

HOPE HERALD



July-August, 2018

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH
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A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR OSWALD

From 1987-1996, the American Express Card ad campaign pronounced that “Membership has its privileges!” The elitist appeal of the slogan tried to sidestep something that has spread through the culture – a deep distrust of institutions with reluctance to become members of them.

Polls and surveys confirm what I and many others have observed: That confidence in institutions continues to drop. Public confidence has spiraled downward now for several decades as negative impressions accumulate about banks, schools, government institutions such as Congress and the Supreme Court, news organizations, hospitals, police, etc. Some have surmised that

Donald Trump, the ultimate “outsider” of Washington, was helped to victory by this wave of disillusionment. Interestingly, the military continues to hold steadily to first place in public support among institutions, but amid ongoing accidents and scandals, it may be a question of “when” rather than “if” the defense of the Department of Defense begins to weaken.

It should not surprise anyone that churches and organized religion are among the leaders in institutions that have lost public confidence. Not only have scandals among religious leaders devastated their reputations, our culture has increasingly perceived religion and spirituality as “personal” matters. Religious choices have exploded for people as protestant groups continue to divide, down to the present popularity of “non-denominational” churches in which, ironically, every congregation is a denomination unto itself. Add to this the availability of traditionally non-western religions in western cultures, and the average American is confronted by so many options for religion that it seems impossible to sort them out. It is only a small leap from that situation to the conclusion (a wrong conclusion unfortunately) that religion is a personal matter. “What would be the most useful to me?” asks the average American. Religion becomes a matter of personal utility, what makes sense in my life. As that happens, loyalty to, and the importance of any religious institution decline.

Consequently, when I was a chaplain exposed to 1000’s of people outside of my faith, I often engaged in conversations about religion in which someone would pronounce to me, “I’m spiritual, just not religious.” This was often accompanied by a mildly more intense stare with a pause in the dialogue as the speaker waited for me to be shaken by having heard something they considered quite profound, not knowing that I had heard it countless times before. What the speaker meant by that statement was that he or she had a personally spiritual dimension of life, beliefs and opinions about “God” and the invisible realms, perhaps prone to personal prayer, perhaps even

attending assorted public worship services, but without any kind of permanent commitment to religious institutions or systems. It is smorgasbord religion. Fill your plate with what tastes good, selecting from a broad menu, and free to disregard anything unappealing. Each of you has family or friends who are exactly like this.

I want to make two observations about this. Such spirituality is idolatry; and membership in a religious institution (namely, a local church) is not optional for a follower of Christ. SPIRITUALITY IS FUNDAMENTALLY IDOLATRY. When Eve was tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, she succumbed to its proposal that if she ate of the fruit, she would *be like God, knowing good and evil*. Ah, to be like God where **I make the conclusions about what is right and what is wrong**. Therein is the root of all our sin. The first commandment in which I am told “*You shall have no other Gods*” is most frequently broken when I make myself into a God by thinking I can decide what I will do or not do, what I will believe or not believe, what is true or not true, thank you very much. Rather than harkening to what God has said, we put ourselves in the place of God and feel we can make up our own minds. Anyone who has ever said “I think God /I don’t think God would _____ (fill in the blank with anything)” is guilty of this. It does not matter what we think. It only matters what God has revealed.

I observed medical professionals incorporate “spirituality” into discussions of comprehensive wellness. Evidently there is clear data to prove that people with a transcendental dimension to life and/or participation in religious community life enjoy a variety of benefits in their health and well-being. Now if that fact moves some people one step closer to Christ’s holy church, I rejoice, but I am not fuzzy about the fact that such data pertains to a broad range of spirituality and not narrowly to Christian discipleship. At the last judgment, God will not ask whether we enjoyed sociological or existential benefits from religion as we chose to engage it, but He will ask whether we have

believed upon His only Son with all that that entails. **MEMBERSHIP IS NOT AN OPTION.**

The scriptures describe membership somewhat differently than we usually mean it today. “*Now you are the body of Christ and individually **members** of it.*” I Cor. 12:27 It is talking about our inherent membership in the **invisible church**, that is, the collection of all those who believe upon Christ. This is invisible because unlike an institution (what we call the “visible” church), we cannot see into anyone’s heart to know definitively who all those members are. (See articles VII and VIII of the Augsburg Confession). **BUT** does the Bible say anything about becoming a “member” of a local church? The answer is that directly speaking, it does not. So then what is so special about membership? Isn’t that just a more modern development?

One would not expect a modern concept of membership to be explicit in the New Testament because they had a different context. Without the plurality of Christian beliefs which exist today, a local church in New Testament times consisted of all of Christ’s disciples in that locale, often meeting in a home, and with a decisive admission to the fellowship through baptism. Yet I claim that membership to a local church congregation is not an option. Why can’t someone just attend church without ever joining? After all, where in the Bible do we find voters’ meetings, offering envelopes, a church constitution, and all of those other things associated with membership?

I believe that we cannot be biblically Christian without joining a local church and these are the reasons why – spiritual submission and church discipline. The scriptures are clear that God has appointed spiritual leaders over us. Among other places, this is clearly taught in passages like Hebrews 13:17. “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*” Without a

formal commitment to a local church such as occurs through membership, which spiritual leaders would we obey? Any we choose? That is not obedience. A commitment is required to formally establish that relationship. Commitment is another idea that is culturally out of vogue. But what would you think of a man and woman that merely live together without the commitment of marriage? The obligations of spouses with respect to one another could never apply to them since the relationship is never formalized. Of course one could argue that they might voluntarily honor those obligations, but an obligation that is only voluntary is not really an obligation.

Secondly, the church has been charged to exercise discipline. The story of the Corinthian man who was sleeping with his stepmother (I Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2) illustrates the requirements of the church toward those in unrepentant sin. There is much more I might teach about church discipline. Christianity Today reported results of a recent survey in which significant numbers of churches admit that they do not even practice it. Yet my single point here is to show that the possibility of church discipline can only exist where there is a visible, institutional church with formalized membership which defines those that are to be subject to the discipline.

It is impossible to be faithful to what the Bible teaches about these two matters, spiritual authority and church discipline, apart from the formal commitment of membership in the church: But if you have friends or relatives who are reluctant to become members, these arguments, though compellingly true, are not likely to move most people. So I also remind all that there is another wonderful thing about membership, something to celebrate. Membership defines who we are and constitutes part of our public confession! If I were a member of the Communist Party, perhaps I might not attend meetings, or I may even publicly disavow its philosophy, but in the end, you would be right to question why, then, I remain a member. Membership invariably defines me publicly, for better or for worse.

When a new member stands up and commits to Hope Lutheran Church, it is a form of public confession. That person tells the world that “these are my people; what they believe is what I believe; where they stand is where I stand.” This is outrageously joyful and empowering in today’s world where most people never rise to anything so defining. In a world where most are in a search for some kind of public identity, I never wonder who I am. I am, confidently and joyfully, a follower of Christ as He is revealed in God’s Word, the Bible, which is rightly understood through the Lutheran Confessions, the Book of Concord! Here I stand, I can do no other!



Pastor Oswald intends a formal acceptance of new members sometime early this Fall. Anyone interested in membership should contact him ASAP. Members of other Lutheran Churches- Missouri Synod, have already been instructed in what the church believes and become members by transfer. Others can obtain instruction from Pastor Oswald in the teachings of the church. He can customize this based upon how much background a prospective member already has. These then become members by public confession of faith.

Pastor Tim Oswald

2018 CAR SHOW –
JULY 14TH, 1PM - 5PM



Everything is coming along nicely for the show, and it's hard to believe the date is only a couple of weeks away!

If you are interested in getting business donations for the silent auction, there is a list in the Narthex showing where we have gotten things in the past. Or, you can visit your favorite restaurants, stores, etc. and add some new ones to the list if you'd like. Thanks to **Tanner and Rachel Muur**, we once again have a big screen TV as our big ticket raffle prize! The book to log silent auction items is downstairs on the table closest to the doors. **Please give all gift cards and certificates to Nadine or Pastor so they can be locked up after you log them in.**

Signup sheets for food and cash donations and to volunteer help are on the table as well, so please sign up for anything that interests you. Dinner tickets are also available for pre-sale.

We will be setting up for the silent auction and dinner on Thursday, July 12 at 2pm. Hopefully, we can get most everything done that day, but still have Friday, July 13 to finish up, plus Saturday morning for last minute and work on the dinner.

Questions? The following people can help:

Advertising/Promotion – Brian Larie
Spaghetti Dinner/Kitchen – Tami Voigt
Registration Table/Raffles – Peter Voigt
Cars/Prizes/Parking – Gary Schaetten
Children's Activities – Lori Hogan
Silent Auction – Gail Feick
General Questions – Gail Feick

Thanks for your help!

The 2018 Hope Car Show Committee

WOMEN OF HOPE



Our dinner meeting on May 21 was a wonderful potluck get together! We were able to reflect on how blessed we have been over the 2017 – 2018 year to be able to accomplish so much for our church, community and mission project.

Although we will take a break from meetings over the summer, we will still have some activities going on:

Baking cookies for the monthly brat sales
Shut in visits later in the summer
Collecting items for the Blessings Bags project
Targeted food drive for kid-friendly lunch items

Contributing to pay off a wheel chair for one of our shut in members
Contributing toward the banner closet remodel
Contributing toward new inserts for the sign by the road

Officers for the upcoming year are:

President – Gail Feick
Vice President – Tami Voigt
Secretary – Dawn Oswald
Treasurer – Doris Kunz

Our 2018 – 2019 year will begin on Monday, September 17, at 7:00pm. As always, our Fall and Christmas season activities and projects come upon us faster than we know, so lots of planning to do! Always looking for ideas and new ways we can help make Christmas brighter for others, and let them know that Jesus loves them.

All women of the congregation are welcome to join us for our meetings and activities, so please do! Regular visitors who are not yet members are always welcome as well, and we'd love to have you! If you need a ride, we can get you to a meeting or activity, so just let me know.

Thank you to everyone who has been participating and helping with what we do. If you have questions or suggestions for ways we can serve our church and community, and spread the Word of God, please talk to Tami, Dawn, Doris or me anytime.

Once again, God bless everyone for your support and dedication. Have a wonderful Summer!

Gail Feick
President

CHOIR NOTES



It is hard to believe another choir season has already gone by and we are now ready to take a break for the summer! Thank you to everyone who participated this year – we have been blessed to see our group grow our talents with some different arrangements and parts. Every member's dedication, help, suggestions and enthusiasm has been overwhelming! A special thank you to George for accompanying us for the services, to Doris for helping to accompany at rehearsals and providing new sheet music for us to try, and to Nadine for keeping all of our music in order and filed.

Our next choir season will begin on Wednesday, September 5 at 7:30pm, and we will sing for the first time in the new season on September 16. Work on selections for Christmas will begin early on, so please share your thoughts on anything you would like us to consider singing for that to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Thank you and abundant blessings to everyone who supported and encouraged us. We look forward to raising our voices to praise the Lord again very soon! Enjoy the summer!

**Gail Feick
Director**

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

4/29:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 3,035.00
	Mortgage:	186.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
5/6:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 1,854.00
	Mortgage:	95.00
	Endowment/Memorial Fund	1,062.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
5/13:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 2,638.00
	Mortgage:	231.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
5/20:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 1,551.00
	Mortgage:	95.00
	Lawn/Snow:	51.00
	Brat Sales	674.00
	Fund	66.94
5/27:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 2,278.00
	Mortgage:	131.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
	Fireside Payments	2,387.00
6/3:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 1,742.25
	Mortgage:	95.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
6/10:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 2,991.25
	Mortgage:	131.00
	Lawn/Snow:	25.00
6/17:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 2,039.25
	Mortgage:	20.00
	Lawn/Snow:	61.00
	Brat Sales:	25.00
6/24:	Unified Budget Offering:	\$ 2,412.00



Matthew 6 19-21.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."