



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

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VOL. 116 NO. 4 MONTHLY

APRIL 2018

PICKING THE FRUIT OF FAITH

“Lutherans don’t have much to say about the Christian life.” Maybe this criticism is levied against us because Lutherans spend a lot of time and spill a lot of ink clarifying how one is saved, *i.e.*, justified before God. We do this because Roman Catholics teach that one cooperates *with* God in salvation. The Reformers denied this, saying one can never be the efficient cause in their salvation, not when all are born dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1)—not mostly or kinda-sorta dead, but cold spiritually dead. Moreover, Lutherans believe, teach, and confess that the will is bound regarding spiritual things, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him...” So, when it comes to the things of God, we are incapable of making decisions for God. The Confessions state, “Human nature, which is perverted and corrupted by original sin, must and can be healed only by the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. However, this healing is only begun in this life. It will not be perfect until the life to come” (FC SD I:14). This healing work of God, done through the means of grace, is termed Divine monergism, wherein God *alone* does the work of regeneration (Eph. 2:3-7). So having done this work, now what?

In our “layman’s Bible,” *The Small Catechism*, Luther details in the 1st chief part, the Ten Commandments, how one is to live the Christian life. Luther wrote, “Here, then, we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works must spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow” (LC First Part, 311). Luther is addressing sanctification, which is different from justification. If justification is monergistic (no cooperation on the human side) sanctification is synergistic (there is cooperation on the human side). Before being justified, one’s natural sinful condition is “bent in on one’s self.” The work of sanctification is the work of unbending, of shifting the focus from oneself toward God in faith and the neighbor in love. *The Small Catechism* takes up sanctification again in the explanation of the 2nd article of the Creed. After reading what Christ has done to redeem us, we find out why: “...that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.” This is what we want to do. Having been justified we want to participate with, cooperate with, the Holy Spirit. No longer passive, we can.

Think of all the Biblical language one would have to avoid to teach that there is no growth in sanctification or that there’s no cooperation on the human side when it comes to sanctification. A few examples include:

Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress (1 Tim 4:15).

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Eph 4:15).

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing (2 Thess 1:3).

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col 1:9-10).

Martin Chemnitz wrote, “The testimonies of Scripture are clear, that the renewal of the new man, as also the mortification of the old, is not perfect and complete in this life but that it grows and is increased day by day until it is perfected in the next life, when this corruptible will have put on incorruption” (*Examen*, 1.538).

Luther takes up growth in sanctification again in *The Small Catechism* where in the 4th part of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism we read “that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” Now we are getting somewhere! Holy Baptism is how God distributes what Jesus did on the cross to us. This means that in those waters you were reborn! This is not a mere intellectual assent. Your will, once dead, is now liberated. Sure—you grow in great weakness but that’s light years better than being dead! Thus, you can now hear Christ say, “*Follow Me*,” and you want to. You can hear St. Paul say, “*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*,” and you do so. You can hear St. Peter say, “*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul*,” and you do. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within you, forgiving you all your sins, and giving you “new impulses and new works” (Ap. IV 250)

So, when someone says, “Lutherans don’t have much to say about the Christian life,” that’s coming from someone who hasn’t done their homework. *The Small Catechism* and our other Confessions have much to say about how the Holy Spirit begins the inner renewal of the Christian life.



Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104

Associate Pastor – Rev. D. M. Kerns, ext. 101

Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102

Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz

Associate Kantor - Bethany M. Johnson

TLS Teachers - Ashley Brandmahl, Andrea Kosmicki, Edith Kerns, Rachel Kathman

THE VIGIL OF EASTER

Three-thousand four-hundred and sixty-four years ago God’s people, the children of Israel, underwent a night of watching—that’s what a vigil is. It was a night of watching for their rescue from the slavery of Egypt. Actually, while they kept vigil, the LORD did, too. Ex 12:42, “It was a night of *watching by the LORD*, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” And Moses goes on to say, under the LORD’s inspiration, “Therefore this same night is a night of watching kept *to the LORD* by all the people of Israel throughout all their generations.” Today Christ, *our* Exodus, has come; Christ, *our* Passover, has been sacrificed. “Old Israel”—Israel by faith in the Christ who was to come—has given way to “New Israel”—Israel by faith in the Christ who has come. So Christians continue to observe the Passover and Eve of Easter as a Vigil, now commemorating the rescue the Passover only pointed to—the rescue from the last enemy, death itself, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, from the dead. We invite you to make the celebration of the Vigil of Easter a standard part of your annual celebration of the Lord’s great redemption in Christ. **This year’s Vigil is on Saturday, 31 March, at 8:00 p.m.** After meeting in the courtyard for instructions, we’ll gather around the Paschal fire outside, process into church in a darkness evoking our captivity to sin and death, only to see that darkness put to flight by the proclamation of the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. We hope to see you there.

SOUND WORDS ACADEMY COURSE LISTING: CURRENT

CHILDREN:

Rhythm of Faith Choir (3 January – 9 May, 5:30-5:55 p.m.; Bethany Johnson & Marcia Lange)

Rhythm of Faith uses God’s gift of music to confess the truth of His Word in song. Learn the rich heritage of Lutheran hymnody and liturgy.

Jr. Lutherans (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Daniel Sweet)

This fast-paced Bible, Catechism, and Lutheran history trivia game places Lutherans aged 4 – 12 yrs. in competition with one another and eventually teams from other congregations. It’s trivia that is hardly *trivial*.

ADULTS:

New Testament Greek (5:00-5:50 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Continuation of last year’s New Testament Greek course.

Hebrews (Spring Term; 5:55-6:55 p.m.; Dennis Hintz)

Luther describes Hebrews as a marvelously fine epistle. It discusses Christ’s priesthood masterfully and profoundly on the basis of the Scriptures and extensively interprets the Old Testament in a fine way.

Themes in Genesis (through 9 May, 5:55-6:55 p.m.; Pr. Kerns)

Pr. Bruss says, “We can never get enough of Genesis!” He’s right. This class will cover five themes drawn from the book of Genesis. The themes include: The Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, the Flood, the Two Covenants and Justification by Faith.

COLLEGE STUDENTS & YOUNG ADULTS:

Book Study (through 9 May, 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Kerns)

We are working our way through the wonderful book, *The Theology of Martin Luther* by Paul Althaus. This is a rich book, offering tons of Luther and even more discuss together.

CATECHESIS:

Spring Adult Catechesis (14 weeks; 17 January – 9 May; 7:45-8:40 p.m.; Pr. Bruss)

Youth Cat I (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Dcns. Linda)

Youth Cat II (3 January – 9 May, 5:55-6:50 p.m.; Prs. Bruss & Kerns)

EASTER BREAKFAST

Easter breakfast of pastries, coffee, and juice will be provided without your bringing anything. We do need, however, volunteers to serve and clean up. **Please note that this is not the second Sunday**, but the first. If you would kindly help, please let Deaconess Linda or Jim Simpson know. Thank you.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP: BUDGET AND RECEIPTS REPORT

In an effort to keep our congregation informed about our financial situation, the Board of Stewardship has agreed to publish monthly budget reports. These reports are designed to give you a snapshot of our congregational support of the budget adopted by the voter's assembly for 2018. We hope that you will find this information useful.

Through the month of February:

Budget through February	\$125,677.33
Actual Receipts through February	<u>\$ 92,198.41</u>
Surplus (Shortfall) through February	(\$ 33,478.92)

YOUTH NEWS

SKY-ZONE INDOOR TRAMPOLINE PARK! Saturday, April 28 4-6 p.m. at 1801 SW Wanamaker. 15 or more gets us a group rate for two hours of crazy jumping and dodgeball fun! All participants **MUST** have a liability waiver on file. To save time checking in, please fill one out **online** before we go—parents **MUST SIGN** for any kids under 18. Sign up on the youth bulletin board or call/text Kathy at 785-727-3943. This is for youth in grades 6-12 and any friends/family. Cost is just \$5/person.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE CARING & MISSION

Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief will be prepared in April through June.

Items needed are:

- Light weight bath towels, dark colors: 2 sizes – 52” x 27” and 20” x 40”
- 2 or 3 bath-size soap bars (4 to 5 oz., any brand, original wrapper) totaling 8 to 9 oz.
- Sturdy combs
- Metal nail clippers
- Adult-size toothbrush in original wrapper

If you would rather let us do the shopping, monetary gifts will be accepted. Please give your money to Geri Tate (271-0886), Marcia Wade (286-1119) or Carol Ravins (266-7088)

60TH ANNUAL SMORGASBORD FOR MISSIONS

What a meal deal for you! Chicken, Baked Ham, B-B-Q Meatballs, Baked Beans, Salads, plus Homemade Pie—all that for \$10 for Adults, \$4 for Children 6-12. Children under 6 are FREE. Mark your calendars for **the 60th Annual Smorgasbord for Missions in Luther Hall on Tuesday, April 24 from 5:00-7:00 PM**. Tickets may be purchased at the door or on most Sundays in April. Please tell family and friends about this annual mission fundraiser (WOW—60 years)! Profits go to mission projects—Topeka Rescue Mission, Doorstep, Topeka Lutheran School, Lutheran Hour Ministries, LLL Rosebowl Parade, and the Orphan Grain Train. Anyone wishing to volunteer to help prepare food or assist in the dining room would be welcome Sunday, April 22 at noon, Monday, April 23 at 9:00 AM or Tuesday, the 24th at 11AM. There's a sign up sheet by the Information Center. Congregational members may be contacted for additional volunteer needs as this is a tremendous project and any assistance is greatly appreciated. Please contact Jim Simpson at 379-5703 with any questions.



TLS NEWS

Pancake Feed! Stop by TLS on Saturday, April 7, from 8:00 to 10:00am for pancakes and sausage, being served by TLS middle school students and their parents to raise funds for next year's 8th Grade trip to Washington DC. For \$5 per person you can have all-you-can-eat breakfast, so we hope you can join us! Thank you for your support!

TLS Alumni - we want to hear from you about your years at TLS as well as how to contact you! Please go to the TLS home page (www.topekalutheran.org), click on the "Foundation/Alumni" tab at the top, then look for the survey link on the left under "TLS Alumni". After completion, click on "Submit" to email directly to the TLS Foundation Office. We hope to hear from many of you!

TLS Foundation Capital Campaign - An update on the TLS Foundation Capital Campaign will be announced in the upcoming weeks. You'll recall this is one of several steps being taken to ensure the sustainability of TLS and parochial education during future years and was approved by TLS governing boards and members of the association churches earlier this year.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

We know this information has run for a couple months now, and we will stop after this month for a period of time. It only applies to members who are at least 70 ½ and are required to withdraw funds from their retirement accounts. As those who must do this know, these withdrawals are taxed as income. A way to defer part or all of those taxes is through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (Contribution). If you have been giving to St. John's with your charitable gifts each year, or are seeking a way to contribute, we would advise you to look into this option if you meet the above-mentioned criteria. We believe you will be glad you did.

Board of Stewardship

Members have asked how they might contribute to St. John's through their IRA's when the government requires that funds have to start to be withdrawn once a person reaches age 70 ½. The below information is from the IRS website giving some information on how this might be accomplished. If you have questions, we suggest that you talk with your financial advisor in getting this set up.

What is a qualified charitable distribution?

Generally, a qualified charitable distribution is an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (other than an ongoing SEP or SIMPLE IRA) owned by an individual who is age 70½ or over that is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity. See Pub. 590-B, Distributions from Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs)) for additional information.

Can a qualified charitable distribution satisfy my required minimum distribution from an IRA?

Yes, your qualified charitable distributions can satisfy all or part the amount of your required minimum distribution from your IRA. For example, if your 2014 required minimum distribution was \$10,000, and you made a \$5,000 qualified charitable distribution for 2014, you would have had to withdraw another \$5,000 to satisfy your 2014 required minimum distribution.

How are qualified charitable distributions reported on Form 1099-R?

Charitable distributions are reported on Form 1099-R for the calendar year the distribution is made.

How do I report a qualified charitable distribution on my income tax return?

To report a qualified charitable distribution on your Form 1040 tax return, you generally report the full amount of the charitable distribution on the line for IRA distributions. On the line for the taxable amount,

enter zero if the full amount was a qualified charitable distribution. Enter "QCD" next to this line. See the Form 1040 instructions for additional information.

You must also file Form 8606, Nondeductible IRAs, if:

- You made the qualified charitable distribution from a traditional IRA in which you had basis and received a distribution from the IRA during the same year, other than the qualified charitable distribution; or
- the qualified charitable distribution was made from a Roth IRA.

In order to qualify for the Charitable Tax Distribution the Financial organization must make the check payable directly to the church, it cannot be made to the member and then signed over to the church.

2ND QUARTER VOTERS MEETING

The 2nd quarter Voters Assembly is scheduled for April 22 at 2 p.m. in the Nave. Reports will be presented by the Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and the Council and the various boards.

THANK YOU'S

Topeka Lutheran School Chili Supper

Thank you on behalf of the students, families and staff of TLS! The chili supper went extremely well this year. The PTL will be able to make significant contributions to the school through your support and generosity. **Thank you!**

2018 FLOWER CALENDAR

The following services are available in the next few months if you would like to provide flowers for any of them: April 15, 22 & 29; May 6, 20 & 27.

DOORSTEP NEWS

Doorstep will again be selling **cinnamon rolls and tamales**. We will be taking orders Sunday April 15 and April 22 between services in the Courtyard. A six-pack of cinnamon rolls is \$9 and a six-pack of beef or pork tamales is \$13. Payment is due at the time of your order, and delivery will be Sunday, May 6.

Doorstep has also indicated that they have an immediate need of men's socks and underwear.

Doorstep has had some of their supporters ask them to explain how they work with Harvesters. Doorstep is a participating member of Harvesters. However, when you place food in their containers in the grocery store, it does not come to Doorstep. It does not go to any agency free of cost. If your perception is you are helping the local food banks and pantries with your donation and they receive it free or at all, this is incorrect. Doorstep's best suggestion to anyone is if you want a particular agency, in this case Doorstep, to receive your donations whether it is food or monetary, give it directly to the agency you choose to support. This is not a criticism of Harvesters. Just a clarification of how donations are handled.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you, parents for bringing your children to Sunday school where they can be nurtured in the faith through the Word of God. Even the two-year-olds have their own class! Why not set a good example for them and attend one of the Bible classes during the Sunday school hour.



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a)
So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 5)