

The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

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



Fifty Years of God's Grace

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From the Desk of Pastor Messer "Come, Lord Jesus"

"Come, Lord Jesus." That's the prayer the Christian Church has been praying now for nearly two thousand years. That's the prayer that brings Holy Scripture to a close: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus be with all. Amen" (Rev. 22:20-21).

As Christians, this prayer should be always on our lips, for we know that the Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on the Last Day is our "blessed hope" and will bring us unspeakable peace and joy. On that Day, we will inherit the eternal Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world (cf. Matt. 25:34), where there will be no more pain and suffering, no more tears and mourning, no more sin, but only peace, joy, comfort, perfection, and unknowable bliss. All the struggles we endure in the wilderness of this sinful world will be decidedly absent in the world to come, the "new heavens and earth" our Lord will establish on the Last Day. We will live life as it was meant to be lived then, in full communion with our Triune God and with all His children, the saints of all time. Thus, we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus."

This prayer is especially on our lips as we begin a new Church Year with the season of Advent, during which we anticipate our Lord's Coming, both in the manger on Christmas and on the clouds in great glory on the Last Day. Advent is a season of prayer and reflection. It is a penitential season, much like the season of Lent—a time for Christians to examine themselves, recognize their sinfulness and their desperate need of a Savior. It is a season of anticipation and expectation—a time for Christians to meditate upon the Coming of the Savior they need, the One who came to earth in our Flesh to save us, the One who continues to come through Word and Sacrament to give us the salvation He won for us, and the One who will come on the Last Day to bring us into His eternal Kingdom.

Advent is not Christmas. That should go without saying, but we need to be reminded of this truth from time to time, especially since we live in a culture that has gone out of its way to secularize and commercialize Christmas. The world has turned the period between Thanksgiving Day (or, is it



Halloween? - it seems to get earlier every year) and Christmas Day into an extended “Holiday Season,” focused on its own agenda. The world has no use for the season of Advent. The world is not looking for the Coming of Christ. The world could not care less what you believe. The world has no use for repentance and faith. The world is only interested in the bottom line. And, to get to the bottom line it desires, the world has hi-jacked Christmas and turned it into its own “season,” replete with its own created symbols and such.

The Church is powerless to stop the world from doing what it wants. We will not be able to convince the world to replace its self-created “Holiday Season” with the penitential season of Advent. The world would simply laugh at such a suggestion—all the way to the bank!

But, what the Church can, and should, do is restrain herself from falling into the world’s ways. The Church can, and should, retain the preparatory season of Advent, for it is good, right, and salutary for the Church to spend the weeks leading up to Christmas in prayerful meditation upon the Coming of her Lord. As the world busies itself with all the hustle and bustle of its “Holiday Season,” let the Church busy herself with self-examination, prayer, anticipation, and expectation. The grand celebration of our Lord’s Blessed Nativity will come soon enough. Let us be prepared to celebrate it faithfully when it does. Let us allow the season of Advent to have its way with us, that we may be led to pray with the faithful of all time:

Stir up, we implore you, your power, O Lord, and come, that by your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and be saved by your mighty deliverance; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

God grant you a holy and blessed Advent, beloved!

In Christ,
Pastor Messer

Installation of Newly Elected Officers

The following members were elected (or reelected) to serve as officers in our congregation at the Voters’ Assembly in October, and will begin their terms on January 1, 2013:

Vice President	Chris Brown
Treasurer	Carol Zeile
Secretary	Megan Brown
Board of Elders	Miguel Ortiz
Board of Trustees	Daren Johnson
Bd. of Christian Ed.	Janice Sager
Financial Secretary	Coaline Luplow (<i>will be appointed on Jan. 2</i>)

Congratulations to all of you and thank you for volunteering to serve our congregation!

*Installation of New Officers will take place during Divine Service on **Sunday, December 30.** Please be there to be installed into office if at all possible!*

✠ Advent Schedule at Peace ✠

Wednesdays in Advent (December 5, 12, 19)

7:30 a.m.	Matins
12:00 p.m.	Sext
4:30 p.m.	Vespers
6:00 p.m.	Advent Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer

Feast Services during Advent

Thursday, December 6	Noon	Divine Service (Feast of St. Nicholas)
Thursday, December 13	Noon	Divine Service (Feast of St. Lucy)
Thursday, December 20	Noon	Divine Service (Feast of St. Thomas)

Wednesdays in Advent will be full days of prayer at Peace this year. The Offices of Matins, Sext, and Vespers will be short, spoken prayer Services. We will gather for soup and salad dinner at 6:00 p.m., followed by sung Evening Prayer at 7:00 p.m. On Wednesday, December 19, Evening Prayer will include our Children's Christmas Program. On Thursdays at Noon, we'll gather to be fed upon Word and Supper during the Feast Services listed above. We hope that you will join us when you can to prayerfully and penitentially prepare for the Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

✠ Christmas Services at Peace ✠

Children's Christmas Program

Our Sunday School children will share the story of our Lord's Nativity with us through drama and song on Wednesday, December 19 at 7:00 p.m. Please make plans to come out and support our children, who are working hard to prepare!

Service of Lessons and Carols

Our Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m. This is a beautiful and popular Service which puts before us the account of our Lord's Holy Birth through Holy Scripture and Hymnody (including many beloved Christmas Carols), and the preaching of the Holy Gospel. This Service also includes the lighting of the Christ Candle, with the singing of Silent Night and the Christmas Prayer by candlelight.

Midnight Mass



Midnight Mass will be celebrated at 11:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve/Day again this year at Peace. This is one of the most beautiful Services held throughout the year. The Mass begins by candlelight, with the reading of the ancient Christmas Martyrology and Procession of the Christ Candle, and there is just something special and unique about being in the Lord's House to celebrate His Nativity and to receive the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood right around when the clock strikes Midnight. We hope that many of you will be able to attend this most solemn and blessed Mass with us this year!

The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Morning

The Divine Service on Christmas morning will be held on Christmas Morning at 9:30 a.m. The Holy Gospel for this Divine Service is the glorious Prologue to the Gospel According to St. John, where we are blessed to hear and meditate upon the fact that the Eternal Word of the Father became Flesh and Tabernacled among us. It is a different Divine Service than Midnight Mass, so those who would like to attend both are certainly welcomed and encouraged to do so.



“Divine Humility and Love”

Not a palace, but a stable (or cave). Not a cushioned crib, but a feeding trough for animals (a manger). Not in a rich powerful city, but in lowly Bethlehem. Not to rich, powerful, royal, and influential parents, but to a simple carpenter and lowly maiden. Not with great fanfare, pomp, and circumstance, but while the world slept unaware—the only announcement made by the angels to shepherds in the fields. This is how the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity made His entrance into our flesh in order to bear our sins and be our Savior. It is nothing short of amazing! Hearing the remarkable details of our Lord’s birth never gets old, which is why the Church continues to sing, “Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth” (“Savior of the Nations, Come” - LSB 332, st. 1).

Marvel, indeed! God is born a baby! The Eternal Word of the Father, the very Creator of all things, the One who spoke creation into existence, descends from heaven to be born into His creation.

In Mary’s arms, nursing from her breasts, is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. He humbles Himself to assume our human flesh and become dependent upon the milk of His mother and the care of his earthly father, even while He continues to hold the entire universe in His tiny little hands. If this does not cause you to marvel, nothing will!

The Divine Humility of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, is truly a marvelous thing to behold. The holy angels are amazed by it and long to delve into what they perceive to be the mystery of mysteries. They have seen the One who lies seemingly helpless in a manger in all His glory. They know Who this Baby named Jesus really is, and it amazes them to see Him in this manner. Not only that, but they know the reason God takes on human flesh and is born into this dead and dying world, namely to save sinful humanity, and they cannot help but sing His praises. As they gaze upon Almighty God, their Lord and Master, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a dirty, feeding trough, they marvel not only at His Divine Humility, but at His Divine Love for sinful mankind, for it is that Divine Love which moved Him to subject Himself to such humility.

The Divine Humility and Love we see on display in Bethlehem on that Holy Night long ago continued to be exemplified in our Lord Jesus throughout His salvific pilgrimage to our sinful world. He did not come seeking honor and fame, but to serve and love God and neighbor completely and perfectly in our place. He did not come to conquer the world and establish a mighty earthly empire, but to do battle with, and defeat, sin, death, and the devil on our behalf. He did not come to be served, but to serve. The One who chose to be born in such low estate lived in poverty throughout His time here, relying upon His Father to provide for His every need. He had no place to lay His head. He had no accumulation of material possessions. There was nothing about His appearance that would draw people to Him. In short, the Divine Humility we witness at His birth continued throughout His earthly life.

Of course, the ultimate picture of our Lord’s Divine Humility and Love is seen in Jerusalem thirty-some years after His ignoble birth. We see it when He washes the feet of His disciples. We see it when He sweats blood while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, submitting to His Father’s will. We see it when He submits to being arrested. We see it when He is spit upon, beaten, mocked, and severely flogged. We see it in His silence before Caiaphas and Pilate. We see it when He carries His own cross to Golgotha outside the city gates. We

see it when He allows Simon of Cyrene to assist Him in carrying His cross. We see it when the nails are driven through His hands and feet. We see it when He hangs on that cruel instrument of torture, gasping for air. We hear it in the Words He utters from the cross, and we see it when He takes His last breath and dies.

And it's all amazing; it's all something to most definitely marvel over, for this is God Himself, Incarnate in human flesh, Who is born in such low estate, lives in such poverty, and dies such a heinous death. It becomes all the more amazing (if it's possible to ponder anything more amazing than God living and dying as a Man) when we consider that He did it all for us—for you, for me. He humbled Himself and assumed human flesh to live as your substitute; to hunger and thirst as you hunger and thirst; to be tempted as you are tempted; to experience pain and suffering as you experience pain and suffering; to be mocked and suffer injustice as you are mocked and suffer injustice; to even suffer death as you suffer death. All of it because He loves you with a Divine Love beyond our human comprehension. All of it to rescue you from the eternity you deserve because of your sins. All of it to win for you forgiveness, life, and salvation. All of it because He desires that you spend eternity with Him in perfect peace, comfort, and joy.

Dearly beloved, as we enter the holy season of Advent and make our way to Bethlehem to celebrate our Savior's birth, let us take our cue from the holy angels and ponder the mystery of our Lord's Incarnation. Let us follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and treasure this mystery in our hearts, pondering with great wonder and joy the reason our God humbled Himself to be born into this sinful world in our human flesh. He came to live and die for you, dear friends, each and every one of you. In Divine Humility and Love, He came to save you by living the life you fail to live and by dying the death you deserve to die for your sins. This is the true "reason for the season," the true meaning of Christmas.

But, let us not stop at pondering and treasuring up in our hearts this great mystery, as if this was all just some bygone story to be cherished, remembered, and passed on to others. This is no legend or fairy tale or epic saga to warm our hearts and lift our spirits as we roast chestnuts around the fire. This is no "Hallmark Special" to talk about as we sip our eggnog and open presents. Our Lord lives! His Divine Humility and Love is still on full display and still as active today as it was two millennia ago, for the same God who assumed human flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, the same God who lived to serve and love God and neighbor, the same God who allowed Himself to be treated shamefully and put to death, continues to come to us in Divine Humility and Love as we gather in His Name for Divine Service. It should not surprise us that He makes no flashy appearance in our midst, but instead comes among us humbly and hiddenly, wrapped in the swaddling cloths of His Holy Word and Sacraments. That's His way. And He comes to us in Divine Humility and Love to deliver the forgiveness, life, and salvation He accomplished for us. This, too, is the meaning of Christmas.

"Marvel now, O heav'n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth." Yes, marvel away at that! But, marvel, too, that our Lord chooses to continue to meet us in His Church in Divine Humility and Love to deliver to us His Divine Gifts. Marvel and come, at His gracious invitation, to receive His Gifts and to be filled with His Divine Humility and Love!



A Holy, Blessed, and Merry Christmas to you all!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Messer

TEST YOUR CHRISTMAS KNOWLEDGE

1. *Which Gospel(s) speak of the events surrounding Christ's birth?*
a) Mark and John, b) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, c) Luke only, d) Matthew and Luke
2. *What was the name of the King of Judea at the time of Christ's birth?*
a) Caesar Augustus, b) Quirinius, c) Herod, d) Nero
3. *How many magi (wise men) visited Christ after His birth, according to the Bible?*
a) An undisclosed number, b) One, c) Three, d) Five
4. *Where is Christ when the magi (wise men) come to visit Him?*
a) In a house, b) In the temple, c) In the manger, d) In the womb
5. *After the magi inquire of Herod where the Christ is to be born, he summons his priests and scribes, who know the location of the birth because of the prophecy of this prophet.*
a) Jonah, b) Micah, c) Amos, d) Joel
6. *What does "Immanuel" mean?*
a) Jesus saves, b) God is born, c) God in flesh, d) God with us
7. *Herod's slaughter of the male children two years old and under fulfills a prophecy uttered by what prophet?*
a) Micah, b) Joel, c) Jonah, d) Jeremiah
8. *What was the name of the father of John the Baptist?*
a) Zechariah, b) Joseph, c) Benjamin, d) John
9. *How much younger was Jesus than his cousin John the Baptist?*
a) One year, b) Twelve days, c) Six months, d) Two years
10. *What was the name of the angel who announced to Mary that she would conceive Jesus?*
a) Gabriel, b) Michael, c) Raphael, d) Cherubim
11. *Who speaks words to the pregnant Mary that have become part of the Church's traditional "Hail Mary"?*
a) Simeon, b) Elizabeth, c) Anna, d) Zechariah
12. *What does the name "Jesus" mean?*
a) The LORD saves, b) God with us, c) God is born, d) God in flesh
13. *In which Gospel do we find "The Magnificat"?*
a) Matthew, b) Mark, c) Luke, d) John
14. *Who speaks the words that have become a part of our liturgy known as the Nunc Dimittis?*
a) Zechariah, b) Simeon, c) Mary, d) Elizabeth
15. *Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem, according to the Gospel of Luke?*
a) His adoptive father, Joseph, went home for a census, b) That's where both Mary and Joseph lived,
c) His mother went to visit Elizabeth, d) Bethlehem had the best hospitals
16. *When Jesus was born, we are told that He was laid in a manger. What is a manger?*
a) A barn, b) A cave, c) A type of Inn, d) A feeding trough
17. *The Bible tells us that Christ was born in December.*
a) True, b) False
18. *How do the shepherds learn of Christ's birth?*
a) There are no shepherds in the Biblical account, b) They see a new star in the sky, c) An angel appears to them, d) The magi tell them
19. *When was Jesus circumcised?*
a) At birth, b) He wasn't, c) At 13 years old, d) at 8 days old
20. *Who prophesied to Mary that Christ was "destined for the fall and rising of many" and that "a sword would pierce her own soul also"?*
a) Anna, b) Simeon, c) Elizabeth, d) Gabriel

Answers to these questions are given on page 18



A Homily Upon Midnight Mass
Rev. Larry L. Beane II
Salem Lutheran (Gretna, LA)
24 December Anno + Domini 2010
Text: Luke 2:1-20 (Isa 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14)

In the name of + Jesus. Amen.

A prominent Jewish celebrity once quipped: “Jews know two things, suffering, and where to get great Chinese food.” He is right about suffering, anyway. For God’s people have suffered greatly ever since the fall in the garden of Eden. All mankind has suffered because of sin, that of our ancestors, and that of our own. Sin has brought suffering and death upon our world. Sin has put us at enmity with the very God who created us. And sin stands in the way of ever restoring peace and life and wholeness.

The Old Testament people of God have suffered even more. For in addition to their own sinful flesh, the children of Israel have had to contend with the attacks of the devil. For God made Satan an offer he could not refuse: the promise of a Savior of mankind who would destroy the devil, the “Seed of the woman” who is God in the flesh Himself come to put things right.

And as a result of that threat that is also a promise, Satan has attacked and harassed the children of Israel. For the Seed was carried within the bodies of this chosen people from the very first giving of the continuation of that promise to our father Abraham.

As the holy prophet preached to suffering Israel: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.” Satan has fought from the very beginning to keep us all in darkness and to prevent even the flicker of the light of hope from being kindled.

But darkness is not to win the day, dear friends, and suffering and persecution are defeated by joy and vindication. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The darkness of the Judean night on that most extraordinary day in history was rent in two by the glory shining in the heavens, the angelic hosts singing with us in our liturgy: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.”

For God is pleased with us, dear friends, not in our sins, but in our confession, in our repentance, in our forgiveness – for this is a gift of God – the Savior, born to us and to the people of Israel; “Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.” He is pleased with us, His children, because He is pleased with Jesus, His Son.

In spite of the devil’s attempts to destroy the Son, the Seed, by destroying the people in whom the Seed dwelt, in spite of the suffering of the children of Israel, in spite of the sins we have all committed and the punishment we all deserve, God has not abandoned us, the devil has not defeated us, death does not get the last word, and hell itself is defeated and turned away.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for

all people.” The covenant with the children of Israel has been extended and offered to all people. The Lord, the Seed, the Christ child, is born to us, and He is our Savior, our Champion, our Redeemer, “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession.” He is the one who overcomes darkness and defeats the devil – and God has done this through His chosen people Israel for the sake of His chosen people, the Church.

Unlike Mary and Joseph and the shepherds witnessing this “thing that has happened,” we have two millennia of hindsight. We know exactly what happened to this Christ child. We confess the truth of history and of the Church that He “was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day, He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.” We see Jesus suffering for and with Israel, and we see Jesus suffering for and with us, for our vindication and for our salvation.

He suffers for us by taking our sins to the cross, and He suffers with us taking flesh in our fallen world. He suffers that which we have earned and deserve, and we glory in that which He is and gives. And even knowing all of this, we nevertheless join the Blessed Virgin Mary in treasuring up all these things and pondering them in our hearts.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear fellow saved and redeemed and beloved of the Lord, let us not only treasure and ponder, but let us also rejoice and live in the hope that is ours by means of the gift of the Christ child.

And let us not marvel when Satan continues to attack us. For even as Mary bore the Seed within her and was persecuted by Satan, and even as the children of Israel were attacked and harassed by the devil over the course of thousands of years, so too does the church face diabolical attacks. She is attacked for the sake of Christ. She carries Christ within her in her very core of being – not in the form of the Christ child in the womb as did Blessed Mary, but in a similar way of carrying our Lord in our hearts and in our bodies through the preaching of the Word and our participation in the sacraments.

And though the devil will indeed harass us, let that encourage you, dear friends, for it means that the Christ dwells in you as well. For hear anew the promise, dear brothers and sisters: “The rod of His oppressor you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given.”

And that is not just a promise given, but a promise delivered: at the manger, on the cross, in the font, from the pulpit, and at the altar. It is a promise that gives everlasting life and salvation, delivered to Jew and Gentile alike, and it is a promise that all suffering will cease. And it is in that promise that we “are waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Amen.

Christmas blessings to each of you, “from this time forth and forevermore!” Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Believing Christians Meditate at Christmas on the Birth of Jesus Christ

Exhortation

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

If the birth of a royal prince causes comforting reflections and joy in the entire kingdom, the birth of Jesus Christ cannot fail to be a cause of joy to all people. The angels rejoice in the heavens above and proclaim to all tidings of great joy; how then could the children of God not rejoice? They rejoice over the love and mercy of God, who spared not His Son but delivered Him up for us all. They rejoice over the loving-kindness of Jesus, who though He is God and the Son of God, does not refuse to take on Himself the nature of man in a lowly virgin and to become a little child.

In quiet moments of devotion, believers marvel at the wonderful counsel of God for our salvation, which no human and no angel could ever have conceived—that the Son of God was to suffer in the place of humanity and thus reconcile all to God. They marvel at the unmerited grace that God offers to human beings who were His enemies (Rom. 5:10), and for which they did not pray, no matter how much they needed it. Therefore, they return all the more fervent thanks to Him once the counsel of God for our salvation has been revealed to them. They enter gladly into the order of salvation by clinging to Jesus in faith and by following Him in a godly and pious life. And thus the holy Christmas days become to them days of prayer, rejoicing, and thanksgiving.

Prayer

This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it! Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Arise my soul. Use this festival for the glory of God and for your edification and say: O Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, would that every drop of my blood were a tongue, that I might praise Your love, grace, and mercy!

God is love! This truth my heart and mind perceive on this holy festival. Your love has found a means for bringing grace to humanity, of which neither angels nor human beings would have dreamed to think! Namely, that the Second Person of the Godhead was to become man, to sanctify and cleanse our human nature. O gracious Jesus, everlasting praise and thanks to You for Your incarnation and birth. You became a child of man that we might become children of God. Now our human nature is truly exalted: You have united it with Your divinity and brought it into the council of the Holy Trinity. O love! O grace! As surely as the human nature is united with the divine, so surely everlasting friendship, everlasting reconciliation, everlasting peace, and everlasting love has been established between God and all people. When God beholds us in His Son, He cannot but be gracious to us. For He who spared not His beloved Son but delivered Him for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things—the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, life, and salvation?

Oh, the greatness of the love of Jesus, who chose to be born a tender infant, that He might sanctify our sinful birth! He increased in wisdom and stature that He might sanctify our youth. “Welcome to earth, O noble Guest, Through whom the sinful world is blest! You came to share my misery That You might share Your joy with me” (LSB 358:8). What thanks shall I return to You? O dearest Friend of souls! My Brother! I now have in You a helper in affliction, a deliverer in tribulation, a Savior when my sins terrify me, an aid in need, a support in death. You are my light; enlighten me! You are the Way that leads me to the Father. You are the Truth that teaches me to know that life which gives life. You are my righteousness; You justify and save me. You are my High Priest, who intercedes for me and blesses me. You are the lamb sacrificed for my trespasses, the full ransom for all my transgressions.

O precious Holy Spirit, how great is Your love in having this comfort, this joy, this salvation proclaimed to me again! From my heart I rejoice on this holy festival and say: My Jesus is mine; His heaven is mine. This Child is born for me, yes, truly for me. This Son is given for me, yes, truly for me. He has obtained and given also to me, yes to me, the grace of God, sonship with Him, and the eternal inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven.

O Jesus, whom in spirit I behold and gaze upon in the manger, how lovely, how kind You are! Grant me grace never to forget You, but to keep You ever in my heart, on my lips, and before my eyes. O my salvation, sanctify me! I yield myself to You with all that I am and have. O my Bridegroom, embrace me. For You I will live, You I will serve, from love of You I renounce the world and all the pleasures of this life. Let my heart be Your manger and Your dwelling in time and in eternity. Enfold and keep me in Your love, that I may have rest, peace, comfort, safety, and the salvation of my soul. Now that my Jesus has become man, I am not lost. Since I believe in Him, I will not perish, but have everlasting life. God is my friend because by faith I am in Jesus, and because Jesus is in me. I do not fear death, for in Him I have life. I do not fear the accusation of my conscience on account of my sins, for Jesus, my Advocate, is with me.

“Thou Christian heart, Whoe’er thou art, Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee! For God’s own Child, In mercy mild, Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee! Remember thou What glory now The Lord prepared thee for all earthly sadness. The angel host Can never boast Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness” (LSB 372:4-5). Amen.

—Starck’s Prayer Book: Revised Concordia Edition (CPH © 2009), pp. 56-58.



Ceremonial Catechesis

The Elevation and Genuflection

Over the next several months, I will include an article like this one explaining why we practice certain ceremonies during Divine Service at Peace. I'm beginning this series by focusing this month on the elevation and genuflection during the Words of Institution, since I've probably been asked more about this ceremonial practice than anything else. However, before I begin this first article, a little historical background is in order.

Most often, those who question ceremonies like this are convinced that they are "too (Roman) Catholic!" This comes from a lifetime of being erroneously taught that part of what defines Lutheranism is steering clear of any and all things done by Roman Catholics, which is a far cry from the intent of our Lutheran forefathers, who were adamant about retaining the ancient customs and ceremonies of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. They fervently rejected the accusation hurled at them by Rome that they were ditching those ancient customs and ceremonies. Thus, they confessed in the Augsburg Confession:

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. The Mass is held among us and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns. These have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ (AC XXIV:1-3—emphasis mine).

And, after Rome had responded to the Augsburg Confession with their Confutation, our Lutheran forefathers confessed in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

At the outset, we must again make this preliminary statement: we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously keep and defend it. Masses are celebrated among us every Lord's Day and on the other festivals. The Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other such things (AP XXIV:1—emphasis mine).

It is easy to discern from these two quotes from our Lutheran Confessions that our Lutheran forefathers had absolutely zero intention of doing away with the many ancient ceremonies and customs that had been practiced during the Mass (Divine Service) by Christians long before Roman Catholicism ever came on the scene. They celebrated the Mass with the highest reverence and religiously kept and defended it, preserved all the usual ceremonies, and offered the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood every Lord's Day (every Sunday) and on all the Feast Days. These things were part and parcel of what it meant to be Lutheran.

So, it is frustrating, and quite amazing, when lifelong Lutherans today get bent out of shape and accuse Lutheran pastors and congregations of being "too (Roman) Catholic" when they are simply doing the very things our own Lutheran Confessions confess that Lutherans do. What is even more frustrating is when these same lifelong Lutherans have no problem with Lutherans adopting the practices of Americanized Protestants, who do not even believe that Jesus Christ is Present among them when they gather for worship. You never hear them say, "That's too Baptist (or Methodist, or Pentecostal)!" What they fail to realize is that our Lutheran forefathers were far more opposed to the radical groups that arose during the time of the Reformation, which eventually led to all the Protestant denominations out there today, than to Rome. It was these radical groups who were guilty of doing what Rome accused Lutherans of doing, namely starting new churches and doing away with the Mass and all its usual ceremonies, etc. The radical groups began rejecting original sin, teaching that salvation is a personal decision made by a person's will to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. They began teaching that Holy Baptism was nothing more than a pledge made by the Christian to accept Jesus, which is why they did away with Infant Baptism. They began teaching that the bread and wine in the Holy Supper merely represented and symbolized Christ's body and blood. They began teaching that all the ceremonies done in worship by Roman Catholics and Lutherans were evil and needed to be eliminated. In short, the radical groups boldly and clearly rejected the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church and really did start a brand new church that had little in common with the ancient church. So it is that our Lutheran forefathers knew full well that they had far more in common with Rome than they did with the radicals and, as hard as it is for many lifelong Lutherans to hear, this remains true to this day.

That is not to say that we do not have major theological differences with Roman Catholics. We do. This is why the Reformation was necessary. Rome taught, and still teaches, a system of salvation that includes works-righteousness, something that we Lutherans vehemently reject, declaring that we are justified (saved, declared righteous) by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. For this reason, our Lutheran forefathers reformed, or eliminated, those ceremonial practices in the Mass that militated against the Gospel, most notably the language used surrounding the Holy Supper that had the priest doing the work of offering anew the “unbloody” sacrifice of Christ, which is appalling to Lutherans, who believe, teach, and confess that the Holy Supper of Christ’s very Body and Blood is a Divine Gift given by our Lord Himself, who is our Great High Priest. Also, while Lutherans continued to remember and honor the saints for the grace of God bestowed in their lives, they did away with calling upon the saints to intercede for them, which was done, and still is done, in the Roman Mass. Many other theological differences could be cited, but for our purposes here it is enough to point out that our Lutheran forefathers were well aware of these theological differences and made sure to reform, or eliminate, those ceremonies in the Mass that taught false doctrine, even while gladly retaining all of the ancient customs and ceremonies that were in line with the Gospel and taught the faithful what they needed to know about Christ.

With all that said, even with the many, major theological differences we have with Roman Catholics, we do share a common liturgical heritage with them. Like us, they employ the historic liturgy of the Western Church, which can be traced all the way back to the early church in the first few centuries. This is why, if you attended a traditional Roman Catholic Mass, you would notice the same basic order and many of the same liturgical elements, even as a Roman Catholic attending our Divine Service would notice the same. The differences would come in the language surrounding the Consecration of the bread and wine, and in the prayers. But, here’s the thing people need to remember and ponder when it comes to ceremonies they may be prone to question: Roman Catholics and Lutherans both believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is Really Present in the Mass (Divine Service), which is what the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of all ages has believed, taught, and confessed. Thus, it is only natural that one would notice similarities between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in their ceremonial conduct during the Mass (Divine Service). Unlike the Protestants (Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Church of God, Church of Christ, Nazarenes, Evangelicals, Non-denominationals, etc.), Lutherans and Roman Catholics (and Eastern Orthodox Christians) believe in the Real Presence of Christ.

Unfortunately, this is something that many Lutherans in America lost sight of over the years. In their zeal to make sure that no one mistook them for being “too (Roman) Catholic,” they began to eliminate many of the ancient customs and ceremonies that predate Roman Catholicism by centuries, believing that the elimination of these good and salutary customs and ceremonies marked them as distinctly Lutheran. “Lutherans don’t make the sign of the cross. Lutherans don’t chant the liturgy. Lutherans don’t elevate and genuflect. Lutherans don’t use crucifixes. Lutherans don’t practice private confession and absolution. Lutherans don’t use incense.” And on and on they went. The inevitable result of this unfortunate turn of events within American Lutheranism was a loss of reverence and awe in the Divine Service. The loss of several ancient customs and ceremonies had an impact on what generations of Lutherans came to believe about what is really happening during the Divine Service. After all, as noted in the quote from the Augsburg Confession above, Lutherans believe, teach, and confess that the purpose of ceremonies is to teach the people what they must know about Christ. It is no surprise that the elimination of the many ancient customs and ceremonies that were in place to teach the faithful that Christ is Really Present in the Divine Service eventually opened the door for Lutherans in America to allow many of the ceremonial practices of the Protestants, who do not believe Christ is Present where they worship, to enter in and be used in their midst.

But, there is today a Reformation of sorts underway among Lutherans in America to rediscover those ancient customs and ceremonies that served the church well for two millennia. We have seen the results of eliminating those ancient customs and ceremonies, which has had a negative impact on what Lutherans believe is happening in the Divine Service. Many a Lutheran pastor, myself included, has been saddened and shocked to hear what many lifelong Lutherans believe when it comes to the Divine Service, which is often more in line with a Protestant theology of worship than a Lutheran theology of worship. Ceremonies teach. So does the lack of ceremonies. It is no wonder that many lifelong Lutherans offer a less than salutary confession when asked what they believe is happening in the Divine Service. After years of witnessing a sort-of nonchalance in the celebration of the Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood, why would we expect them to confess that this is the biggest deal on earth; that this is the heart and soul of the Church, the very Lifeblood by which Christ’s Church is sustained?

Why Elevate and Genuflect?

After all that, I finally come to the point of this article, explaining why it is that we practice the elevation and genuflection during the Words of Institution at Peace. It is for this reason, and this reason alone: Christ IS PRESENT! When the pastor recites the Words of our Lord over the bread and wine upon the altar, the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, IS REALLY THERE. It is not the pastor’s words that makes this a reality, but the Words of Jesus Himself, which the pastor recites in His stead and by His command. When Jesus says via the mouth of the pastor, “This is My Body,” it IS. When Jesus says via the mouth of the pastor, “This is My Blood,” it IS. And, where the Body and Blood of Jesus is, there IS Jesus!

Now, to be sure, this is the reality whether or not any additional ceremonies are added. The moment Jesus speaks His Word via the mouth of the pastor, He is there. But, remember, ceremonies are added to teach people what they need to know about Christ. By the ceremonial elevation of the Host and Chalice, the people are taught that what the pastor holds above his head is the very Body and Blood of Jesus Himself. The elevation provides the opportunity for the faithful to look upon their Savior in adoration and worship, in great awe and wonder, even as the holy angels do the same. It also allows the faithful to make a confession about what they're gazing at in great awe and wonder. When the pastor elevates the Host, he confesses (and the congregation is invited to confess with him), **"The Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world."** When the pastor elevates the Chalice, he confesses (and the congregation is invited to confess with him), **"I will take the Cup of Salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord."**

Then, after each elevation, the pastor genuflects (bows) to further teach the people that our Lord Jesus Christ is now Truly Present among us. If the consecrated bread and wine really are the very Body and Blood of Jesus (and they ARE!), then Jesus is really there upon the holy altar and the natural reaction to that awesome reality is to bow in reverence before Him. This ceremonial reaction to the reality of Christ's Presence is not only natural, but leaves no doubt as to what is believed at our congregation: Jesus is Present! Right now! Right here! And, like the elevation, the genuflection provides the opportunity for the faithful to adore and worship their Present Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by bowing their heads (or bowing at the waist) as the pastor (and elder) genuflects, as well as to make a confession about the reality they are blessed to witness. As the pastor genuflects, he confesses (and the congregation is invited to confess with him), **"My Lord and My God,"** for right there in front of him (and you) upon the altar is his (your) Lord and God.

This is why we practice the elevation and genuflection, dear friends. These are not just old customs or ceremonies we simply want to mimic, but a genuine confession of what we believe, teach, and confess about the Holy Sacrament. Ceremonies are added to teach the faithful what they need to know about Christ, and there could be no more beautiful and worthwhile ceremonies than these to drive home the point that we Lutherans believe that Jesus IS REALLY PRESENT among us in the Holy Supper. Indeed, these ceremonies leave no doubt that this is our belief and confession.

Do Roman Catholics practice these ceremonies? Yes, they do. In a traditional Roman Catholic Mass, the priest will elevate the Host and Chalice and genuflect before them, just as we do at Peace. This is because, like it or not, we share the belief with them that Jesus is REALLY PRESENT among us in the Mass (Divine Service). To eliminate these ceremonies just because Roman Catholics do them is wrongheaded and quite un-Lutheran. If we were to eliminate everything Roman Catholics do, we would have to eliminate the vast majority of our Divine Service. After all, Roman Catholics sing the Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, chant psalms, read the Scriptures, preach sermons, wear vestments, and so forth.

Do we have to practice these ceremonies? No, we don't. As noted above, our Lord Jesus is Present whether or not we add additional ceremonies to the Words of Institution. Elevating and genuflecting do nothing to change that reality. But, what they do accomplish is exactly what we Lutherans confess is the purpose of ceremonies, namely they teach the faithful what they need to know about Christ—that He is REALLY PRESENT with His very Body and Blood, and that He is worthy of our reverent worship, adoration, and praise. One may argue that, since the Word of Christ alone establishes the Real Presence of His very Body and Blood, we need not add these additional ceremonies. Again, that's true. We need not. But, when you consider the fact that even the Protestants repeat the same Words of Christ when they celebrate their "memorial meal," which is no Sacrament at all, the elevation and genuflection serve as a further confession that we are not Protestants, but Lutherans who believe with faithful Christians of all ages that Christ is Really Present in His Holy Supper. That's why we elevate and genuflect.

My questions to those who, after hearing this explanation, would still be uncomfortable with, or downright opposed to, these ceremonies, are these: Do you really think it is wrong for us to elevate our Lord's very Body and Blood in order to worship and adore Him? Do you really think it is wrong for us to bow before our Present Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in reverence? Would you really rather us just get through the Words of Institution and not pause to consider, and react to, the Heavenly Reality that is occurring in our midst, right before our eyes? I would ask these questions because I simply cannot imagine anyone who believes and confesses what we Lutherans believe and confess about the Holy Supper being opposed to these ceremonies for any reason other than the erroneous belief that we shouldn't do them because they're "too (Roman) Catholic," which, as I've hopefully shown here, is no reason at all.

Lastly, what we should also ponder is this: What does it teach the people to know about Christ when the pastor rushes through the Words of Institution and behaves as though nothing extraordinary is happening? What do the people learn when a pastor flippantly and nonchalantly celebrates the Sacrament? Ceremonies teach. So does the lack of ceremonies. Something to ponder indeed!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Messer



Peace Celebrates 50 Years of God's Grace!

On Sunday, November 11, we celebrated our 50th Anniversary with a beautiful Divine Service at 3:00 p.m., followed by a wonderful banquet with delicious food and festivities. A HUGE THANK YOU to the members of our 50th Anniversary Committee (Amy Blair, Marion Greening, Sharyn Greening, Coaline Luplow, Pastor Messer, Cassie Tennant, Dorothy Trgina, Jo Wendt, and Carol Zeile), who did a fantastic job planning the event. Thanks also to everyone who helped clean and set up, and to all who donated to cover the costs associated with the event. Everything was as close

Fifty Years of God's Grace to perfect as it could have possibly been. It was a great day!

Some pics of the occasion (we will be receiving a CD with all the pictures taken by the photographer we hired for the event, and plan on getting them printed and placed in a special album to be on display soon):



The Charter Members in attendance



The Pastors in attendance



Pastor Larry Warsinski (left) and Pastor Michael Buchhorn (middle) served as lectors, reading the Old Testament, Epistle, and Holy Gospel lessons. Pastor David Reed (right) blessed us with the preaching of God's Word.



Pastor Messer served as Celebrant.



We were blessed with a packed house!



We enjoyed an out-of-this-world delicious meal together.



Pastor Messer reading letters of congrats sent to Peace.



Carol put together an awesome slide show and led us down memory lane. We also watched an old video of the dedication of our Fellowship Hall.



We ended with a closing prayer, the singing of the Common Doxology, and the Benediction.

PEACE NEWS & NOTES

Advent and Christmas Decorating

*We will continue this year with our tradition of decorating for the upcoming Advent and Christmas seasons following the guidelines of **The Altar Guild Manual** by Lee A. Maxwell, Lutheran Service Book edition. This manual, published by Concordia Publishing House, is authorized by the Commission on Worship of the LCMS.*

One section of the Altar Guild Manual is devoted to the seasons of the church year. The primary theme for the Advent Season is penitential, much like the season of Lent. In addition, during Advent, there also is an emphasis on the anticipation of the birth of our Savior.

For the Advent Season, we will continue this year with our use of violet, the traditional color for Advent altar paraments and vestments. Violet symbolizes the penitential nature of the season. In addition, we will keep our decorating very simple by removing the candelabra from the chancel, using seasonal greenery with minimal flowers instead of fancy floral arrangements and minimizing decorations in the nave. The only real decoration for the Advent Season will be the Advent Wreath. Our brass Wreath is simple and elegant. It holds five candles, three purple, one pink and the white Christ Candle in the center.

The remainder of the decorating will be done after the Divine Service on December 23, 2012, the last Sunday in Advent. At that time we will put up the Christmas tree, hang the Christmas banners, bring back the candelabra and adorn the nave with wreaths and candles. The minimal decorating for Advent will be transformed into the more elaborate adornments of the Christmas Season, thus making a distinction between penitential/anticipatory Advent and joyous Christmas.

It is the sincere desire of the Ladies' Guild members to enhance the season of Advent and improve our preparation for the most joyous occasion of the birth of our Lord and Savior. We invite and encourage all of the adults to join us on December 23, 2012, following the Divine Service, to decorate for Christmas. There will be no Adult Bible Class that day, but the children will have Sunday School as usual. When Sunday School is complete, the Ladies' Guild will provide a pizza lunch for everyone.

SALT NEWS

Next SALT meeting will be held in January at the church. Details in next month's newsletter. We welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Please see our Meeting Minutes on the SALT Bulletin Board

SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS

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

LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

We will meet on Monday, December 10 at 1:30 pm at Stucchi's here in Alma. We had a wonderful turnout in November and had a fun time. Please join us. The more the merrier!

ADVENT TEA

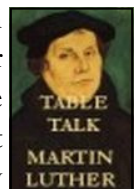
Due to many of our hostesses not being able to attend on our previously announced date, we have changed our date to

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11 AT 7 PM!

A sign-up sheet has been posted on the SALT board for both hostesses and those who wish to attend but not to host a table. If you have any questions, please see a member of the Advent Tea Committee: Gretchen Harrison, Lisa Messer, Lois Ramsey, Dorothy Trgina.

Table Talk

Our Table Talks are informal and informative discussions with Pastor Messer on various topics decided by the group in attendance. Table Talk is a great time to take advantage of the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Our next Table Talk will be held in January. Check out next month's newsletter for more info.

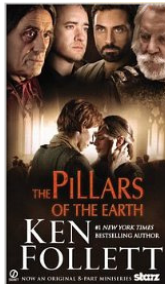


PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd

PEACE BOOK CLUB

The November Book Club met at Sharyn Greening's home to discuss *The Pillars of the Earth* by bestselling author Ken Follett. Thanks to Sharyn for being a great hostess, as always, and to Pastor for sharing some of his venison with us.

This epic novel of 12th-century England relates the story of Tom Builder, a stone mason whose dream is to build a cathedral. It's a fascinating read and one that is very difficult to put down. The one thousand page tome seemed daunting at first, but moved along quickly. Ken Follett certainly has a way with words.



The church, civil war, anarchy and the struggles of royalty were constant themes in the book, along with personality clashes common to all human beings. Some of us think that Follett got a little carried away with the description of building a cathedral in the 12th-century. He didn't miss a detail. And, some of the characters were depicted in a way that just made the reader want to see them beaten, but that is part of the storyline.

All-in-all, we found the book difficult to put down and very readable and recommend it as a 4 out of a possible 5.

Since it is such a busy month, the Book Club will take a break and reconvene on January 15, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Yvonne Elenbaas. At that time we will discuss two books: *An Advent for Religious Liberty: A Stephen Grant Novel* by Ray Keating and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* by Seth Grahame-Smith. Both of these authors are familiar to the Book Club members and we look forward to exploring two more works by them. We learned of the historical revisionism of Grahame-Smith in his *Unholy Night* and of the exploits of Keating's Pastor Grant in two previous novels. January 15, 2013 will be a fun night! Please join us.

50th Anniversary Ornaments

If you were not able to attend the 50th Anniversary celebration and did not receive an ornament, please see Carol Zeile. We have enough ornaments so that each family in the congregation may have one.

REMEMBERING OUR SHUT-INS

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

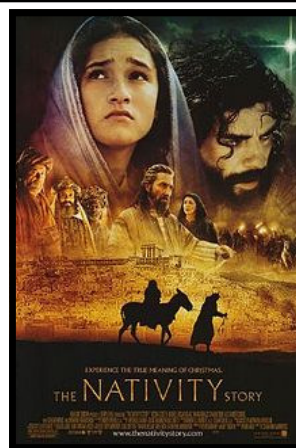
Marlene Wiltshire
Warwick Living Center
842 W. Warwick Dr.
Alma, MI 48801

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

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

Marion Greening
1025 Vassar Street
Alma, MI 48801

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



PEACE MOVIE NIGHT

Friday, December 21

6:30 pm - Pizza

7:00 pm - Movie

"The Nativity Story"

Bring comfy chairs and snacks if you wish!

Freewill Offering collected for pizza.

This is a wonderful movie to watch as we prepare to celebrate our Lord's Holy Nativity!

Hope you'll join us!

PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd



DECEMBER

Happy Birthday

5 Phyllis Hill	17 Thomas Pease
10 Faith Russell	18 Kelsey Gensler
12 Wanda Bebow	19 Jim Sager
14 Cassie Tennant	20 Sarah Messer
15 Ken Russell	30 Amber Brown
16 Karen Strong	30 Dick Wiser

Happy Anniversary

5 LeRoy and Maxine Isaksson
17 Bill and Jennie Harmon

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

Advent Soup Suppers

Again this year the Ladies' Guild is sponsoring soup suppers at 6:00 pm on Wednesdays during Advent—December 5, 12, and 19, 2012. Please attend as often as you are able. This is a great time to enjoy fellowship with your brothers and sisters and also have a good meal.

If you are able to help by providing soup, salad, bread or dessert, please sign-up on the sheet provided in the fellowship hall.

Contact Coaline Luplow with any questions. Thanks!

ANNUAL COOKIE WALK AND CRAFT SHOW

**SATURDAY, DEC. 1, 2012
9:00 AM—4:00 PM**

The ladies of Peace are hard at work baking cookies, and in some cases making crafts, for the annual Cookie Walk and Craft Show. Please stop by and see all of the beautiful and delicious items. Lunch will be available for purchase, so come and make a day of it and do some of your Christmas shopping.

Raffle tickets are available for the beautiful handcrafted quilt shown below, \$1.00 per ticket or 6 tickets for \$5.00. The drawing will take place at 3:00 p.m. on December 1 and you need not be present to win. Tickets may be purchased from any Guild member or at the Cookie Walk.



Please contact Coaline Luplow with any questions. Thanks in advance for your support!

Ladies' Guild

Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies Guild will meet on **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, at 12:15 pm.** with Coaline Luplow as hostess. All Ladies of the congregation are invited to attend our Guild meetings. If you are a confirmed female member of Peace, you are a member of Guild. We would sincerely encourage you to participate and be an active member of the Guild.

PLC Women's Prayer Chain

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

Altar Flowers

There is a flower calendar for 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

PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES GUILD



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

FABRIC KIT

2 PIECES OF COTTON OR COTTON-BLEND FABRIC:

2 1/4 YARDS OF 60" WIDE FABRIC or
3 YARDS OF 44" WIDE FABRIC or
4 YARDS OF 36" WIDE FABRIC

2 SPOOLS OF MATCHING GENERAL PURPOSE THREAD-250-300 YARDS EACH

FOLD THREAD AND ONE PIECE OF FABRIC INSIDE SECOND FABRIC AND TIE WITH YARN, STRING, RIBBON OR FABRIC.

COLLECTION DATES:

OCTOBER 1—DECEMBER 31

PEACE LADIES GUILD COOKBOOK

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

LADIES GUILD SELLS CUTLERY

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



December

Carol Zeile



2 Cassie Tennant
9 Jo Wendt
16 Andrea Elliott
23 Coaline Luplow
30 Jenny Baughmann

January

Altar Care

Marlene Miller

Coffee Hostesses

6 Carol Zeile
13 Tina Schafer
20 Peace Youth Group
27 Janice Sager

February

Carolyn Johnson

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

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

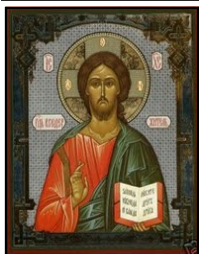
- We meet every **Thursday at 10:00 a.m.** We are currently studying *1 Kings*. All are welcome to join us!

Wednesday Bible Study

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

First Communion and Confirmation Classes

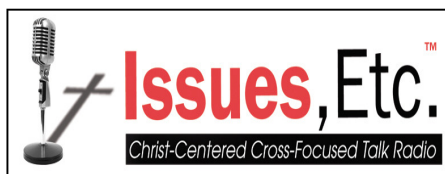
- First Communion Classes take place as arranged (see Pastor Messer if interested); Confirmation Class meets Thursdays, 6:00-7:30 p.m.



PASTOR MESSER IS BLOGGING!

www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

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



TALK RADIO FOR THE THINKING CHRISTIAN!

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

PAROCHIAL REPORT (as of 11/30/12)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 140; Confirmed - 119

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 0

Financial Report as of 11/30/2012

YTD Budgeted.....\$102,319

YTD Receipts.....\$90,796.30

Difference.....-\$11,522.70

Sunday School Christmas Program

The Sunday School students are rehearsing for the Christmas Program. Lunch will be provided after class with rehearsal following. Rehearsals will take place on Dec. 2, 9 and 16. The Christmas Program will take place on Dec 19 at 7:00.

Answers to "Test Your Christmas Knowledge":

1. d 2. c 3. a 4. a 5. b 6. d 7. d 8. a 9. c 10. a 11. b
12. a 13. c 14. b 15. a 16. d 17. b 18. c 19. d 20. b

O Come, O Come Emmanuel And Ransom Captive Israel!



LCMS LIFE CONFERENCE

2013








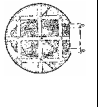



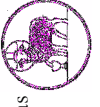







Lutherans and Pro-life Advocacy:
Good and Acceptable Service (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
January 25-26, 2013

<http://www.lcmslifeconference.org>

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

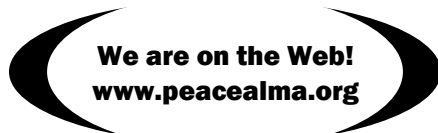
Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Drive
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 463-5754
contact@peacealma.org
www.peacealma.org

December 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 <i>Ad Te Levavi (Advent 1)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	3 6:30 pm - Council 	4 6:30 pm - Council 	5  7:30 am - Matins 12 pm - Sext 12:15 pm - Ladies' Guild 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Evening Prayer	6 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Saint Nicholas</i>  5 pm - WW 6 pm - Conf. Class	7 	1 Cookie Walk/Craft Show 9:00 am - 4:00 pm 8
9 <i>Populus Zion (Advent 2)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	10 1:30 am - Ladies' Lunch Bunch	11 7:00 pm - Advent Tea 	12  7:30 am - Matins 12 pm - Sext 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Evening Prayer	13 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Saint Lucy</i>  5 pm - WW 6 pm - Conf. Class	14 	15
16 <i>Gaudete (Advent 3)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	17 	18 	19  7:30 am - Matins 12 pm - Sext 4:30 pm - Vespers 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Evening Prayer w/Children's Program	20 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Saint Thomas</i>  5 pm - WW 6 pm - Conf. Class	21 Peace Movie Night 6:30 pm - Pizza 7 pm - Movie "The Nativity Story" 	22
23 <i>Rorate Coeli (Advent 4)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & Christmas Decorating 	24 7:00 pm - Service of Lessons and Carols 11:30 pm - Midnight Mass 	25 <i>Nativity of our Lord</i> 9:30 am - Divine Service <i>Merry Christmas!</i> 	26 	27 	28 	29
<i>Church Office Closed; Pastor Messer Away Visiting Family</i>						
				5 pm - Weight Watchers		
30 <i>Circumcision & Name of Jesus</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 	31 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Stephen, First Martyr</i> 	January 1 	2 6 pm - Bible Study (Acts) 7 pm - Divine Service <i>St. John, Apostle & Evangelist (Obs.)</i> 	3 10 am - Together in Word 12 pm - Divine Service <i>The Holy Innocents</i> 5 pm - WW 6 pm - Conf. Class 	4 	5

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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 December

	ELDERS	ACOLYTES	USHERS	GREETERS
December				
2 - 9:30 am (Advent 1)	Miguel Ortiz	Sierra Luplow Morgan Johnson	Vern Jakolat Terry Luplow	Sager Family
5 - 7:00 pm (Advent 1 Midweek)	Miguel Ortiz		Bill Hendrick	
9 - 9:30 am (Advent 2)	Gabriel Blair	Aaron Messer Myka Luplow	Daren Johnson Gary Miller	Dorothy Trgina
12 - 7:00 pm (Advent 2 Midweek)	Gabriel Blair		Vern Jakolat	
16 - 9:30 am (Advent 3)	Larry Elliot	Aaron Cross Savannah Blair	James Sager Tyrel Harwager	Blair Family
19 - 7:00 pm (Advent 3 Midweek - Children's Program)			Gabriel Blair Miguel Ortiz	
23 - 9:30 am (Advent 4)	Terry Luplow	Farah Blair Natalie Penzien	Chris Brown John Lemmermann	Jenny Baughman
24 - 7:00 pm (Service of Lessons and Carols)	Miguel Ortiz	Paige Harwager Myka Luplow	Jon Penzien Bill Hendrick	
24 - 11:30 pm (Midnight Mass)	Gabriel Blair	Aaron Messer Savannah Blair	Daren Johnson Gary Miller	
25 - 9:30 am (Nativity of Our Lord)	Terry Luplow	Farrah Blair	Vern Jakolat	
30 - 9:30 am (Circumcision & Name of Jesus)	Miguel Ortiz	Paige Harwager Sierra Luplow	Gabriel Blair John Lemmermann	Charlotte Dargie/Marlene Miller
January 6 - 9:30 a.m. (Epiphany of Our Lord)	Gabriel Blair	Aaron Cross Natalie Penzien	Jon Penzien Terry Luplow	Yvonne Elenbaas/Mary Girard