



SELC DISTRICT
Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod

The Lutheran Beacon

Let your light shine . . .



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April 2020

Blessings of Another Lenten–Easter Season

by Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

We live in the civil year 2020 and another Christian Church year. One demands our attention; the other deserves our attention on a daily basis. The one easily becomes a cause of endless worry or concern; the other is a source of great blessing when we remember to avail ourselves of its proven benefits.

Reflecting on the elements of our Christian Creeds and other parts of *Luther's Small Catechism* (all of which are inter-related ultimately serves) as a reminder that we have a powerful and loving God who passionately desires to assure us of the forgiveness of all our sins – a comforting thought indeed!

Reflecting on these biblical truths especially in the presence of other like-minded redeemed people of God affords us with the kind of needed lasting blessings that this sordid world is incapable of providing.

The blessings of forgiveness for penitent sinners are never automatic as they cost our Heavenly Father the voluntary sinless death of His only Son. Our need for a sinless Brother-Savior from our willful rebellion and its consequences of everlasting death are more than superseded by His extraordinary love in willingly enduring for His redemptive physical as well as intensely spiritual agonies on Calvary's cross.

Thus, in order for us to experience fully the blessings of another Lenten season and the prospects of God's promise of bliss and never-ending joy of Easter, we need to avail ourselves of every opportunity to recall the ongoing benefits of already having been baptized into Christ's sinless death and glorious resurrection such as are currently being experienced during these Lenten days by members and friends of our SELC Central Circuit congregations at this year's growingly popular annual spiritual retreat in Sugar Creek, OH.

A similar event is scheduled for March 28 at Calvary, Parma, OH in loving memory of my seminary classmate, missionary David Schneider and author of *Arrows of Light* who went to be with his and our blessed Lord on February 20th of this year. We thank God not only for his remarkable book but for the Schneider's many years of faithful Gospel ministry on several continents.

Even as I write these lines, I am receiving word from fellow Christian families who are prayerfully considering traveling more than 100 miles to attend the rapidly approaching inter-generational "Catechism Refresher" in learning and sharing God's truths at Calvary, Parma between 10 am and 3 pm on Saturday, March 28. For more info, email them at churchoffice@calvary.parma.org or call the church office at 440.845.0070.

We also pray for you in your own beloved parishes during this most holy and spiritually meaningful season of the Christian Year regarding your local worship services of Word and Sacrament. God be praised!

JESUS LIVES!
THE VICTORY'S WON!
DEATH NO LONGER CAN APPALL Me!

FOOLS AND FOLLY

by Rev. Thomas Soltis

April Fools' Day

Even though April Fools' Day has been celebrated for centuries, its exact origin remains a mystery. Some historians have linked the day to the "Festival of Hilaria" in ancient Rome. "All Fools' Day" spread through Britain in the 18th century. Humorous deceptions continue on. In 1996, the Taco Bell restaurant duped people by announcing it had purchased the Philadelphia Liberty Bell intending to rename it the "Taco Liberty Bell". (Source: History.com Editors)



Malicious Deception

We've all pretty much enjoyed the fun of April Fools' Day deceptions. However, it's not very funny to be made fools of maliciously. Fraud is as old as history. "Buyer Beware" is good advice. P. T. Barnum's quip, "There's a sucker born every minute", seems true today. Con men, schemes and scammers regularly make fools of the gullible and greedy. Malicious deception treacherously creeps into all walks of life, including relationships. When it does, it's not funny. It hurts.

The Greatest Fools of All

Satan is on a rage to make fools of the unwary by getting them to reject the existence of God. Psalm 14:1 declares: "The fool says in his heart: 'There is no God'." Atheists are fools. Rejecting God, they foolishly substitute someone or something else in His place. Rom. 1:22 describes their folly: "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." The art, culture and religion of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans dramatically demonstrate this. Today, in a materialistic culture, many make money their God. Jesus warns: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15) The "Parable of the Rich Fool" exemplifies the folly of materialistic greed. God said to the rich man: "You fool! This night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Lk. 12:20)

"Nones"

"Nones" is the catchword for those today who spiritually claim they believe nothing in particular. According to Pew Research Center, 17% in the U.S. are Nones. The

survey also indicated that the number of self identified Christians in the U.S. declined from 77% a decade ago to 65% today. One factor impacting religious decline is the theory of evolution replacing the tenets of Scripture which declare God as Creator. Rom. 1:20 emphatically states: "Since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." The marvels of nature testify to the existence of a powerful God.

Evolution Scientifically Problematic

The scientific method consisting of hypothesis, observation and conclusion, has proved problematic for evolution. Scientific observations of fossils, gene mutations, symbiosis and other things have made tenets of the theory inconclusive.

- Fossils - An evolving process from a lower to a higher form of life is not found among fossils.
- Genetic Mutations have not produced new gene forms to enable new organisms to evolve.
- Symbiosis (the dependence of life forms upon other life forms to exist) negates the theory that life evolved over a long period of time. The Biblical six day creation is compatible with symbiosis.

The Folly of Mainline Denominations

After the Scopes Trial, the majority of mainline Protestant denominations succumbed to evolution. A new theological system, Higher Criticism, endeavored to make evolution compatible with Scripture by stating that some parts of Scripture contained "theological myths" and were not historically true. Instead of denominations influencing a secular culture with Scripture, a liberal, secular culture influenced most mainline Protestant denominations producing a serious departure from Scripture and membership loss. "Liberals have learned that it's difficult for the Church to survive", says historian George Marsden, "if there's nothing that makes the Church distinct from culture." The Missouri Synod has not succumbed to the folly of Higher Criticism and firmly affirms the absolute authority of Scripture.

RELATED RESOURCES

www.selc.lcms.org/stewardship

"Evolution vs. Science"



It's convention time!

by Milly Kwiatkowski,
Interim LWML President, SELC District

**The SELC-LWML Convention will be held May 1st-3rd, 2020
at Holy Trinity, Parma, Ohio.**



Our theme is Isaiah 40, verse 8,
The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

The registration fee is \$100. We will not be charging a late fee.

Our guest speaker will be Mary Bates from Harp.
Also on the program will be Cynthia Khan & Joy Markus from POBLO
Lynn Crocker from Women of the Pearl
Rev. Robert Marshall from Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

We will be collecting Health Kits, diapers, school supplies,
Blankets and toothbrushes and toothpaste.

We are looking to fill offices such as
President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer & Mission Grants.

If you are interested in any of these positions,
please contact Millie Kwiatkowski
at 216.398.7321 or gasngomilly@att.net.

Please join us in celebrating our 17th Convention



What's Happening at the Haven

by Diane Leining

A bus full of residents went to a new Dinner Theater in Mt. Dora, FL to see "Dean Martin and Friends". We were entertained by a gentleman that looked and sounded just like Dean and we also got a chance to hear "Marilyn Monroe" sing and flirt with some of the audience members while enjoying a lovely dinner. It was a great evening of fun!

For something really different, we attended the Strawberry Festival in Plant City, FL.

We ate our way through hundreds of booths of forbidden junk food, saw plenty of livestock, rode the ferris wheel and of course ate delicious mounds of strawberry shortcake. It was a beautiful day and many of us brought flats of berries home with us.

A local charitable organization called "Hope Cares" holds a 5K event – Hope's Shamrock 'n Run" every year that winds through Lutheran Haven and St. Luke's Lutheran Church. Several of our staff members and residents participated as a team and individuals. Two of our residents got to the podium – Steve Wolf came in 3rd for his age group and Ann Chandler zoomed to 1st place in her age bracket. Everyone wore colorful Irish attire, along with green and white tutus. Fun and Fitness on a Saturday morning!!

We held a very special birthday party on March 4th in our Fellowship Hall. Our very special Independent Living resident Inez Fink turned 104 years young!! Inez lives in a cottage by herself, loves to garden and you can see her whizzing through the Haven on one of her many walks. Her family was present and they led all of us in a Happy Birthday song for Inez. God Bless Inez who graces us with her presence and sweet smile!!

As we have all been blind sided by the Coronavirus, please keep our residents in your prayers. All of our medical facilities are now unavailable to visitors, so it is a hardship for those that want to see their loved ones. We pray that this is a short lived problem and that all of us are kept healthy!



Dementia

by Al Weir, MD**

submitted by Ziggy Rein

“...There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4, NIV 1984).

I try to visit her twice a week, but sometimes only make it once. My mom is suffering from severe dementia and requires round-the-clock attendants. She can barely carry on a conversation and, when she does, it is often like, “I haven’t seen Mother in a while. How is she doing?” ... with her own mother gone for 30 years; or, “Where is Bud?” ... about our dad, who has been with the Lord for four years. My goal when I visit is to bring a moment of joy into her mental chaos, to produce a smile or a bit of laughter, even if she doesn’t understand.

Dementia is tragic for those whose minds are caught in its confusion, and it’s tragic for those who care for loved ones so trapped. Dementia is terrible, but we must not give dementia more credit than is due. Dementia is terrible, but:

* Dementia does not negate the life that preceded it. Long years of joys and relationships and love are not erased by a few years of dementia.

* Dementia does not negate the value of those within its grasp. We are confused if we think people have value because they are beautiful, or educated, or rich, or clear minded. As William Sloan Coffin reminds us, “God’s love does not seek value, it creates it. It is not because we have value that we are loved. It is because we are loved that we have value.” My mother’s value is linked to a love from which she cannot be separated (Romans 8:38-39).

*Dementia does not negate God’s purpose for the lives of those who are trapped in its dark cave. As long as we live on this side of heaven, God’s purpose will work through our lives, however debilitated we might be. I don’t know what other purposes God might have imbedded in my mother’s suffering, but I do know He has changed my character and my faith for the better by my caring for Mom.

*Dementia cannot frighten away the Christ who walks beside the ones who have chosen Him. “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5b, NIV 1984).

*Dementia cannot prevent the victory to come. We will one day all be whole — my mom will laugh and love again coherently when “the old order of things has passed away.

Dear Father,

Thank You that You are with each of us, regardless of our mental capacities. Give us strength to care for those with dementia and strength to weather our own . . . for Your glory. Amen.

**Printed with permission from Christian Medical & Dental Associations.
Link to that devotional on their website is <https://cmda.org/dementia>

A World of Possibilities

by Linda Gari

Pluto was discovered. Huckleberry Finn was published. Snow fell in the Sahara Desert. Throughout history, hundreds of things happened on February 18.

How do I know? One click of the mouse gives me access to countless online resources that can lead me to countless other digital and printed resources.

I have never lacked for reading material. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of visiting the library, bringing a stack of books home, and diving in. Having books available—and the opportunity to learn to read—are things I simply took for granted. My life has been enriched and my world view expanded through the written word.

A lack of resources

Not everyone has been similarly blessed. “I believe I counted ten booklets in the local library,” a former missionary once remarked. He was referring to the library in the small town where he served in Africa. “That’s booklets, not books. An American author might produce more reading material in a day than this entire community will produce in a year!”

Why is that? “Reading and writing are not practiced skills in communities that don’t require them. When your material survival is almost entirely dependent on your ability to produce your own food and care for your own livestock, you spend your time doing just that, not reading and writing. There was a time when it was like that in the U.S. too.”

That’s not the only reason. Some languages have never been written. There is simply no tradition of reading and writing among these language speakers. Even when a writing system has been developed, there may be few opportunities for education.

Empowering through literacy

The mission of Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) is to make God’s Word accessible to people in their own languages. We often work with local churches and Bible Societies to promote literacy in communities as translated Scripture because available. In fact, Scripture portions are often the first printed materials to which people have ever had access. What follows are further materials that range from folk stories to medical pamphlets to Sunday school leaflets.

Studies show that education and literacy are key to empowering communities to deal with social issues. People learn new skills, can make informed choices, students are more engaged when lessons are in their first language.

God’s Word opens hearts and minds to the assurance of life everlasting through faith in Jesus Christ. Being literate presents new options and opportunities for individuals, communities and the church.

You have the ability to read this story. Help others attain the ability to read God’s Word and learn more about God’s world through their own languages.

Go to LBT.org to learn more.





The Coronavirus – What YOU Need to Know

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is the cause of concern for many people. Because of this concern, the District office has put together some information for the Church with regard to general health information about COVID-19 and also information for you and your congregation regarding how best to handle questions and concerns about the Coronavirus in the church's life together.

GENERAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR CHURCH WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS.

- * Wash your hands frequently and wash them for at least 20 seconds each time you wash your hands. This is the best method for stopping the passage to others.
- * If you touch your face, nose, or eyes, wash your hands.

Note: It takes about 20-25 seconds to sing the Common Doxology.

Sing this every time you wash your hands and you will be doubly-blessed.

- * If you are sick, please stay home so you do not spread germs to others. This is especially important if you will be around people who have chronic diseases or are compromised, health wise, already.
- * When you have to cough, please cover your mouth. Please dispose of all soiled tissues. Use disinfectant wipes to clean those areas that are touched by multiple people or by people who are ill. For example, your telephone, your door handles, your keyboard on your computer if you share your computer, light switches, etc. Use your sleeve to touch elevator buttons, door knobs, etc. as much as possible.

CONCERNS RELATED TO THE CHURCH BUILDINGS AND FUNCTIONS.

There are many questions being raised about the virus and how it can, will, should affect our interactions at Church. Here are some suggestions to think about in your congregation:

- * Stop shaking hands as people enter Church and pause your sign of peace during the service. Smile and wave instead! Make sure you have adequate paper towel and tissue supplies so that your dispensers are always stocked.
- * Have dispensers of hand sanitizer in all areas of your church gathering spaces outside the Sanctuary – as you enter or leave the Sanctuary, in your fellowship hall, in your meeting rooms. If you have a school associated with your Church, have them at the entry and inside each classroom.

Empty waste receptacles daily. Custodial staff or volunteers should wear disposable gloves.

In addition to door handles and computer keyboards, churches should also consider sanitizing the altar rail, the baptismal font and other commonly touched objects more frequently.

CONCERNS ABOUT HOLY COMMUNION

These are important matters because shared meals, baptisms and human contact are central to the practice of our Christian faith. When it comes to the Lord's Supper and our practice of Holy Communion, regarding the spread of germs and viruses there is little actual data or observed experience to support a concern with regards to health.

There have been a number of studies examining participation in Holy Communion and the spread of viruses and infections. Several of these studies are cited in an appendix in the Altar Guild Manual published by Concordia Publishing House which has been authorized by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Commission on Worship. This appendix directly examines the use of the common cup. [<https://www.cph.org/p-671-The-Altar-Guild-Manual-Lutheran-ServiceBook-Edition.aspx>]

Notably, some of these studies include one on the use of the common cup conducted by professors Burroughs and Hemmers in 1965 and reported in the Journal of Infectious Diseases. Another, in 1985, was a study done by Dr. David Ho in the New England Journal of Medicine over concerns about the spread of the AIDS virus in saliva through common eating and drinking utensils. This same subject was presented at the 97th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in May of 1997, and in 1998 the Center for Disease Control and Prevention published an official position about the risk of infectious disease transmission from a common communion cup.

The consistent findings of these studies are summarized accordingly: "Although we are not able to absolutely rule out the danger of transmission, the danger seems to be slight to none. There has been no indication that those who receive communion have more illnesses or are at a higher risk than the public at large, and there has not been a case of a community outbreak of infectious disease related to its spread via Holy Communion."

While very few of you practice intinction, it is suggested that those pastors who do stop the practice of intinction, or dipping the communion bread or wafer in the wine. This is probably the least hygienic way to distribute communion because our hands are often the dirtiest parts of our bodies and the most likely to carry disease.

With regards to the host, good hygiene of those who preside at the Altar and those who assist should always be paramount, but especially now when there are extreme health concerns. Those handling the elements, including the pastor, the servers and the Altar guild preparing the table, should wash their hands, and sanitize preferably with an alcohol-based (minimum 60%) hand-sanitizer (At Concordia, we simply use Vodka to cleanse our hands and purify the vessels between tables.).

There is still an ongoing debate whether it is best to distribute the host directly to the communicant, versus placing it the communicant's hand. If the former, the host is distributed without it touching any contaminated surface (like the person's hands). If the latter, the concern is that the Pastor may touch the person's mouth or face and be contaminated. Each pastor should decide for himself what would work best in his own situation. The current recommendation is that you continue with your normal practice of receiving the Lord's Supper. Do note that any "exceptions" or "emergency practices" that your congregation institutes will often become "the norm" after the emergency passes. Be prudent. Exercise responsible caution.

If you have a specific question or concern about your congregation's Communion, please contact President Vinovskis for a consultation.

From the LCMS on Communion

The Common Cup: <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine#sick>

A MODEL LETTER TO A CONGREGATION ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

<https://mailchi.mp/11f997cd043a/hclc-pastorletter-concerning-coronavirus?e=aa3403d5c1>

PRACTICES FROM OTHER CHURCH BODIES

Greek Orthodox: Amid fears of a broader coronavirus contagion across the country, the Holy Synod, the ruling body of the Greek Orthodox Church, recently issued a statement saying that the disease does not transmit through the distribution of holy communion by the chalice.

Roman Catholic: Holy Communion: All priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands with soap and water prior to the celebration of Mass. A hand sanitizer may be used in the pew by the extraordinary minister prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. In addition to the usual purification of fingers with water after the distribution of Holy Communion, all Communion ministers should again wash their hands.

GENERAL HEALTH LINKS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

CDC – Center for Disease Control - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?fbclid=IwAR1hxqXW9WAE5pcOtOrVjL9QE_wewNNxdliHSyRWn3nd8IXFFS3zWHO

The Mayo Clinic - <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/covid-19-information-on-symptoms-transmission/?fbclid=IwAR3ZmrJ2sB0Xvk7B7ka5DX1TjrrilPXZepncTftizMJ4gnNgD6MOzR PJrZg>

Harvard - <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/as-coronavirus-spreads-many-questions-and-some-answers-2020022719004?fbclid=IwAR0kw8IT1gfFFMt0oliiv8diUnKh1ruJvnhp25W6KHGFNaN0rozn Mr32aAc#q1>

LCMS LINKS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

Blog links

* <https://blogs.lcms.org/2020/coronavirus-nothing-new-about-disease-or-the-need-for-the-gospel/>

* <https://blogs.lcms.org/2020/synod-monitoring-coronavirus-news-missionaries-safe/>

* http://htlcms.org/2020/03/luther-on-epidemics/?fbclid=IwAR2tt9v4jl2T7JLgqRNzEL_ezSEj6lr2UphirQdKz5_bMU5F1ak JGGG3nKE

Most importantly...

Wash your hands.

Wash your hands.

Wash your hands.

Don't touch every random surface in somebody's house or eat random food out of their refrigerator.

Wash your hands.

Clean your hands.

Un-dirt your hands.

Your hands . . . have you washed them recently?

Give us clean hands, oh Lord.

Wearing a mask is fine too, but mostly, wash your hands.

For more information, check out the LCMS Website

<https://www.lcms.org>

At the Time of an Epidemic

O HEAVENLY Father, we beseech Thee to turn from us and from our fellow-men the destruction and terror of this epidemic. We pray Thee, halt the Angel of Death as He relentlessly proceeds from dwelling to dwelling. We ask Thee, above all, not to let us and our fellow-men be merely grief-stricken and fearful at this Thy visitation, but we beseech Thee to stir us all to an understanding of Thy purposes. Grant us the grace of true, humble repentance. Tell us in words of life that Thou scourgest every son whom Thou receivest. Tell us that it is our good which Thou dost intend with this evil. Grant success to the efforts to stem the tide of affliction, and quicken hearts to bear the burdens of each other's grief and need. Lord, it is Thy mercy that we are not completely lost. Direct us to solve first the needs of our soul, and remind us of the demands of eternity, and turn us earnestly to seek our peace with Thee through Jesus. Lord, Thou dost direct the course of life and death. Have mercy on us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Lutheran Beacon

This is your newsletter . . . Articles & Photos are welcome!

Send to: gailpete37@yahoo.com

DEADLINE FOR THE MAY ISSUE IS APRIL 12TH