantate (Easter 5)</i>	Larry Elliott	Sierra Luplow Natalie Penzien	Gary Miller Jon Penzien	Penzien Family
13 - 9:30 am <i>Rogate (Easter 6)</i>	Terry Luplow	Farrah Blair Morgan Johnson	Gabriel Blair Daren Johnson	Dorothy Trgina
17 - 7:00 pm <i>The Ascension of Our Lord</i>	Gabriel Blair	Aaron Messer	Vern Jakolat	
20 - 9:30 am <i>Exaudi (Easter 7)</i>	Miguel Ortiz	Myka Luplow Samantha Messer	Vern Jakolat John Lemmermann	Blair Family
27 - 9:30 am <i>Whitsunday (Feast of Pentecost)</i>	Gabriel Blair	Paige Harwager Aaron Messer	Chris Brown Terry Luplow	Jim & Janice Sager
June				
3 - 9:30 am <i>The Holy Trinity</i>	Larry Elliott	Savannah Blair Georgie Bebow	Tyrel Harwager Miguel Ortiz	Jenny Baughman

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