

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 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)

MT. MORRIS COUNCIL MINUTES

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)

JAN 3 AND JAN 10 – CELEBRATING OUR BAPTISM!

Every year we celebrate "The Baptism of our Lord." It is part of the complex of events that begin the magnificent ministry of Jesus Christ.

Annunciation to Mary and the Dream of Joseph (late Advent)

Nativity of our Lord (December 25)

"Word become flesh" (Sunday after Christmas)

Name of Jesus (circumcision of our Lord, January 1)

Epiphany ("manifestation" of Christ to the [Gentile] Magi, January 6)

Baptism of our Lord (the next Sunday)

This year Baptism of Our Lord falls on January 10. We will use this day to celebrate our own Baptism. The whole service will explore this wonderful mystery of grace.

To participate most fully, remember or research (ask parents or older siblings) what you can about your own baptism. When was it? Where? Who was present? Who baptized you? What did your family do that day to celebrate? A special stories about the event?

We will have some “contests” that morning, for fun. Whose baptism:

- was longest ago in time
- was farthest away in space
- has the strangest story
- had most unusual guest
- oldest age WHEN baptized
- youngest age when baptized?

Sunday School children at both churches are learning about Jesus’ baptism on January 3rd, and will have some things for us—maybe even a reenactment.

FOR JAN 3, SEE “RE-RALLY DAY” ARTICLE.

Plans to hold this baptismal celebration at the mill pond are being reconsidered.

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!”

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

JANUARY 18-25

How many churches did Jesus start? Right, one. So, how many churches are there? Again, one.

But aren’t there 200 national church bodies in the yellow pages of the USA? Yes. What gives? *We are not as we ought to be.*

So for decades now, there has been a week of prayer for Christian unity. The bookends of the week are January 18, the Confession of St. Peter, and January 25, the Conversion of St. Paul. ***Please pray, every day that week, for the unity of Christ’s Church.***

I want you to understand, though. *We do not pray that Christ would unite us; he already has,*

baptismally. He has drawn every one of his sheep into his Body, thus all true Christians are united in fellowship with him and his Father. *But we are not acting like it.* That is what we pray for.

So please pray:

That all churches *agree*. There is only one truth, and so wherever churches disagree at least one must be in error. Pray that we learn from each other to know the truth.

That all churches *love*. Honestly, by this point, even if churches came to agreement in what they teach, it would be hard for us to join with another church body just because we are so used to our own ways. We would probably rather continue in our ways than give them up for the visible unity of the church. Pray that we love Christ and his brothers and sisters enough that we are not stubbornly insisting on our own ways.

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

RE-RALLY DAY JANUARY 3, 2010 A. D.

“Re-Rally” day is to get the Sunday School “re-started” after the Christmas break. *This is going to be good.*

January 3rd is the first day of Sunday School of 2010. Remember the schedule change:

WH 9 AM Sunday School 10:30
Worship
MM 9 AM Worship 10:30 Sunday
School

The theme is “Jesus’ Baptism and Mine.” There will be a reenactment of Jesus’ baptism, a quiz and contest with prizes comparing his to the children’s. Baptism music and a “search the church” for baptism symbols. Children will bring items from their baptism, which will be on display the following Sunday for the church’s celebration in worship.

ANNIVERSARIES JANUARY Jan. 20th - Larry & Lona Atkinson - 37 years

ANNOUNCEMENTS Mt. Morris Quilting will depend on the weather in January. Decisions will be made on a weekly basis.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JANUARY

<u>Mt. Morris</u>	<u>West Holden</u>
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 Frank Holzman
13	
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	

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:	Mt. Morris:
Beth Osicka	Pat Krause
Betty Johannes	Sally Schnese
Kathy Norlin	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.

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Your Sister in Christ,

Sue Winter

3732 County Rd C

Spring Green WI 53588

Cell: 920-787-2059

GREETINGS

Friends:

Greetings from Pietermaritzburg on a warm and sunny Wednesday afternoon. Over the past days temperatures here have risen close to 100 degrees, so the only chance of a "White Christmas" would be if someone dumps a bag of sugar on our heads!

As Kristen and I prepare for the numerous blessings of Christmas, we are reminded of the amazing support of friends, family, and ELCA sponsoring congregations who help to make our service with Global Mission a reality. While physical distance may separate us by thousands of miles, we feel a sense of continual closeness through mind and spirit that provides us with much needed strength and guidance. We continue to thank God for the amazing opportunity to serve here and accompany our South African companions, and we pray that our roles will be performed in a way that makes you pleased and proud.

While the environment of our Christmas celebrations may be quite different from what you are experiencing in the United States, we are bound together by the presence of the Christ child, and in response to the many blessings we all have received, we look forward to our continued relationship and cooperation in God's mission around the world.

May God bless you this day and always...

With peace and love,

Rev. Brian E. Konkol

Book of Faith for January: Deuteronomy and Joshua

Dear Readers:

Good stuff this month! Deuteronomy has some beautiful, emotional passages about faithfulness to the God of Israel, "the Lord your God," who is also our God. Realistic and strong expressions of

God's goodness to us, and our dangers of unfaithfulness.

And Joshua is a book of great stories. Starts with the walls of Jericho tumblin's down!

January 3 assignment. Read by (1/10):
Deuteronomy 1-6

January 10 assignment. Read by (1/17):
Deuteronomy 1-6

January 17 assignment. Read by (1/24):
Joshua 1-6

January 24 assignment. Read by (1/31):
Joshua 7-12

Now that we have our parish website it seems wise no longer to publish in the Holden Highlights all of my notes for reading the Book of Faith. We are going instead to do the following; please give us feedback if you think there is a better way.

- The simple schedule, without notes, will be in the newsletter.
- The full set of notes will be posted on the website under "Adult Learning."
- For those without access to the website, a few copies of the notes will be printed out and available in the narthex of each church.

EPIPHANY PARTY

And You're Invited

The party is at Mt Morris, 5:45 PM on Wednesday January 6 (right after Catechism class).

Epiphany is the Church holiday to end the 12 days of Christmas, commemorating when the Christ was made known to the Gentile Magi. Epiphany is a festival of **light**.

So, here is the party plan.

First, a tree UNdecorating party, begins at 5:30. Then we take the church tree, and trees from

