

PASTORAL EPISTLE

Dear Christians,

We had a grand service on Jan. 10, the Baptism of our Lord. There was something I very much wanted us to experience, to learn, to believe. You may have noticed how much we emphasized *transitions*:

- Israel crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land;
- *repentance* (what John baptized into), the change from running away from God to running toward God;
- in the stories of baptisms in Acts those who 1) hear the Word and 2) believe and 3) are baptized; *begin a new life as a Christian*
- Paul tells the Romans Christians that *because they are baptized into Christ* it is no longer possible for them to live in sin; for they died with Christ and have begun a new life.

My reason is, that we are tempted to see faith and repentance and baptism as isolated events. We see them as things that happen to people, even giving them gifts from God. But *merely adding* to their lives *while their basic life continues ever onward*. By contrast, the Bible tells us—in all the ways listed above—that baptism is *a radical change of life*: “re-birth” (John 3), “dying and rising to new life” (Rom 6). Really: can receiving the grace of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—incarnate, serving, suffering and dying, and exploding in glorious resurrection—can receiving *His* grace, if we *really* receive it, do anything *less* than recreate our lives?

So here is the point, first for evangelism, and then for Lent. Christianity is not merely an adjustment to an otherwise normal human life; it is a completely different way of living. 1 John 1 says it beautifully: it is “fellowship with the Father and with the Son.” To be Christian is to live in that blessed, happy, eternal, life-giving communion with the Father and the Son.

So, when we are reaching out to others in our **evangelism work**, we are not merely trying to get church members, we are trying to draw people into this whole new life, which is an everlasting fellowship.

And **in Lent** we take one tenth of our year to focus especially hard on our personal participation in that fellowship. For, while we are in it by grace, our participation can be stronger or weaker, just as our participation in community and marriage.

So, with **Ash Wednesday** coming up (Feb. 17), the best thing you can do for yourself is to figure out one or two things that are keeping you away from a richer and more satisfying participation in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. Is it being too busy? Worrying? Trying to control others? Doubts about your worth? Doubts about God? Possessions? “Busy with many things”? Whatever. And if you don’t know what your sin is, the people who live with will be able to tell you!

Then, make a Lenten plan for yourself. To strive against what separates you from God and neighbor, make a plan for extra prayer and worship, a plan for self-denial (refuse yourself certain foods or pleasures, etc.). Then use the worship of the Church to help you help yourself, to move closer to our great and gracious Lord and God, Jesus Christ, in the new life he gives, that you were given in your baptism.

WELCA to Meet at Mt. Morris

New officers for the coming year were installed at the church service January 3, 2010. Valerie Jarvis as Vice-President, and Bonita Jarvis as Treasurer.

Our next meeting will be on February 4, 2010.

Prayer meeting to be held at 1:00
Bible study and circle meeting at 1:30
Study leader Pastor or Chris Bliesner
Devotions by Mildred Anderson
Hostess: Mildred and Chris

All Women in the Parish are invited to attend and participate. The study for the month is from Romans 11:29. Copies of the study may be gotten from Lona in the church office....Good fun and fellowship.....

LENT, "GETTING THE RIGHT PITCH"

Brothers and Sisters:

In my daily devotional I had this reading one day and thought it very helpful; I pass it on to you. (Thanks to Myrna Schulz for keying it in!)

Pastor

We are like members of a choir which is singing together unaccompanied; possibly we do not know each other very well, and we are not used to singing together. Gradually, though we do not hear it, we drop lower and lower, and the choirmaster has to give a little toot on his pitch pipe to remind us of the level at which we ought to be singing.

Isn't this rather like our tendency to live day by day, doing the same things over and over again, meeting the same duties and the same people, while we are often working at great pressure, rushing to get things finished, and breathlessly trying to "cope"? Whether we enjoy this pressure - and I am sure that some of us do like it - or whether we hate it, very often the effect is the same: without being aware of it, our "note" is dropping all the time; our prayers are becoming more formal, or more irregular, or more languid. When we are able to secure a little leisure, we find it increasingly difficult to make the most of it; we are "distracted" or "dissipated" in the sense in which Pascal uses the word.

To revert to our parable of the choir; the note on which our lives are being lived is dropping all the time - and we don't notice it. We need a sudden and urgent reminder, to pull us up sharply, as the choirmaster does when he sounds his pitch pipe. We need something to pull us together and to help us to screw the note of our lives up again.

That is why in any period for thought and prayer - such as Lent provides - it is far more important to turn our minds to God than it is to consider ourselves. The pitch pipe we shall use will be the consideration of our Lord's Passion. When we consider him during this supreme moment of his life on earth, we shall see how far the note of our lives has dropped; at once we shall begin to start afresh and try to sing in tune with him.

From *Consider Him* by Olive Wyon (1890 - 1966)

THANK YOU

Dear Friends,

God is faithful and answers my prayers when He sent you to help me. Thank you to all His angels who have helped me through a difficult time in my life. I can't even begin to tell you how appreciative I am for all the love you've showered on me. Whether it was a hug, a smile, a prayer, an encouraging word, a phone call, a card filled with love, lifting and moving my heavy furniture, a meal, a treat, a gift, a bed or couch to sleep on when I'm here visiting, my Jeremiah quilt, my prayer shawl, the list is endless. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I love you all, and with God's help, I hope to pass that love on to others.

Your Sister in Christ,

Sue Winter

3732 County Rd C

Spring Green WI 53588

Cell: 920-787-2059

Thank you for all your notes, cards and prayers during my quadruple bi-pass surgery and convalescence. My recovery and healing are going well, thanks be to God.

Myrna Murken

Dear West Holden Council, WELCA & Pastor Todd,

Thank you so much for such a generous Christmas gift - undoubtedly, I will use it to purchase more piano music for church! (I love shopping in the sheet music aisles @ Ward - Brodt) - Thank you, mostly, for your love, good humor & cheery demeanor -

Love,

Vicki

WELCA

What a special treat to receive a "we care Box," of Christmas goodies from my church friends. Thank you. Millie Anderson

WHAT DID WE DO IN 2009?

January 31 is going to be Holden Lutheran Parish's **Celebration of Ministry**. (It is the Sunday of MM's annual meeting, and the week following WH's). Each congregation will celebrate what it accomplished in 2009.

Is this boasting? No more than St. Paul did! Check out 1 Corinthians 15:9f:

For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, *I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*

Maybe we could call it, "**By Grace**" Sunday.

Here is your part. To do this well, it takes a little help *from you*. Here are three things you can help us remember.

1. Please think back about everything that got done in your church last year. All worship and teaching and administration and helping the needy and property upkeep, and EVERYTHING.
2. Remember WHO did what, so we can list names. (Spouses: *please* ask your spouse what he or she did, and sent that in!)
3. Please especially remember those wonderful people who *took responsibility for things*, who took charge of some aspect of our life and work and just made sure it got done.

Whatever you can remember, please get to the Parish Office. E-mail would be easiest for the office, (holdenparish@centurytel.net).

The Office will print up those lists for all to see, so we can say, "Thank you, Lord, for using us!"

PASTORAL EPISTLE

CHRISTMAS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Barely to be believed, really. Consider God-- so very, very different from us as to be beyond our imaging. God is eternal, without beginning. Not just infinitely large, but really beyond measure: he is larger than the entire universe that he made like I might make a sandwich.

This great God, in compassion for us, came to be with us. No, not just with, even to be *one of us*. To join us in our—to him—small and brief life. I love the line in Luther's Christmas hymn:

O Lord, you have created all;
how did you come to be so small?

Did he come to accompany us? That is quite an honor to us (I would not even hope the President to accompany me, let alone God!). But he did much more, he joined us *so that we could join him*. He came into our humanity in order to raise up human nature to something greater. As the great St. Athanasius put it, "God became human so that humans could become divine." The absolutely staggering wonder of Christmas is this: to save us, God even became human!

It gets even better. Something very much like the wonder of the Word becoming flesh in Mary's womb happens in our church. In His Holy Supper, the flesh and blood of Christ are *there* for us. Mary was privileged to hold the baby God in her arms; we are privileged to eat and drink his body and blood. So much does the Lord Christ love us. As she stared in wonder at him, there in her arms, I encourage you to stare in wonder at the bread in your hands. To her he looked like any other baby, but through the Word of God she knew him to be the Son. To us it looks like any other bread, but through the Word of God we know it to be the body of Christ, our Savior and God and Lord.

Something like the wonder of Christmas, whenever we celebrate Eucharist!

Holden Lutheran Schedule of the Lord's Supper

I most often use the name "The Lord's Supper" for the sacrament because it is a biblical name--1 Cor. 11. And further because "Holy Communion" is usually misunderstood. For "communion" cannot refer to the bread and wine since "communion" is a fellowship of people. In this case "The Holy

MT. MORRIS COUNCIL MINUTES

Communion” is the fellowship of believers and Father, Son and Spirit that is created when those believers obey the Lord’s commands to “Take and eat” and “Drink from this, all of you” (1 Cor. 10). Therefore “communion” cannot be distributed nor given, but can only be “entered” or “taken part in.”

Background:

1. There have been discussions in the parish about our schedule of doing the Lord’s Supper. Several people asked that they be given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament more often. Others have voiced that they do not want the Supper every week.
2. Pastors, as the designated “stewards of the mysteries of God,” are charged with responsibility to see that the means of grace are given out. The schedule, therefore, is part of my calling (though no wise shepherd will proceed without consultation with the flock).

After those discussions, and consulting with the councils, at this time it seems good to me that we offer the Eucharist more often, even if not every week. Therefore I am making two adjustments to our traditional schedule (first and third Sundays). I want to see to it that our observances of the Supper are never more than two weeks apart, for brothers and sisters in trial badly need, want and deserve the sustenance of the Body and Blood.

When I am away, I will schedule Eucharist the Sunday before I leave and the Sunday when I return.

Months with five Sundays will find an additional celebration.

Also, we will have the Supper whenever we have festival days—we mostly do already, but this will add a couple more each year.

The end result will be that we still do not have the Supper every week, but instead of having it slightly less than half the Sundays, we will have it slightly more than half. This then is the schedule for the first quarter of 2010. After the quarter is over, I will ask for your responses.

January 3, 10, 24, 31

February 14, 17 (Ash Wednesday), 21

March 7, 21, 28 (Palm Sunday)

Date: December 1, 2009

Roll Call:

Present: Curt Nelson, Diedrich Bastar, Laurie Jarvis, John Hassmann, Pat Hassmann,

Dawn Belfeuil, and Pastor Todd. Absent: Kathy Anderson

President Laurie Jarvis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Old Business:

Cash Reserve request not to be included in the budget.

Crossway Camp Request: It was proposed to divide the Lenten offering as such:

1/4 to the Deacons Fund, 1/4 to the Youth Fund and 1/2 to Crossway Camp.

Motion made and seconded.

Picture Directory: No new information

Stained Glass Window update: Someone coming to talk to the congregation on December 13th.

Special Sunday meeting to be called on December 6th to discuss the budget, council nominations and bulletins.

New Business:

Need to get samples of the Little Lutheran

Secretary’s report was accepted as presented.

Motion made and seconded.

Mt. Morris’s reports were approved as presented.

Next meeting to be January 4, 2010.

Respectively Submitted,

Diedrich Bastar, Acting Secretary

YOU SHOULD BE ON THE STAGE!

Holden Lutheran Parish is going to do something . . . **dramatic**. On **Maundy Thursday** (the Thursday of Holy Week, this year April 1) our worship service will include a **re-enactment of the Last Supper**. We will see what it was like when the Lord washed his disciples' feet, ate his last **Passover** meal with them, and **instituted the Eucharist**.

Something like this was done some years ago. And the **MM Evangelism Committee** heard all the favorable comments and has been working on it for months. We already have leaders for music and costumes and a director, but it will take the whole parish to do it well!

We need at least 15 actors, both women and men. Some will be speaking parts, some not; so there is something for you.

Here are people to contact to take part:

Actors: contact Director Laurie Jarvis
(920.291.5737)

If you want to help with costumes, contact Chris Bliesner (787.5431)

Stage and set building: contact Judy Foster
(787.4601)

Publicity: Kathy and Eric Weil (787.4007)

A Note from Thrivent

As most of us know, Thrivent is a life insurance and investment company that was begun a hundred years ago by Lutherans in Appleton to serve Lutherans (as Aid Association for Lutherans; another started in Minnesota called Lutheran Brotherhood; they merged in the 1990's). It is a non-profit, but IRS regulations require it to give back to churches what it would normally pay in taxes. So, every year since forever our churches have benefitted from Thrivent funds amplifying our fund raising efforts. (This is a good reason for all of us to consider using Thrivent for our financial planning.)

Two things to know:

One, Thrivent wants to thank, and asks us to thank,

those who have been the coordinators between Thrivent and us.

West Holden:

Beth Osicka

Betty Johannes

Kathy Norlin

Mt. Morris:

Pat Krause

Sally Schnese

Carol Thompson

Two, Thrivent will be distributing funds in a very different way from now on. It will be based not on congregations but on Thrivent members. So, those of us with Thrivent investments will have to be sure to select our churches to receive in 2010

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birth

Let us praise God for His blessings. Announcing Kristin Winter and Tony Velazquez' little miracle:

Sofia Elyzabeth Velazquez born December 23, 2009 at 3:15 pm, 7 pounds 2 ounces, 17 1/2 inches long. The entire family, including Gramma Sue, is filled with joy.

In His Grace,

Sue

Choir

Mt. Morris Choir needs a few more men's and women's voices to bolster the sections. Please consider adding your voice on Tuesday evenings at 6 PM. It's said when you sing you pray twice. It's also fun. Check it out.

Why Stay?

One of Pastor's journals has a well written article on why those who disagree with the Minneapolis Decision should stay in the ELCA. Pastor is willing to lend it out or make copies.

Benefit

There will be a benefit on Sat. Jan. 30th at the Wild Rose Lions Building for Mary Lynn Kolka's sister who suffers from MS. Some of the entertainers are Polkas by John Jenks, Allen Stea & Dave Gunderson – 'The Corner of G & S' – why not support this worthy cause and enjoy some great entertainment!

Sunday – Jan 31st – give thanks to the Trinity

“We will give thanks to the Trinity for all the good work our congregation did in 2009. Please list what you remember: things done, people who served, etc. This is congregational work, not individual life.”
Pastor

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JANUARY

Mt. Morris

West Holden

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|------------------|
| 2 | | Nicholas Chapple |
| | | Ellie Butzin |
| 3 | | George Perry |
| 5 | | John Anderson |
| 7 | Andrew Loging | |
| 8 | Ethan Larsen | |
| | Jeremiah Simenson | |
| | Sydney Fink | |
| 9 | Kristen Jones | |
| | Cindy Jarvis | |
| | Noah Johnston | |
| 10 | | Ken Lewallen |
| | | Ryan Riley |
| 13 | | Frank Holzman |
| 14 | Jonathan Clark | |
| 17 | Dawn Olson | |
| 18 | Kris Peterson | |
| 20 | | Harry Kracjik |
| 23 | Jesse Loging Jr. | |
| 25 | Christine Bliesner | |
| | Tina Stott | |
| 27 | Sue Winter | Sterling Waala |
| 28 | Joan Arveson | |
| 31 | Katy Bray | |

FEBRUARY

Mt. Morris

West Holden

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-------------------|
| 2 | | Ina Perry |
| 3 | Colton Belfeuil | Kimberly Stillman |
| 4 | Bonita Jarvis | Chad Gunderson |
| 5 | James Clark | Karen Riley |
| | | Eddie Leppin |
| 8 | Tom Pagel | Calvin Wilson |
| 9 | | Jarmy Koepf |
| 10 | | Donna Gunderson |
| 11 | Curtis Nelson | |
| 13 | Taylor Belfeuil | Larry Atkinson |
| | Donald Hasselquist | |

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-------------------|
| 14 | Chad Thompson | Michelle Brownlow |
| 16 | Barbara Bauer | |
| 18 | Wesley Lungwitz | |
| 21 | Robert Hadel | |
| | Adam Jones | |
| 22 | | Scott Eagan |
| 24 | Valerie Jarvis | Rachel Japuntich |
| 28 | Judi Slovinski | |

Mt. Morris Care Box Time

We are asking again for a variety of snacks and homemade cookies for our college students and those in the military from our church. We have 15 boxes to fill again. The date of packing will be Monday, Feb. 22 so your goodies can be left in the church kitchen on the 21st or before 9:00 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 22nd or before 9:00 a.m. on Monday Feb. 22nd. Thank you so very much! Each time we do this the boxes have been filled with such delightful snacks!