

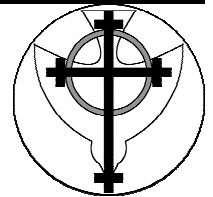
# The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

August, 2009



## From the Desk of Pastor Messer



What a truly blessed and awesome week it was for those of us who attended the Higher Things Lutheran Youth Conference in Grand Rapids (July 21-24). Words cannot adequately describe what it's like to be in the company of over 900 brothers and sisters in Christ, most of whom are under the age of 18, as the historic liturgy and hymnody of our confession are beautifully and faithfully sung. Wow! That's about the best I can do – Wow! And, yes, I know I say that every year, but that's simply because I am always wowed by the Services at these Conferences.

And, as if the unbelievably reverent and beautiful Services in God's House were not enough, we were also privileged to receive some of the best teaching around from so many faithful pastors and servants in our church body. The theme for the conference was "Sola," which is Latin for "Alone." Solo Christo – Christ alone; Sola Gratia – Grace alone; Sola Fide – Faith alone; Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone. These "solas" – these "alones" – define the eternal truths of our Christian religion. We are justified (saved, declared righteous) by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; all of which is revealed to us by Scripture alone. And all of this leads us to declare, "Soli deo Gloria," that is, "to God alone be the glory," for He alone is the author and creator of these "alones" through which we are saved.

The Plenary Speakers for this year's conference were the Rev. William Weedon, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran in Hamel, IL (whose articles and sermons I have included here from time to time, including the excellent piece found on the next page in this issue) and the Rev. Bruce Keseman, pastor of Our Savior Lutheran in Freeburg, IL. Both of them did a wonderful job catechizing our youth in the "solas" of our faith. Their love for our Lord and His Word is simply contagious, and their teaching was as solid as can be.

What always amazes me about these excellent conferences, besides the beautiful worship services and solid catechesis (teaching), is the desire I see in the youth to learn more about our Christian faith. The idea held by many in our day and age that our kids are disinterested in their Christian faith and that we need to "dumb things down" and "fun things up" for them is blown away by what I witness at Higher Things conferences. This is the second year in a row that I was privileged to teach one of the In-Depth Sectionals and the youth who attended my class were anything but disinterested or bored. They wanted to learn. They asked questions and participated in the discussion. I was thoroughly impressed.

I thank God for Higher Things and am so grateful to the brothers and sisters in Christ who put so much hard work into making these Youth Conferences the best they can be. These are, by far, the absolute best Christian Youth Conferences around, and our youth are richly blessed to

have them available. More to come on the conference in next month's newsletter!

In Christ,  
*Pastor Messer*



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# Correcting a Misperception

By Rev. William Weedon, Pastor at St. Paul Lutheran in Hamel, IL

*In this brief article, Pastor Weedon does a remarkable job of defending the truth which we Lutherans teach, namely that we are simultaneously just (or, righteous) and sinners (simul iustus et peccator). While he is directing his comments here toward former Lutherans, it behooves us current Lutherans to pay attention, for there is a tendency among Lutherans to fall into the trap of "cheap grace," believing that we are free to go out and sin as much as we please, since we can simply come to church and be forgiven. As Pastor Weedon points out, this is not what we Lutherans believe, teach, and confess. The Christian life is a struggle against sin, not a license to indulge sin.*



Some former Lutherans persist in slandering our faith by saying that it is spiritually damaging - pointing especially to the teaching that we are simultaneously just and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*). Thus, to their way of thinking, Lutherans teach that one may intentionally

and willfully persist in sin and rejoice in forgiveness. But this is a complete falsification of our teaching.

Lutherans state unequivocally:

*Nor indeed is this faith idle knowledge, nor can it coexist with mortal sin. (Apology IV.115)*

*For through one's entire life, repentance contends with the sin remaining in the flesh. Paul testifies that he wars with the law in his members, not by his own powers, but by the gift of the Holy Spirit that follows the forgiveness of sins. This gift daily cleanses and sweeps out the remaining sins and works to make a person truly pure and holy...The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so that it is carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants. If sin does what it wants, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present. (Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article III.40, 44)*

The person who dares to say "God loves to forgive; I love to sin; what a deal!" is no Lutheran and no Christian.

What *simul iustus et peccator* is rather seeking to confess is that to be a Christian is to be in a life-long struggle against the flesh and its lusts. You will never advance to a point where the struggle is

ended. It goes on to the very end. The fact of the struggle doesn't mean one isn't a Christian (the absence of the struggle does!). As St. Paul wrote of himself to the Romans: "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, for I have the desire to do what it right, but not the ability to carry it out." (7:18)

Such is the sad experience of every Christian: we can and do make progress in following our Savior, and yet we find that there is inside of us a wretched fountain of corruption that continues to pollute us. It drives us to the joy of grace. The joy of *simul iustus et peccator* is that we are not condemned before God for this fountain of corruption in our flesh; we fight it with every weapon of the Spirit and resist it to the grave, and we rejoice that it will finally be extinguished and removed from us on the day of our death, when our Baptism into Christ is completed, and we put off this body of death. When we are resurrected, this fountain of corruption will not be resurrected within us. And for that all glory to God!

To confess *simul iustus et peccator* is, thus, the exact opposite of saying "don't worry; do what you want; you're forgiven." It's rather saying: "Since you are forgiven, you have the Spirit to fight tooth and nail to the bitter end against this sin which inheres in your flesh and to be assured as you battle that you will win the final victory if only you remain under the forgiving blood of the Lamb of God."

Such a teaching is anything but spiritually damaging; it is in fact the only comfort and source of peace you can find when confronted with the ongoing wretched flood of filth from the flesh. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)

# A Report on the Michigan District Convention

The 99<sup>th</sup> Convention of the largest District in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was held Sunday, June 28 – Wednesday, July 1. Elder Terry Luplow and I attended as voting delegates from our congregation. What follows is a rundown of the significant happenings, along with my commentary on the same.

## Convention Theme: “Celebrate Jesus”



The Convention Theme was built upon Philippians 2:9-11, which reads, *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Maybe I’m being too nit-picky, or maybe I’m just a little dense, but I fail to understand what this passage has to do with “celebrating” Jesus? Bowing to Jesus, whose Name is above every other name – Yes! Confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father – Yes! But, “celebrating” Jesus? What does that mean? It just sounds a little too “contemporary praise worship-like” to me, and provides an illustrative example of how the Scriptures are often manipulated to arrive at a pre-conceived meaning. To go from bowing and confessing to celebrating is to change the meaning of this text, for the point of this text is not to celebrate Jesus, but to recognize Him as the Savior we need, to bow in humility before Him, and to confess that He is Lord.

Now, for those of you who may think that I’m making too much out of this—after all, it’s just the Convention Theme; gee whiz, relax a little, pastor—I have a little exercise for you to do. It won’t take long. Simply get out your Bibles (hopefully you won’t have to dust them off) and turn to the Concordance in the back, which has a list of words used throughout Scripture along with references to verses which employ those words. Go ahead, I’ll wait . . . Okay, now look up the word, “celebrate.” And, while you’re at it, look up the word, “fun,” too. What do you find? Interesting, isn’t it?

## New District President Elected

Rev. David P.E. Maier (son of Walter A. Maier II and brother of Walter A. Maier III, both of whom are professors at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, and nephew of Paul Maier, renowned historian, author of several books, and professor at Western Michigan University) was elected as the 15<sup>th</sup> President of the Michigan District. Rev. C. William Hoesman could not stand for re-election due to term



limits and is planning to retire in October of this year. Rev. Maier won on the first ballot, receiving 51.9% of the votes cast. The candidate we supported, Rev. David H. Reed, came in a distant second at 21.0% of the vote.

## Convention Services

I did not attend the opening Divine Service on Sunday evening, as I was attending the graduation party of my cousin, but heard that it was surprisingly right out of LSB and free of any contemporary praise ditties. My convention experience began on Monday morning with a truncated version of Matins, in which the preacher left the pulpit to deliver his entertaining and energetic “message” from the center of the chancel, the thrust of which was aimed at getting us to break free from our comfort zones and celebrate Jesus by getting out there to reach the lost. The



underlying implication was that we should be willing to do whatever it takes to get the Gospel out. That’s a common theme among those who follow the Church Growth Method. The problem is that our Lord never tells us to do whatever it takes to reach the lost in His Word. Rather, He is vividly clear on how the lost are reached, namely through the means of grace He Himself has established, i.e. His Holy Word and Sacraments. But, for many, the Lord’s means of grace are not enough. More is needed, they think. The means of grace must be supplemented with our own efforts. Thus, they believe that we must determine what it is that people want in church and then give it to them. Of course, this flies in the face of what our Lord teaches us time and time again in His Word. We are not to give people what they want, but rather deliver unto them what they need. We are not to compromise the Lord’s Word in any way, shape, or form, but cling to it steadfastly in faith, trusting that the Lord will accomplish what He will through His Word, according to His promise.

This idea, being promoted everywhere today, that the church must somehow help God out, since He’s obviously not getting things done by the means He established, is reminiscent of the time when Abram and Sarai decided to take matters into their own hands and help the Lord out. He promised them a son, but didn’t seem to be delivering. So, they reasoned that maybe God was waiting on them to get this done themselves. Thus, they came up with their own solution. They would have Sarai’s maidservant, Hagar, serve as a surrogate. How did that whole thing work out for them? If you don’t remember, look that account up and read it again. It teaches us an enduring lesson about trusting in the Lord, even when it seems that His ways are not producing the results we would like to see.

I passed on the Tuesday morning Service, but attended the Tuesday evening Installation Service, in which President Kieschnick preached. After the five minute introductory comments in which he thanked everyone and their brother, and paid tribute to the service of Rev. Hoesman as District President for the last 12 years, leading the congregation in applause (which led into a standing ovation) – I didn’t clap or stand, since it really makes me itchy to do such in God’s House; but that’s just me – he launched into his message titled, “Life Is Just So Overwhelming.” It was typical Jerry Kieschnick preaching. Every time I’ve heard him preach, he’s followed the same format: First, he shares personal stories about how he’s “sharing the Gospel” with others, then he emphasizes the utter urgency there is for reaching the lost, and finally exhorts us to follow his example. Terry commented to me that it was a bit like hearing Joel Osteen preach. To be fair, unlike Osteen, Kieschnick does talk about sin and hell, and even points to Jesus as Savior, but the point is well taken, since he does similarly put himself forward as an example to follow. Every time I’ve heard him preach, I leave a bit disheartened, since I know I could never be as good a Christian as Jerry is. I’d much rather hear a Law and Gospel sermon than a motivational message, since the former leads me to repentance and faith, while the latter leads me only to doubt and despair, for no matter how hard I try, I just can’t get it done on my own. I fully admit that I need Jesus. Without Him, I am lost indeed!

### Devotionals

There were over 200 pastors in attendance at the convention and yet all of the devotionals and prayers were led/offered by laymen. Many of us found that a bit strange. I have nothing against laymen. Love ‘em! Used to be one! But, having laymen lead/offer the devotionals and prayers when



there is a room full of pastors is not only a little weird, but is a bit too “everyone a minister” for me, which, again, comes right out of the Church Growth Movement playbook. While all Christians belong to the Priesthood of All Believers, not all Christians have been called and ordained to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry. That doesn’t mean

that pastors are any better than laypeople, nor does it mean that laypeople can’t ever lead public prayer. It just means that the Lord has set apart certain men to serve in His stead and by His command in His Church. To avoid confusion and to steer clear of falling down the slippery slope created by those who refuse to heed the Lord’s Word and maintain the distinction between the Office of the Holy Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers, it would have been much more preferable to have ordained ministers leading the Convention devotions, especially when there were so many available to do so.

### Resolutions: Convention Business

The way we handled the business of the convention was more than a little disappointing. Of the 22 resolutions which



called for our action, only 11 were acted upon (and the action of one of those eleven was simply to table it until the next convention).

Especially disappointing was the fact that we conveniently skipped

over two resolutions (one that called for us to reject gender neutral language in Scripture, translations, liturgies, and hymns; the other that resolved that we seek unity in worship practice) to get to a resolution to address clergy mental health (especially “burnout”), which was amended to address “professional church worker” mental health, instead of just “clergy” mental health. Here’s a rundown of the resolutions:

#### Floor Committee 1: Theology, Mission and Relations

- 1-01 To commend the use of “Partners in Ministry: Ethical Conduct for Congregations and Professional Church Workers” (Passed with overwhelming majority and little debate)
- 1-02 To encourage accountable internet usage in Michigan District Churches (Passed)
- 1-03 To promote healthy marriages (Passed)
- 1-04 To promote the Biblical understanding of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Lots of discussion on this one, which was prompted by a pastoral delegate going to the mike to oppose the resolution on the basis that he felt we would be taking the civil rights away of many of our children whom he argued did not choose to be gay or lesbian, but were made that way by God. He brought up the polygamy found in Scripture and argued that different cultures and different times called for a different approach toward marriage. The resolution eventually passed).
- 1-05 To oppose embryonic stem cell research (The same pastoral delegate who opposed 1-04 went to the mike to oppose this resolution as well. Lots of discussion, but eventually passed)
- 1-06 To reject gender neutral language in Scripture, translations, liturgies, and hymns (Skipped this one – too theological, I guess)
- 1-07 To encourage congregations of the Michigan District to seek unity in worship practice (Skipped this one, too - no word was given as to why we were skipping these resolutions, it just happened. Given the fact that there is such diversity in worship practice, especially in our District, one does not

have to strain one's brain too hard to figure out why this one was conveniently skipped over)

- 1-08 To address clergy mental health (amended to 1-08A and passed with the title "professional church worker" replacing "clergy")
- 1-09 To plan for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Reformation, etc. (Didn't get to this one)

#### Floor Committee 2: Administration/Constitutional Matters

- 2-01 To transfer Prince of Peace Lutheran of Ortonville from Circuit #12 to Circuit #17 (Passed)
- 2-02 To implement changes to future Michigan District Conventions (Lots of discussion on this one; it involved changing the timing of the convention from summer to fall, combining the All Professional Church Workers Conference with the Convention, and changing from a Sunday-Wednesday format to a Thursday-Saturday format; many changes to District bylaws would have been required; it was tabled until the next convention)
- 2-03 To revise District Convention nomination and election procedures (Skipped, but with an explanation - we were running out of time and needed to get to the resolutions regarding the Church Extension Fund)
- 2-04 To revise the Church Extension Fund bylaws allowing the participation or purchase of loans or investments outside of the Michigan District (Passed)
- 2-05 More changes to CEF bylaws to enable the 2-04 passed resolution to stand (Passed)
- 2-06 To amend the District Bylaws regarding Article X on the CEF to enable the 2-04 passed resolution to stand (Passed)
- 2-07 To encourage participation in National Lutheran School Accreditation (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-08 To affirm mission through Lutheran Schools (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-09 To support the Lutheran character of Lutheran schools (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-10 To commend the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-11 To support Synodical Pre-Seminary Programs (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-12 To encourage Michigan District congregations to embrace disaster preparedness (Didn't get to this one)
- 2-13 To ensure proper accounting of congregational money (Didn't get to this one)

As I said, the way we conducted business was more than a little disappointing. More important to the chairman was to stick to the "orders of the day" (i.e. schedule), which included several advertisements, promotional videos, and speeches of various RSOs and such that most of us have

heard and seen many times. I say we do the business we're responsible for doing and then, if we have time, we can hear from all those organizations. Besides, there's a "Ministry Tent" housing dozens of tables (booths) for all of these organizations (and more) that we can visit throughout our time at the convention. It just seems a little ridiculous to me to leave half of the resolutions the convention delegates are called together to address unattended in order to make sure that we get all the ads in there. And I know I'm not the only one who feels this way.

#### **No Rev. Matthew Harrison**

One of the things I was looking forward to the most was hearing Rev. Matthew Harrison speak, but, alas, he didn't make the schedule. For those of you who don't know, Rev. Matthew Harrison, Executive Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, is the leading candidate to run against President Kieschnick at the 2010 LCMS Convention. Rev. Harrison is a tremendous theologian and pastor, and a confessional Lutheran to the core. Having heard reports from others regarding Rev. Harrison's address at their District Conventions, I was really looking forward to hearing him. Evidently, many tried to convince President Hoesman to allot Rev. Harrison some time, but he wouldn't do so. He was briefly acknowledged for the wonderful work he is doing, but wasn't permitted to address the assembly. I sincerely hope that this was merely pragmatic, and not political, but judging from the buzz at the Convention, it sounds like my hope is in vain.

#### **Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance (BRTFSSG)**

For those of you who haven't been playing along, the BRTFSSG was appointed by President Kieschnick a few years back to evaluate our current synodical structure and governance and to introduce proposals for improving the same. There has been a lot of heated debate within the synod ever since the BRTFSSG proposals were publicly introduced. Many fear that the adoption of these proposals would have a negative impact upon our synod, not only structurally, but also theologically. As you might guess, I'm not a big fan of the proposals. While many of them seem harmless enough on the surface, the devil is always in the details, which, in this case, are conveniently left out. And, some of the proposals are just plain bad on the surface. Besides, given the current state of affairs in our synod, which is deeply divided over many issues, this is simply not the time to be doing a massive overhaul of our structure and governance. If you want to read more about this, you can go to [www.steadfastlutherans.org](http://www.steadfastlutherans.org) and click on "Blue Ribbon Task Force" in the top box.

With all that said, having heard reports from others about the presentation of the BRTFSSG at their Conventions, I was already well prepared for what would come. However, there

did seem to be something new to the presentation, which I hadn't really heard emphasized in the reports of others before, namely an obvious attempt to sell us on the idea that all of the proposals were created with a "congregational bias." Rev. Jon Braunersreuther (President Kieschnick's personal assistant), who led the presentation, continuously repeated the phrase, "The Task Force has a congregational bias" I was trying to keep track of how many times he made reference to the Task Forces' supposed "congregational bias" – I think it was about 14 times during his presentation. It was like he was trying to use a Jedi Mind Trick on us, as if repeating this phrase over and over again would cause us to believe it to be true. I woke up in a cold sweat that night, shouting, "congregational bias" (not really). Obviously, this is an attempt to thwart the ever-growing opinion that one of the main reasons many do not like these proposals is the resultant centralization of power which would be furthered if adopted. Indeed, there are many proposals which, if adopted, would take power away from the congregations, to one degree or another, and centralize that power at the District or Synodical levels. Thus, the continued use of the phrase "congregational bias" rung hollow to many (if not, most) in the assembly.

Especially frustrating about the presentation was the way Rev. Braunersreuther handled the Q&A session. Some very good questions were asked and some very important concerns were raised, but rather than address them, he simply gave short stump speeches, which he had obviously already prepared beforehand. At the end of the day, what it all boils down to is that we're supposed to buy what he's peddling, since, after all, no matter what concerns we may have, we should a) trust our synodical leaders to do right by us and b) just believe that the proposals are necessary to save the synod (sense of urgency emphasized big time). I don't think it worked, as it seems that even those who support President Kieschnick and his administration with great enthusiasm are not too keen on these proposals. At least that's the "buzz" I heard.

### **President Kieschnick's Report**

President Kieschnick's report began with a video titled, "Trouble in River City," in which he emphasized the urgent need for the church in our day and age to be reaching out to the dead and dying world with the Gospel of Christ. It was an emotional appeal to break free from our boundaries and do whatever it takes to reach the lost. The problem is, as I said above, that this "whatever it takes" mentality is just not revealed to us by our Lord in His Word. Yes, we should be doing our best to reach the lost with the Gospel, but not at the expense of the Gospel itself, which is exactly what often ends up happening when you follow a "whatever it takes" mentality.

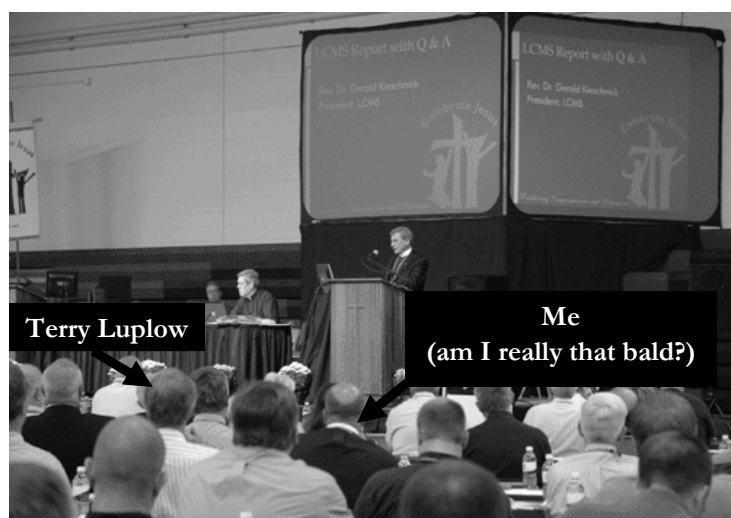
President Kieschnick followed up the video with a live

speech, in which he emphasized how united we are and what a beacon of light we are to so many others out there because of our doctrinal unity, etc. "The things that divide us pale in comparison to those things that unite us," he said. These are "unprecedented times" we are living in, presenting us with "unprecedented opportunities" to reach and save the lost. He spoke a lot about *Ablaze!(tm)*, telling us that it is our "mission of outreach" and "is being accomplished while simultaneously upholding our doctrines and confession of faith."

I beg to differ with this. When this "mission of outreach" involves the funding of new mission starts (*Ablaze![tm]* Covenant Congregations) that *purposely* do not include Lutheran in their names, and go out of their way to avoid giving the appearance that they are Lutheran in any way, shape, or form, it is *NOT* "upholding our doctrines and confession of faith."

President Kieschnick went out of his way to try to convince us that he is well aware of the problems our synod is facing. At one point, he said, "Look, I'm no imbecile; no dummy. I know there are things that divide us." I wish he would make up his mind. Are we united or divided? I guess that all depends on the audience. In any event, it is clear to me that he is of the school that believes that doctrine and practice are two completely separate things; that we can remain Lutheran in doctrine, while following (mimicking) the practices of the methabapticostals and Americanized "evangelicals." For the life of me, I simply have never been able to fathom how trained Lutheran pastors could ever adopt such a flawed and theologically untenable approach. It ain't rocket science; it ain't even rock science – if you worship like methabapticostals, you is gonna become methabapticostals. It's the whole "lex orandi, lex credendi" ("as you worship, so you believe") thing at work. Even a 7-year old can figure this stuff out. So, why do so many grown men and women struggle with it? It is mind-boggling.

As for the Q&A session with President Kieschnick, the



questions had to be submitted beforehand, which is bothersome. Why can't the president of our synod take questions from the floor and answer them? Having the questions screened and filtered out beforehand turns the whole Q&A session into a time for canned stump speeches. That this happens in the world of secular politics is one thing, but that it happens in a Christian Church body is quite another.

In any event, there was only time for around five canned answers to five pre-submitted questions. Of those five, the only real question asked had to do with worship practices. I was surprised that it was permitted at all. The question was something along the lines of, "President Kieschnick, you have stated that one of the areas in which there is some division in our synod is in the realm of worship practices. Can you tell us what specifically is at the root of that division?" The answer: "What kind of music is permissible; how much or how little of the liturgy must be present; whether or not congregations must use hymnals; that sort of thing. Our Commission on Worship is working hard at defining the appropriate parameters of worship among us."

I'm paraphrasing, as I didn't record his answer word-for-word, but that was the gist of his answer. Very short. No detail. Devoid of explanation. We got 5-10 minutes of stump-speech for all the other answers, but about 20 seconds for this one. Things that make you go, "Hmmm."

President Kieschnick's answer is just plain wrong. What stands at the root of the division among us in regards to worship is wholly theological. It's not a matter of style or taste, as he seems to believe (and so many others like him), but it is a matter of whether or not we adhere to the theology of worship revealed to us in Holy Scripture and explicated in our Lutheran Confessions. At one point, President Kieschnick made the claim that he is always studying Scripture and our Confessions. How can that be when he endorses and promotes a theology of worship that is so contradictory to them? How can that be when he endorses and promotes, and offers us as "perfect examples," congregations which one would never guess that they were Lutheran, judging by their practices? He can claim to follow Scripture and our Confessions, but the proof is in the pudding, so to speak.

The last question asked of him was a big, fat, juicy softball placed on a tee for him to hit out of the ballpark: "What can we do to support you as our synodical president? What is it that you need from us the most?" (or something to that effect). In his answer, President Kieschnick indicated that a person in leadership will receive criticism no matter what he says or does. A leader is to expect that. I agree with him on that. It is definitely true that there will be criticism lodged in

every leader's direction no matter how faithful he is. All parish pastors know this to be true. Having said that, he asked that we keep him in his prayers. But, even more so, that we keep his wife, Terry, in our prayers, for while President Kieschnick can handle the criticism that comes his way, it is often much more difficult for his wife to do so. This led into an emotional moment in the convention hall, wherein the assembly rose to their feet and faced Terry, who was seated in the back, to give her a standing ovation.

Now, I'm a sentimental chap and do not want to give the impression that I think there is anything at all wrong with acknowledging our spouses and thanking them for their love and support. Lord knows I would not be where I am today were it not for the love and support of my lovely wife. I also appreciate President Kieschnick mentioning a truth that far too often gets overlooked by many, namely that it is often difficult for spouses (and children) of leaders to deal with the criticism they will inevitably receive. I often wonder if some people even realize that pastors are people with families, too. So, while I have no problem with President Kieschnick drawing our attention to his wonderful companion, and requesting that we keep his wife in our prayers, I do think that his time would have been better served to answer serious theological questions during this limited time for doing so among us. But, as I said, the only real question asked of him received about 20 seconds worth of answer.

### Conclusion

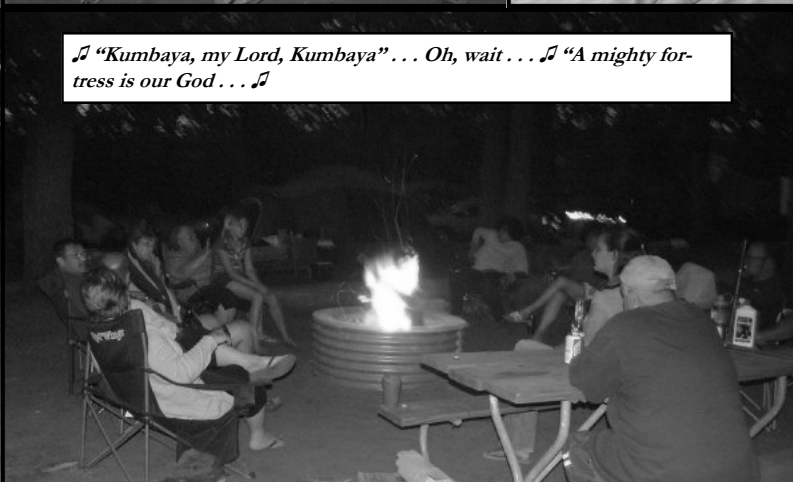
The Michigan District will remain a beacon of light for the new direction our synod is, unfortunately, heading. There was very little controversy and conflict in the convention hall, mostly due to the fact that nothing controversial really made it to the floor, but was cleverly and conveniently passed over. The only time things got even remotely heated was during the resolutions concerning marriage and embryonic stem cell research, both of which should have been slam dunks. It was, at the end of the day, a rather boring three days where nothing much was accomplished. But, I think that was exactly the plan. Maintain the status quo and avoid things that would give the appearance of there being divide in our District. That, and to give President Kieschnick center stage, upon which he could shine (he is good friends with our District). So, in that respect, mission accomplished!

In Christ,  
*Pastor Messer*



# PEACE CAMPING WEEKEND

*Several of us spent time “roughing it” at Wilson State Park in Harrison July 10-12. And several more members drove up to spend the day with us on Saturday, July 11. We ate, drank, swam, roasted marshmallows, made s’mores, sat by the campfire, relaxed, laughed, got very cold at night, dirtied our feet, and even worshipped our Lord during a Vespers Service Saturday evening. A good time was had by all. We are already looking forward to next year’s camping weekend and hope that more of you will be able to join us. Thanks to Megan for the pics . . . still waiting for some of you to email me your pics! ☺*





## **Synopsis of July 7, 2009 Church Council Minutes**

### **Call To Order & Opening Prayer**

- President Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Pastor Messer conducted the opening prayer. The following members were present: Chris Brown, Andrea Elliott, Larry Elliott, Ken Hill, Gary Miller, Carol Zeile, Megan Brown, Vern Jakolat and Sharyn Greening. Pastor Messer was also present.

### **Approval of Agenda**

- Motion made by President Brown, supported by Financial Secretary Miller to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

- Motion made by President Brown, supported by Financial Secretary Miller to approve the minutes from June 2 and June 17. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Report(s)**

- **Pastor** – Pastor Messer presented the attached report. The Council received the report into record.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer Zeile presented the attached report which included a comparison of FY2008 and FY2009 through June. A request was made by Councilmember Jakolat to include a separate report showing the loan information for the Youth Group and Pastor.
- **Financial Secretary** – Financial Secretary Miller informed the Council that plate offering has increased by almost \$4,800 when comparing FY2008 and FY2009. Twenty-five families have also increased their giving.

### **Boards**

- **Board of Elders** – Councilmember L. Elliott informed the Council that the Board of Elders accepted the removal of Connie Saxton.
- **Board of Trustees** – Councilmember Jakolat presented the Board of Trustees report which included information regarding: storage shed, insurance paperwork, soffit repair, roof estimates and the water heater. Also, Burt Henry has resigned his position as a Trustee.
- **Board of Christian Education** – Councilmember Greening presented the attached report and informed the Council of Thrivent money coming back to the church and a new Sunday School program for fall from Pax Domini. The Council received the report into record.
- **Board of Evangelism** – Councilmember A. Elliott informed the Council of the camping trip this weekend and the name of a new soldier for support.
- **Board of Stewardship** – President Brown reminded the Council that a chairperson for this Board is still needed.

### **Organization and Committee Reports**

- **Peace Youth Group** – No report.

### **Business**

- **Ink Cartridges** – Treasurer Zeile spoke with Miguel Ortiz and informed the Council that the church is not able to purchase ink cartridges at his employee rate, but the church is able to purchase them through the outlet. Treasurer Zeile will purchase a black ink cartridge and a color ink cartridge to test.

### **General Comment**

- Treasurer Zeile informed the Council that she would not be present at the August meeting but would send a written report.

### **Adjournment & Closing Prayer**

- Motion made by Financial Secretary Miller, supported by Councilmember L. Elliott to adjourn at 8:20pm. Motion carried unanimously. Pastor Messer closed with the Benediction.

Respectfully submitted,  
Megan Brown, Secretary

(Note: Complete minutes with all attachments are available in the church office for review.)

# PEACE NEWS & NOTES



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

### RALLY DAY

#### PLAN AHEAD

We will kick off the Sunday School Year on **September 13** with a Rally Day potluck after Sunday School and Adult Bible Study. Stay tuned for further information in Sunday bulletins and the September newsletter.

## PYG NEWS

### August Events

None planned at this time

Greetings in Christ,

First, I want to thank everyone for their assistance and support in getting the Youth to the SOLA conference in Grand Rapids. It was an excellent event. The liturgy and study was solidly based in the Gospel and very uplifting. Keep an eye on the PYG board for pictures and essays on the conference.

August will be primarily a review and planning month for the PYG, but we will be attempting to have at least one event during the month.

I wish to thank everyone for your continuing support of the pop can drive, used cell phone collection, and Spartan label projects.

May the Spirit of the Lord be with you,  
Jonathan Penzien



Please consider supporting this Christ-centered, Cross-focused Worldwide Outreach. You can send a donation at any time by making a check payable to:

Lutheran Public Radio  
P.O. Box 912  
Collinsville, IL 62234

You can also donate online via PayPal by going to [www.issuesetc.org](http://www.issuesetc.org) and clicking on "Donate." There are also forms available in the church office for any interested in donating monthly via automatic withdrawal.

## PEACE GOING TO THE ZOO

Peace is planning a trip to John Ball Zoo in Grand Rapids, MI on Thursday, August 27. Cost is as follows:

Adult, age 14-61	\$7.50
Seniors over 62	\$6.50
Kids age 3-13	\$5.50
Under 2	Free

Carolyn Johnson also has coupons for one free child admission with one paid adult admission. The Zoo opens at 9 am and closes at 6 pm.

Anyone interested, please contact

Carolyn Johnson 463-3052  
[darolyn1@verizon.net](mailto:darolyn1@verizon.net) or  
Andrea Elliott 463-2604  
[larry.annie@gmail.com](mailto:larry.annie@gmail.com).

We will meet at the church at 7:30 am and carpool from there.

Also, for those interested in preordering a hot or cold lunch, cost is \$3.75 each. For more details, call Carolyn Johnson. Please RSVP by August 13.

## TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME!



### SUNDAY, AUGUST 16 LANSING LUGNUTS GAME AT 2 PM

We would like to attend a Lugnuts ballgame against the Great Lakes Loons. If we can get 20 people to sign up, we qualify for a group rate of \$9 for box seats, a raffle prize for one of our group, and group recognition on the scoreboard. Kids under age 12 receive a coupon for a free hot dog and soda! It is Christian Family Day and the kids also get to run the bases. Families and friends are invited. **Deadline for reservations and payment is August 6.** Please contact Carolyn Johnson at 463-3052 ([darolyn1@verizon.net](mailto:darolyn1@verizon.net)) or Mary Jakolat at 463-5754 ([contact@peacealma.org](mailto:contact@peacealma.org)) for more info.

# PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd

## AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE AUGUST 7 – 8, 2009 BRECKENRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life will be held at Breckenridge High School starting at 3pm Friday, August 7 through 3pm Saturday, August 8.

We are still receiving prior year tee-shirts, so if you have a RFL tee-shirt, still in reasonably good condition from a previous relay, please consider donating it to one of the Co-Captains for use in making tote bags. These tote bags should be soon available for sale at approximately \$15 each using donated labor with all proceeds going to the American Cancer Society.

Contributions or pledges can be made to any of the Co-Captains: Coaline Luplow, Dorothy Trgina, Bill Brostrom. or Don Reithel; the purchase of luminaria can also be done through them. If writing a check, it should be endorsed to the American Cancer Society. If additional questions, please contact Don Reithel, Gratiot County Event Chairperson at cell number (989) 289-2274 or, by email [dreithel@edzone.net](mailto:dreithel@edzone.net)

A "Care Abounds in Communities" supplementary grant of \$750 will be given by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, meaning fundraising and contributions or pledges given through the Peace Lutheran/Immanuel Lutheran Church team will be supplemented by TFFL at \$.50 for each dollar fundraised to a maximum grant of \$750, or, at least \$1500 will have to be raised to receive the full grant given by Thrivent.

Thanks for your support in the fight against this dreaded disease and, if you can, please join us in Breckenridge on August 7!!



## CHURCH RUMMAGE SALE AND BAKE SALE TO SUPPORT SEM STUDENT

Messiah Lutheran Church  
4640 North Michigan, Saginaw, MI

**Friday, August 7**  
**Saturday, August 8**  
**from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

All proceeds will be used to support Ryan Beffrey, a member of Messiah who is a second year seminary student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN.

This sale includes a variety of household items, books, videos, games, toys, and clothing in all sizes. All merchandise is clean, in good condition, and the sale is well organized. A small bake sale will also be held. Matching funds have been applied for from Thrivent for Lutherans, West Saginaw County Branch.

## Come join us on the Trail!

*The Wittenberg Trail is the online community for people exploring and confessing the Lutheran faith. To join the community, go to:*

[www.wittenbergtrail.ning.com](http://www.wittenbergtrail.ning.com)



*To join our Peace Lutheran group on the Trail:*

[www.wittenbergtrail.ning.com/group/peacelutheranalmamichigan](http://www.wittenbergtrail.ning.com/group/peacelutheranalmamichigan)

## TABLE TALK

Our Table Talks are informal and informative discussions with Pastor Messer on various topics decided by the group in attendance. Plus, THEY'RE FUN! Our next Table Talk will take place on Thursday, **September 3 at 7:00 p.m. at Pastor Messer's house** (around the campfire). Bring a chair and some topics! We hope you'll join us!



## Update from the Treasurer

For those of you who were unable to attend, following is a summary of the report presented at the Voters' Assembly on July 26, 2009. You will notice that this is a comparison of our income and expenses on June 28, 2008 and June 28, 2009. In this way we are able to compare six months of data.

### PLC Income and Expenses

	As of 6/28/09		As of 6/28/08	
	Total Actual	Total Budgeted	Total Actual	Total Budgeted
<u>Income</u>				
Offering	\$53,368.83	\$114,655.00	\$47,547.08	\$114,655.00
Rental Income : City	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$0.00
Rental Income : Weight Watchers	\$630.00	\$1,560.00	\$750.00	\$1,560.00
 Total Income	 \$53,998.83	 \$116,215.00	 \$48,447.08	 \$116,215.00
<u>Expense</u>				
Church and Worship : Altar and Worship	\$877.20	\$1,500.00	\$604.49	\$1,800.00
Church and Worship : Christian Education	\$992.62	\$800.00	\$640.65	\$1,000.00
Church and Worship : Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$150.00
Church and Worship : Music	\$814.90	\$2,000.00	\$704.95	\$2,500.00
Church and Worship : Stewardship	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$300.00
Church and Worship : Evangelism	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Church and Worship : Youth Group	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,500.00
Miscellaneous	\$304.88		\$196.30	\$0.00
Missions : Issues, Etc.	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Missions : Local	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$180.00	\$250.00
Operating Expense: Administrative Assistant	\$2,600.00	\$5,200.00	\$592.00	\$2,408.00
Operating Expense : Advertising	\$131.31	\$200.00	\$432.00	\$900.00
Operating Expense : Building Maintenance	\$905.98	\$1,000.00	\$1240.57	\$2,000.00
Operating Expense : Insurance	\$1408.00	\$2,800.00	\$1519.00	\$3,000.00
Operating Expense : Janitorial	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1716.00	\$3,500.00
Operating Expense : Snow Removal	\$1,080.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,088.00	\$1,750.00
Operating Expense : Maintenance Supplies	\$349.22	\$250.00	\$367.56	\$250.00
Operating Expense : Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00
Operating Expense : Office Expense	\$2,486.35	\$2,400.00	\$1,974.52	\$2,500.00
Operating Expense : Telephone/Internet	\$998.18	\$2,000.00	\$989.71	\$1,750.00
Operating Expense : Utilities	\$3,932.89	\$5,500.00	\$3,141.52	\$5,500.00
Pastoral Expense : Benefit Package	\$11,078.32	\$22,000.00	\$10,029.87	\$19,000.00
Pastoral Expense : Conferences and Training	\$875.78	\$1,000.00	\$180.00	\$1,000.00
Pastoral Expense : Down Payment Loan	\$1,110.00	\$2,220.00	\$1,110.00	\$2,220.00
Pastoral Expense : Guest Pastors	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
Pastoral Expense : Mileage	\$955.22	\$2,000.00	\$798.82	\$2,000.00
Pastoral Expense : Book Allowance	\$365.22	\$500.00	\$191.30	\$500.00
Pastoral Expense : Salary	\$30,857.04	\$62,045.00	\$31,338.47	\$59,645.00
 Total Expenses	 \$63,123.11	 \$116,215.00	 \$61,035.73	 \$116,215.00
 Total:	 -\$9,124.28	 \$0.00	 -\$12,588.65	 \$0.00

Please let me know if you have questions.  
In Christ,  
Carol Zeile

# Ladies' Guild

## Ladies' Guild Meeting

Our Ladies' Guild is on hiatus through August. Our next meeting will be **Monday, September 14, 2009 at 7pm.** Hostess will be Marlene Miller. 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



If you wish to be added to the prayer chain as a caller, see Carol Durst or Beth Brostrom. If you wish to have yourself or someone else "sent through the chain," call Carol Durst at 463-2270.

## Altar Flowers

There is a Flower Calendar for 2009 posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. If you wish to place flowers on the altar sometime during the year, please fill your name in on the calendar and contact the church office with any information that you wish to have included in the bulletin. A bouquet costs \$25 and usually lasts about one (1) month. **We would like to encourage 2 persons (families) to purchase flowers each month, one for each plant stand.** If paying the church for the flowers, checks should be made payable to Peace Lutheran, Church with a separate sizeable note marked "Flower Fund," attached and placed in the Financial Secretary's envelope in the church office. Thank you for helping to beautify our chancel. Questions? See Beth Brostrom, Cheryl Henry or Marilyn Oswald.



## PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES' GUILD AND



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

- Pads of ruled notebook paper (8-1/2"x11") containing 150-200 sheets
- One - blunt scissors
- One - 30 centimeter ruler (or ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other)
- One - pencil sharpener
- 6 - new pencils w/erasers
- One - eraser (approx. 2-1/2" long)
- 12 - sheets construction paper in assorted colors
- One box - 8, 16, or 24 crayons
- One - cloth bag (approx. 12"x14" w/handles)

**(See Beth for directions to make bags)**

Collection Dates:  
July 1—September 15

## Altar Care



### August

Andrea Elliott

### September

Marlene Miller/Charlotte Dargie

### October

Carolyn Johnson

## Coffee Hostesses

### August

- 2 Jenny Baughman
- 9 Marilyn Oswald
- 16 Beth Brostrom
- 23 M. Miller/C. Dargie
- 30 Mary Jakolat

### September

- 6 Jennie Harmon
- 13 Carolyn Johnson
- 20 Peace Youth Group
- 27 S. Greening/M. Brown

### October

- 4 Janice Sager
- 11 NO COFFEE/  
PASTOR APPRECIATION
- 18 Lisa Messer
- 25 M. Isaksson/H. Meyer



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

## Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

- Sunday School will reconvene on Sunday, September 13, 2009. Join us for a Rally Day potluck!
- Adult Bible Class is offered **every Sunday at 11 am.** for all adult members of Peace and guests. We are currently doing a detailed study of the very interesting **Book of Hebrews.**

## Together in the Word

- Our *Together in the Word* Bible Study meets on **Thursday mornings at 10 am.** All men and women of Peace who are available at that time are encouraged to join us. Guests are always welcome as well. We are studying the book of **Leviticus.** Please plan on joining us soon.

## “Christian History 101”

- Weekly classes are held on **Wednesdays at 6 pm.** The class is studying the history of the Christian Church from the time of the apostles to today. Few Christians today really know and understand the history of the Christian Church, so this is a study that will benefit all who attend.



## AUGUST

### Happy Birthday to:

- 1 Violet Byers
- 5 Phillip Schafer
- 7 Bill Hendrick
- 10 Jennie Harmon
- 20 Megan Brown
- 25 Megan Kuehnlein
- 29 Jeanette Bigelow
- 29 Michael Harrison
- 30 Amy Lesinger
- 31 Jonathan Penzien

### Happy Anniversary to:

- 9 Larry and Andrea Elliott
- 14 Daren and Carolyn Johnson
- 14 Lois and Philip Ramsey
- 18 Tina and Blaine Schafer
- 23 Jack and Janice Langan

We apologize for not including Ella Shaw on July 1 in our July birthdays.

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

## WEDNESDAY EVENING DIVINE SERVICES

In July we began celebrating the Feasts and Festivals found on page xi of Lutheran Service Book at 7 pm on the Wednesday evening closest to the Feast/Festival calendar date. Previously, we were celebrating those Feasts and Festivals as they came up on the calendar at Noon. Some months we may have to add additional Services at Noon to get them all in, and some months do not have enough Feasts/Festivals to fill up our Wednesdays, so we'll use the daily lectionary or focus on a commemoration when that happens.

In any event, we are hoping that many will take advantage of this additional opportunity to receive Word and Sacrament in the Lord's House, especially if you have to miss on Sunday.

## PAROCHIAL REPORT

(as of 7/09)

### Membership at Peace

Baptized - 159; Confirmed - 137

### Membership gains: 4

Tom & Sally Pease (*Transferred from St. Paul in Kalkaska, MI*)

Kevin & Linda Sellke (*Transferred from Trinity in Gaylord, MI*)

### Membership losses: 0










### Financial Report as of 7/26/09

YTD Budgeted.....	\$67,050.00
YTD Receipts.....	\$61,207.53
Difference.....	\$ -5,842.47

# August 2009

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

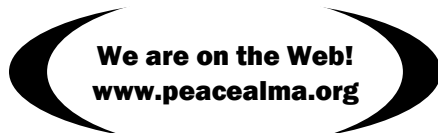
Peace Lutheran Church  
325 E. Warwick Drive  
Alma, MI 48801  
(989) 463-5754  
contact@peacealma.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<b>August 1</b>
<b>2 8th Sunday after Trinity</b> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—Bible Study 	<b>3</b> 	<b>4</b> 7 pm—Church Council	<b>5</b> 6 pm—"Christian History" 7 pm—Divine Service <i>St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord</i> 	<b>6</b> 10 am—Together in Word 5 pm—Weight Watchers	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9 9th Sunday after Trinity</b> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—Bible Study 	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 6 pm—"Christian History" 7 pm—Divine Service <i>St. Bartholomew, Apostle</i> 	<b>13</b> NO Together in the Word 5 pm—Weight Watchers	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16 10th Sunday after Trinity</b> 9:30—Prayer and Preaching 10:45—Fellowship 	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
				<i>Pastor Messer on Vacation</i> 5 pm—Weight Watchers		
<b>23 11th Sunday after Trinity</b> 9:30—Prayer and Preaching 10:45—Fellowship 	<b>24</b> <div>Newsletter articles due</div>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
				<i>Pastor Messer on Vacation</i> 7:30 am—Trip to Zoo GR 5 pm—Weight Watchers		
<b>30 12th Sunday after Trinity</b> 7:30—Elders Meeting 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—Bible Study 	<b>31</b>	<b>September 1</b>	<b>2</b> 6 pm—"Christian History" 7 pm—Divine Service <i>Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist</i> 	<b>3</b> 10 am—Together in Word 5 pm—Weight Watchers 7 pm—Table Talk around the Campfire (Pastor's house)	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>



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

Church: 989-463-5754  
E-mail: [contact@peacealma.org](mailto: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 August*

August	ELDER	ACOLYTES	ORGANIST	USHERS	GREETERS
2 - 9:30 am (Trinity 8)	Dave Zeile	Melanie Penzien Phillip Schafer	Mary Jakolat	Bill Hendrick Gary Miller	Curt and Tammy Oswald
9 - 9:30 am (Trinity 9)	Miguel Ortiz	Sarah Messer BJ Henry	Mary Jakolat	Chris Brown Jonathan Penzien	Terry and Coaline Luplow
16 - 9:30 am (Trinity 10)	Terry Luplow	Tyrel Harwager Jordan Henry	Beth Brostrom	Curt Oswald Bill Brostrom	Carol Durst Marlene Wiltshire
23 - 9:30 am (Trinity 11)	Terry Luplow	Sierra Luplow Aaron Messer	Beth Brostrom	James Sager Gary Miller	Lois Miller Lillian Manns
30 - 9:30 am (Trinity 12)	Miguel Ortiz	Samantha Messer Ashleigh Rodriguez	Mary Jakolat	Vern Jakolat Daren Johnson	Jenny Baughman
<b>September</b>					
6 - 9:30 am (Trinity 13)	Dave Zeile	Natalie Penzien Rebekah Rodriguez	Beth Brostrom	Bill Hendrick Jonathan Penzien	Dorothy Trgina

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