

*A family of God sharing Jesus
and serving Him faithfully*

The Bethlehem Record

The Official Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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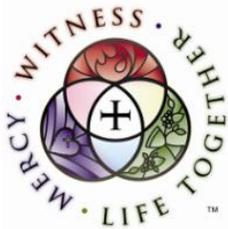
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June 2014

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Our Mission Statement

As members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church who have been granted eternal life through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, we worship Him as our Lord and seek to further His work of salvation through word and sacrament ministry in our community and world toward the goal of creating and strengthening personal faith in Him.

The Pastor's Page

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone? If so, how did it go? I imagine your responses would range from "awkward" and "miserably" to "not too bad" and "a good conversation."

Like many of you, I grew up in a predominantly Christian community with everyone having some connection to a church. Witnessing wasn't something I was taught in Confirmation, although all the tools are there.

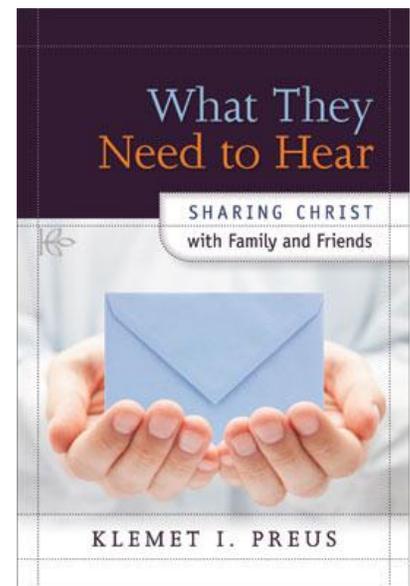
Even the term "witnessing" can send chills up our spine. Chills of fear and anxiety over saying something that doesn't come across as genuine or truthful. We've all had some contact with Jehovah's Witnesses or perhaps even with Mormon missionaries as they go out with zeal and purpose to share the message they have.

Perhaps that's why we get chills over the thought of trying to do the same with neighbors, friends, or family that doesn't have Jesus in their life. We don't want to come across as "preachy" or "pushy" to be branded in the same way as we do the JW's or Mormons.

One of the great blessings I had on vicarage was evangelism training. This was actual door-to-door visiting of people in the

community. Granted, it was a much larger community than what we have here in Sylvan Grove, but it was good for me to learn – and practice – sharing my faith; sharing the hope that I have in Christ Jesus and the resurrection from the dead.

A book I recently read brought back a lot of that training and experience to mind. It came out last year by a Pastor in Minnesota by the name of Klemet Preus.



It's a fascinating collection of letters that he wrote to his father-in-law when he learned that he was dying. The father-in-law had been exposed to Christianity but had many doubts and questions. Pastor Preus began to address those questions and doubts in letters he would write once or twice a week over the course of nearly two years. The father-in-law has his ups and downs as noted in the book, but does come to the peace

(continues on page 2)

(Pastor's page continued)

that surpasses all understanding that he received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

So it's a book with a happy ending, and I'd encourage you to either borrow my copy or purchase your own from Concordia Publishing House (cph.org). Your faith will be strengthened along the way and perhaps you'll find some insights on what to say, where to look, or what to do if you find yourself in a similar situation in your life.

The thing about witnessing is that it takes time. It takes time to study God's Word and be able to speak it. It takes a relationship of trust with the other person that can't be instantly made in order for others to see the light of Christ in your life. Pastor Preus wrote for nearly two years to witness, encourage, debate, debunk myths, and defend the faith from the assaults of the world and the devil.

We don't have all the experience Pastor Preus writes about. He's been a pastor a lot longer than I have and his grasp of the Scriptures is more than mine. But that should stop any of us from continuing to study the Word and be prepared to speak to the hope that we have in Christ. The Holy Spirit is with us and – remember this – *HE* is the one responsible for working faith in the heart.

We are but humble instruments that God uses to let His love and grace be made known to a dark and broken world. God is content to bring one soul at a time into His kingdom. That's all Pastor Preus was concerned about when he wrote his letters.

He wanted his father-in-law to know and believe in Jesus so that he would have forgiveness and eternal life. It wasn't about adding a member to his church (or the church that his father-in-law joined). It wasn't about having another household to give financially. It was simply about ministering to a lost soul so that he would have peace in this troubled world.

I know we've had a lot of talk lately about our budget and the financial needs of the congregation. The devil would have us deal with nothing else because it drives us inward. But God calls us to an outward focus. We've got to be good stewards because we want the good news to continue to be proclaimed from this place so that lost souls would be able to find the peace of God that we have. This is why we are here. We are fulfilling our Lord's command to the apostles as He ascended into heaven: **“you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** (Acts 1:8).

- Pastor Augustine

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June Stewardship Newsletter Article

When it comes to stewardship, a favorite Bible verse is the account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1–4). It's a moving account. Our Lord praises the seemingly small gift of two copper coins given by a poor widow above the abundance of gifts given by the rich, saying, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them” (Luke 21:3). And that is usually where we stop. But the text goes on. “For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on” (Luke 21:4).

“She . . . put in all she had to live on.” She gave everything. She held nothing back. She trusted that the Lord who made her and all creatures, who gave her everything she had, who redeemed her from her own sin, from death, and the power of the devil, who called her by the gospel and enlightened her with His gifts of Word and Sacrament, would continue to do this. He would provide her with all that she needed for this body and life because that is the character of the God she had.

But this is not why we give small gifts. We give small gifts precisely because we don't trust the Lord to provide for us. We give small gifts because we lack faith in the One who created us, redeemed us, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith. We give small gifts because we doubt that God will really give us what we need and desire. We give small gifts because we are not content with what God has already given.

We are not slaves, children of the slave woman, under the Old Covenant, who must give a tithe. We are adopted sons of the free woman. And since we are sons, we are also heirs. And heirs receive the inheritance. For everything is already ours in Christ. And thus moved by the willing spirit of adoption, we do the will of God in financial matters far beyond all that was done by those under the Old Covenant who were forced by legal demands.

So what have you decided to give? How do I decide what to give? Let the Scriptures be your guide.

We are to give proportionally to what we have received from God's giving to us (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2, 2 Corinthians 8:12). And what proportion is that? We are free, for we are not slaves but sons. Nevertheless, ten percent, the amount demanded for those under the Old Covenant, is a good starting point, unless there is a reason not to. For we have received more from God in Christ, and we are free now to give more also. So use ten percent unless there is a reason to use five percent or fifteen percent.

But you have not been set free to give nothing. See that you excel in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7)! We are not free to live selfishly outside the Gospel, without regard for God who gives us all good gifts, without generosity for our neighbor who needs us and our gifts, without supporting the community of faith in which we live, without care for our spiritual fathers and those who teach and help raise our children in the faith, without resources for the poor and needy—in short, we are not free to live unto ourselves, hoarding what God has given us only for us. For love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). And the sum of the law is this: Love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:34–40). We love because He first loved us. We give because He has given to us.

Luther once said “Possessions belong in your hands, not in your heart” (LW 14:240). There is a reason your ten fingers spread apart. You catch with your hands God’s gifts for what you need so that the rest may fall through your fingers to your neighbors—your family, your friends, your community, your church.

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Acolyte Schedule

June - July

- June 1 Hannah Wolting
- June 8* Kilby Meyer
- June 15 Marshall Hurlbut
- June 22* Rachel Sebesta
- June 29 Grace Chegwiddden
- July 6 Hannah Wolting
- July 13* Kilby Meyer
- July 20 Kayla Augustine
- July 27* Marshall Hurlbut

* Communion service

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Weddings!

Congratulations to all these engaged couples as they prepare not only for their wedding day, but also their life together. Please keep them in your prayers:

- Ashley Ancell & Alex Lapaille are planning an August 9, 2014 wedding here at Bethlehem
- Ashton Archer & George Weston are planning a March 14, 2015 (π day!) wedding in Manhattan
- Corey Gier & Caleb Hirsch are planning an April 25, 2015 wedding here at Bethlehem
- Janna Sorensen & Brandon Weber are planning a May 2, 2015 wedding here at Bethlehem

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Circuit 13 News



The Circuit Visitor is coming! Pastor Philip Hoppe of St. Paul’s, Ellsworth is our Circuit Visitor. That means he is our liaison to the Kansas District and Synod. One of the duties of this position is to visit each of the circuit congregations once every three years. It is meant to be a friendly visit, much like distant relatives coming to see you and how you’ve been. In 2013, the LCMS National Convention approved measures to encourage this visitation throughout the Synod.

Bethlehem’s visitation is scheduled for June 29. Details are still being worked out, but the plan is for him to be here for bible class and worship, followed by a potluck dinner, and then a congregational meeting to visit about our life together at Bethlehem as pastor and people. Please make plans to attend all the days’ activities.

Circuit Convocation will be September 14, 2014 at St. Paul’s Lutheran of north Ellsworth. Rev. John Mehl will be our special guest presenter and will talk about the mission work he assisted with in Asia and how he now serves as the director of mission partnerships and church relations at Concordia University – Nebraska (Seward).



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Congratulations Graduates!

Congratulations to our high school graduate, Jenae Chegwidgen; and college graduates Ashton Archer (Kansas State - Engineering) and Elise Schulteis (Fort Hays State - Nursing)! May God bless all your future plans for further education and/or employment!

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BOCL Minutes

BOCL meeting was held on May 6, 2014.

The meeting was brought to order by Chairman Gary Frederking. Members present were Brock Mueller, Ruth Mueller, Gary Frederking, Kylie Ehrlich, Warren Meitler, Barb Meitler, Pastor Augustine. Pastor opened with a prayer.

The blood drive is scheduled for May 12 from 11:00 am to 6:15 pm. Barb Meitler will be in charge of the food again.

For community day it was decided to donate bottled water and helium balloons again. It was decided to approach the fire department to ask if they would like to have 2 or 3 cases of our bottled water. Gary Frederking motioned that under Pastor Augustine's discretion, water can be dispersed at functions if he is called upon for permission. Brock Mueller seconded, motion passed.

June 29 is scheduled for circuit visitation from Pastor Hoppe of St. Paul's, north Ellsworth. We will have a potluck dinner. Gary Frederking motioned that we manage the table service and drinks for the potluck, Barb Meitler seconded, motion passed.

No date for VBS has been scheduled yet. Shelly Thaemert had not made a decision yet if she would head VBS, she will get back with Ruth with her decision.

Lincoln County Fair : We discussed handing out water and balloons. The board needs to contact the fair board about using the round shed again for the peach cobbler stand, (the same place we used last year). Ruth volunteered to get the supplies for the peach cobbler, we will need to ask for volunteers to make the cobbler and work the stand during the fair.

We had a discussion about creating a church brochure. We all felt a strong need for a brochure to hand out to the community and to put in our visitor gift bags. We will ask for the congregation's help in creating such a brochure.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 3, 8:00 p.m. Guest greeters for June will be Kylie Ehrlich and Ruth Mueller. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Brock L Mueller

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Baptismal Birthdays in June

God's blessings to you for all His gifts of grace that you have received, and we pray for many more blessings for Jesus' sake!



Ashton Archer
 Kolton Compos
 Philip Chegwidgen
 Cheryl Gier
 Tanner Kubick
 Terry Lilak
 Warren Meitler
 Gary Sorensen
 Jeremy Wacker

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LWML News

LWML Flower Committee

June

Lorelei Dohl % Sophia Schofield

July

Barb Meitler, Cheryl Gier



A successful food stand at Bobby Gier's estate sale!
 April 26, 2014

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An Invitation from LCMS Rural and Small Town Missions



If you are a congregational leader from a rural or small town, we need you to attend the LCMS 2014 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference, Nov. 6-8 in Kansas City, Mo. We'll take a look at how the Lord is at work in His children in rural areas and even talk about the ways in which we can pray for and come alongside those who do not yet know Christ.

Registration is now open but space is limited. *The registration deadline is September 15*. For more information or to register, visit www.lcms.org/rstm/conference or call Amy Gerdts at 888-463-5127.

Building on the theme, "Small Places, Big Mission — Standing in the Gap," the conference will feature the Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast Jr., the Rev. Richard Boring and the Rev. Todd Kollbaum as keynote speakers.

Choose from breakout topics including witness and outreach strategies, reaching inactive members, stewardship, new member assimilation, health and life issues, Lutheran schools and early childhood care mission opportunities, pastoral strategies for serving in rural and small towns, and many other topics affecting our rural and small-town congregations.

The National RSTM Conference is geared for congregational leaders from all rural and small-town settings, and it will provide training and resources aimed at helping rural and small-town congregations assess community needs and search for opportunities to engage their communities through acts of witness and mercy. While there is no "one size fits all" solution, participants will be encouraged as they see new opportunities for engaging their communities and are filled with hope for the future. Fellowship with others who also have been placed in this unique mission field will be invaluable too!

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Lutheran Family Retreat

Lutheran Family Retreat is August 1-3, 2014, at Camp Webster, just off I-70 near Salina, Kansas. The facility provides air-conditioned housing and dining, plus lots of scenic outdoor areas and activities for all members of the family. Come and join other Christian families for a weekend of relaxation, worship and lots and lots of fun and good food! Retreat fees are \$80.00/person age 4 and older - with children 3 and under \$15.00. A deposit of \$15 is required for each person age 4 and older by July 18, 2014. You can register on-line @ www.lutheranfamilyretreat.org or pick-up a brochure from your LLL or LWML representative. A registration form is available in the brochure and online. For more information on the camp, go to www.webstercc.org. For more information on the family retreat, pick up a flyer in the narthex, visit the website @ www.lutheranfamilyretreat.org; or contact Carroll or Barb Hackbart @ 785-494-2425, cbhack@yahoo.com.

The Lutheran Family Retreat sponsors are your Kansas District Lutheran Laymen's League and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

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Saints Alive After 55 Gathering

The 2014 Saints Alive After 55 gathering will once again be held at the Spiritual Life Center in Wichita. The dates are July 13-15. This year's theme is "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations" based on Matthew 28:19. The keynote speaker is Rev. John Nunes, past President of Lutheran World Relief and now a faculty member of Valparaiso. The Bible study leader is Rev. Tom Harmon of Risen Savior Lutheran Church in Wichita. Small group sessions include Roland Mueller talking about Luther and music as well as two other sessions on topics of interest to everyone. If you have never attended before, give it a try this year. In addition to the excellent presenters, you will enjoy the peaceful setting and accommodations, the fellowship with folks from all over Kansas, the food, the singing, the games, the devotions, and many other benefits.

See the flyers in the narthex and bulletin board for more information and registration forms. The registration deadline is June 20.

Coming Events at Bethlehem

Also available online at www.BethlehemSylvanGrove.org

- June 1 – Community Day
- June 3 – Elders meeting
- June 3 – BOCL meeting
- June 4 – LWML meeting
- June 17 – Church Council meeting
- June 29 – Visitation meeting and potluck

Our Weekly Worship schedule:

9 a.m. – Sunday School and BLTeens Bible study (school)

9 a.m. – Adult Bible study (Parish hall)

10 a.m. – Worship Service (Holy Communion on 2nd and 4th Sundays and some festivals)

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