

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

The Ultimate Miracle

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said" (Matthew 28:5,6).

Alfred Hitchcock once wrote a story about a woman who murdered her husband and was sentenced to life in prison. She was determined to escape.

As her prison bus approached the penitentiary, she saw an elderly prison groundskeeper filling up a grave in a cemetery outside the prison walls. Immediately, she plotted her escape.

Once outside, she befriended the groundskeeper. He was going blind and needed eye surgery. "I'll give you the money for your surgery if you'll help me escape," she said. He agreed.

This was the plan. The next time she heard the death bell toll, she would sneak down to the workroom where the casket was prepared. She would slide inside with the body and pull the cover closed. The grounds-keeper would wheel the casket out to the cemetery, lower it into the grave and cover it with dirt. But that night, when nobody was watching, he'd return and dig up the casket and set her free.

One night the death bell tolled. The plan was executed. The woman waited for the man to dig up the grave as planned. However, several hours passed, and no one showed up to rescue her.

In complete panic, she reached into her pocket for a match. Once lit, she glanced at the corpse beside her and saw that it was the old man himself.

Her only hope lay buried right next to her! This woman had placed her hope in another human being who she thought would be able to save her. But he went to his grave and ended up taking her with him.

Friends, every religious leader in history is in his grave right now except one, and that's Jesus Christ. His tomb is empty. He is not there because He lives! Since Jesus is God, He has the power to overcome the grave.

That's why Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate miracle. You can place all your trust in Him to rescue you from death. His death paid for your sins, and His resurrection guarantees that you will live with Him forever!

Come worship your risen Savior with us this Easter!

PRAYER LIST

Last year, Holy Cross overwhelmingly decided to give birth to a new mission church and to support it throughout this year with prayers, and special monthly offering envelopes. Their grand opening to the public today and Easter Sunday is at 1:00PM. Many hours have been put in by Holy Cross and Grace members to prepare for this. Please pray that God will bless these preparations and that many people will hear the Word of God and be saved. Pray that a loving spirit between the two congregations will grow and thrive as we proceed as mother and daughter in the greatest work there is to be done, the work of sharing the Gospel.

Please pray for the members of two new Bible Infor-mation classes that have recently begun. Pray that the Gospel would continue to enrich and bless Cliff Gallarneau who is 1/3 through his class, and also Kehl Mayfield, Sabrina Monroe and Phillip Class who is already a Holy Cross member and Autumn Krawczynski.

Please thank God that Shirley Adcock, the sister of Janice Gallarneau and Janet Finney, was released from the hospital. Thank the Lord also that their brother's, Roger Abbot, heart surgery has gone well.

STEWARDSHIP

Dear Members,

Every once in a while a letter crosses my desk that makes me sit back and read it again. That happened as I read a letter from the President of our seminary, Pastor Paul Wendland. The letter includes a request for money which in other letters usually makes me want to throw it into the trash. This letter is different because it beautifully shows why we joyfully return to the Lord generous thank offerings. I think you will agree with me that it contains a powerful message. As you read it I would like you to not only keep in mind the seminary, but also our situation here at Holy Cross. What Professor Wendland has to say is the very same reason why we worship the Lord with offerings designated to the proclamation of the Gospel here at Holy Cross.

In last Sunday's bulletin I wrote, "As of February 28th the check book balance which reflects offering

amounts placed in the general fund is -\$4,317.83. The Voters, at a special meeting, resolved to take \$5,000.00 out of the emergency fund to cover the deficit. The purpose of this information is to help you, the people of Holy Cross, to make informed choices when you pour out your love and worship to God in your offerings. God promises to work all things out for the good of those who love Him. That means we can thank God for the blessing of being given the opportunity to wrestle with this situation. Let us not forget to pray about it!"

When Pastor Wendland asks for help with our seminary, consider the opportunity a blessing of grace from God. At the same time put it along side all the other opportunities to worship Him with our offerings. Include the opportunity mentioned in the bulletin. At the end of Pastor Wendland's letter he wrote, "Please remember the seminary in your estate." The same could be said for Holy Cross and the Norman Mission daughter congregation which God led Holy Cross to give birth to. Without further ado, here is the letter. I pray it moves you as it moved me.

Pastor Strackbein

Pastor Wendland writes:

Dear Friends,

A BATTLE YOU CAN'T WIN! Ever been in one of those? Not like some ancient tale where warriors choose death over surrender. In that case it's usually for the glory, and there has to be some kind of satisfaction in that.

I mean a battle where every day is filled with BITTER COMBAT, and you see no end in sight. I mean where even as you struggle with all your might to stand your ground, you feel yourself getting pushed back. Inch by inch. Foot by foot. Yard by yard. And all the while, you know - you just know - that though you dearly want to win you will lose.

Sin had taken our measure. Death had us in its sights. WE COULD NOT WIN. No one could, no matter how hard he might struggle. Sin made each day a misery, and death swallowed up every human hope, every human joy, every human life.

*UNTIL OUR JESUS CAME. Ravenous death was swallowed up forever by his death. And what makes his triumph on Easter so unique is that, when he won that battle, he didn't hoard the glory for himself. He gave his victory away. Listen to Paul: "Thanks be to God! **HE GIVES US** the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." His triumph, my triumph. His life, my life. In an instant our life's struggle is transformed from a slog of hopeless despair into a glorious battle, bright with living hope.*

We draw our life from him. He gives his life to us. God gives. We give. Men at the seminary prepare to give their lives away in service to this Lord. They'd like nothing better than to spread the news of his triumph far and wide. "Death is done. Sin's power is broken!"

That's why I'm writing to you now. To ask for your help in our mission of training pastors. Will you help us free others from their hopeless battles? Will you help us give away what we have freely received?

How? By keeping us in your prayers. Ask God to keep professors and students here faithful to our callings. Then, if you can, make a gift to the seminary. Contributions to our Seminary Fund give us flexibility, allowing us to direct the gift wherever help is needed most. Contributions to our Student Scholarship Fund provide tuition relief for students on tight budgets.

Not for the sake of an institution, but because he lives. BECAUSE HE WON.

In Christ,

President Paul Wendland

EVANGELISM

The Board of Outreach took the youth of Holy Cross out yesterday to pass out Easter invitations and 1,500 cards were delivered. A mass mailing effort has also taken place for new homeowners. In the future the Board hopes to do another free car wash with the youth and pass our brochures and sermon CDs. Another big effort is the sponsoring of four college students from the U. of Wisconsin in Madison, WI. WELS has a student chapel and study center there. The students will hand out Easter invitations and do witnessing to the most recent new homeowners and renters. They will also try to visit all visitors to Grace's grand opening service which is today. The students arrived yesterday and will canvass from 3:00-7:00PM tonight. Holy cross members will provide hot lunches Monday-Wednesday at 2:00PM. The students will then canvass from 3:00-8:00PM. They will be free on Thursday. On Friday they will canvass from Noon-5:00PM and Saturday from 10:00AM-8:00PM with breaks for lunch and supper. Sunday the group will attend our Easter Sunrise service, spend a few minutes thanking the congregation and then,

after the Easter breakfast, head for the airport for the trip home. IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THEM IN THEIR WORK, SHOW UP AT HOLY CROSS ONE HOUR BEFORE THE STATED TIME. If in doubt, call Pastor.

FAITH FOCUSED FINANCES

A. A Look at Today's Financial Situations (Cont'd)

1. The financial picture in our congregations.

a.) Most congregations present a "lopsided" picture: a small group that contributes based on "percentage giving" and often exceeds that amount; a much larger group that contributes less than their percentage basis; and a small group that is very limited financially.

b.) The five main financial challenges in our congregation: 1) maintain a balanced general fund; 2) maintain CMO/Special Synodical Offerings as budgeted; 3) fund assistance for Norman Mission; 4) provide funds for remodeling project; and 5) provide funds for on-going evangelical programs such as VBS, Walking Together, etc.

2. The financial picture in our homes.

a.) Comparing the financial picture of people in our community with the homes of our congregation shows an average/above average situation.

b.) Several goals of our congregation may be affected by our members' personal financial decisions: 1) mission goal to effectively spread the Gospel message to our community; 2) the growth of our congregation; and 3) financial support of our synod.

B. The Fall-out and Collateral Damage

1. The inappropriate relationship to money affects many areas of life.

1st Timothy 6:9-10 - *"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* Some present day examples of "ruin and destruction...all kinds of evil...many griefs" are divorce, foreclosures, and large debt loads. Are these financial challenges necessarily bad for our synod, congregations, families and individuals? No. Challenges can be stimulating, resulting in a re-direction of our priorities. It can bring more focus on our spiritual awareness, and it reminds us to give thanks to God, even in hard times, since God works out everything for the good of those who love Him. We need to put all our trust in Him.

EDUCATION

Sunday School kids from 1st grade and up who have memorized verses 2, 3 and 5 of hymn #538 will sing with the Seminary Choir on Thursday, April 8th at 7:00PM. Practice is taking place every Sunday and a special practice with the choir will take place at 6:45PM on the day of the concert.

Have you ever asked yourself, "why do we offer Sunday School for our children?" It's a tool to help parents fulfill their duty to teach their children the stories of the Bible, and from them to learn the basic doctrines of the Bible. It is our congregation's response to God's command, "Let the little children come unto me and forbid them not." The Word they receive will imprint Jesus on their hearts. We want our children to be rich in the knowledge that leads to salvation not just rich in the knowledge that they learn in public school. We want our children to be prepared for the in-depth confirmation course they will get from their pastor. All of these are good answers. Please encourage parents with children to send their kids. If you have a child between the ages of 4 and 18, we have a class for them. If you are an adult, why not come to the adult Bible study on Sunday morning? God has a lot to offer us all in His Word. Take advantage of the many blessings God has showered upon us here at Holy Cross!

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

This month we would like to give a warm welcome to **Tiffany Loper**. Tiffany went to parochial school here at Holy Cross. We are happy to see you back Tiffany, and pray that God will continue to strengthen your faith through the Word and Sacrament you receive here with us at Holy Cross.

SEMINARY CHOIR COMING TO OUR CONGREGATION

Here is another date to circle on your calendar. **THURSDAY, APRIL 8TH, 7:00PM.** It was 15 years

ago that the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary men's choir had a concert in Oklahoma. It was given at Gethsemane. I honestly feel that this will be one of the best sacred concerts you will ever hear in your life. It is a deep privilege and honor to have them here at Holy Cross. We still need homes for the 43 seminarians to stay in, and people to sign up for food to bring for the meal they will eat that evening. See the church bulletin board if you want to participate. We hope to have several Holy Cross children singing with the choir on one song.

For almost 80 years the Seminary Choir has appeared regularly in congregations of the Wisconsin Synod to proclaim the Word of God in song and to represent the ministry of the seminary. Membership in the choir is open to all students, and the group rehearses three times each week. The choir presents an annual Christmas Concert, performed twice on the second Sunday in December to several thousand guests. A Graduation Concert is held the evening before the seminary's graduation service in May. The choir regularly participates in worship at nearby congregations during the school year and conducts a concert tour every other year during the Easter vacation. The 2010 tour takes the choir to WELS congregations in Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Wisconsin. The choir has appeared in 40 of the United States as well as in Canada during its long history. For the past 25 years the choir has been directed by Prof. James P. Tiefel.

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASS

Monday night congregational Bible studies will continue starting April 26th from 6:30-8:30PM. We always take a 10-15 minute break for fellowship and snacks. Some of the topics will include, "Religion and Science, Homosexuality, Grace, Reincarnation, Satan, Death, etc." The classes are open to anyone and have a goal of spiritual enrichment. Come and grow in the Word and your ability to discuss these topics with others.

EASTER LILIES

Often called the "white-robed apostles of hope," lilies are said to have been found growing in the Garden of Gethsemane after Christ's agony. Tradition has it that the beautiful white blooms sprung up where drops of Christ's sweat fell to the ground in His final hours of sorrow and deep distress. At Easter time, churches bank their altars and surround their crosses with masses of Easter Lilies to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and hope of life everlasting.

If you would like to donate an Easter Lily or several Easter Lilies, please bring them to the Maundy Thursday or Good Friday worship services. The more, the better.

EASTER - CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 1st - Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7:00PM - Offerings to Dan Way Memorial

April 2nd - Good Friday Service at 7:00PM - Offerings to Synod Missions

April 4th - Easter Sunrise Service at 7:00AM - Offerings to Holy Cross General Fund

- Easter Breakfast following Sunrise Service - Served by Holy Cross Church Council

- Easter Worship Service at 10:30AM - Offerings to Holy Cross General Fund

April 8th - Seminary Choir - 7:00PM

As is the custom, after the Easter Sunday Sunrise service, the Holy Cross Church Council will be serving breakfast for everyone. Come early to the Sunrise service and stay for the breakfast and Sunday School. Or, come at 8:00AM after the Sunrise service for break-fast and stay for Sunday School and the Easter service at 10:30AM. So everyone make plans to attend, and if possible, bring a friend.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Our Tenebrae service this coming Friday at 7:00PM will have the theme: "A Walk Through The Valley Of The Shadow of Death" based on Psalm 23. It will be subdivided into the following parts:

1) Preparation for the journey which will include a message based on Hebrews 7:27, "We Preach Christ Crucified, Once For All time!"

2) Footsteps through the valley. The "Footsteps" will include:

The First Step - Through the Valley of Decision

The Second Step - Through the Valley of Betrayal

The Third Step - Through the Valley of Denial

The Fourth Step - Through the Valley of Decision

The Fifth Step - Through the Valley of Judgment
The Sixth Step - Through the Valley of Pain and Torment
The Seventh Step - Through the Valley of the Shadow
of Death
The Final Step - Through the Valley to the Grave

MARY-MARTHA

The Mary-Martha Guild met on Saturday, March 20th at 9:30AM. For the devotion, Pastor Strackbein led a Bible study on the "Famous Chapters of the Bible." The study started in Hebrews 11 - the faith chapter which covers the faith of some of the men and women of Old Testament times.

The Spring LWMS Circuit will be held on April 24th at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arlington, TX. The ladies will be leaving from Holy Cross at 5:30AM. The rally theme will be "Releasing Prisoners From Darkness" with Dave Nack, Administrator for WELS Prison Ministries as the speaker. The annual Synod LWMS Convention will be June 24-27 in St. Louis, MO. Pastor Phillip Strackbein will be one of the speakers. The cost and other information are available in a brochure posted on the church bulletin board. All ladies from Holy Cross are invited to attend these meetings. If you plan to go or need transportation, contact Joy Hahn.

The WELS Seminary Choir will be presenting a concert at Holy Cross on April 8th at 7:00PM. The ladies will be serving them supper at 5:30PM. A sign-up sheet is posted on the church bulletin board for food and housing.

The next Mary-Martha meeting is Saturday, April 10th at 9:00AM. All ladies of Holy Cross are invited and urged to attend.

LUTHERAN MEN'S RETREAT

Pastor Mark Zaring, President of Martin Luther College, our Synod's future pastor and teacher training school, will be leading this year's retreat. The theme of this year's retreat will be, "BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE" from Haggai 1:1-2:23. The study will show how appropriate the Book of Haggai is for our time as we struggle with the "me-first" attitude in ourselves and in others. It will also consider God's amazing world governance as He directed empires to achieve His plan of sending the Messiah.

The men's retreat will be from Friday, April 16th at 6:30PM until Sunday, April 18th at 11:00AM. It will be held at Camp Shiloh, TX. The fee is \$99.00 till April 1st when it goes up to \$114.00.

If you would like to go, please sign up on the bulletin board, or contact Al Cardwell or Scott Peters. In the past, the men have come back on Saturday evening to attend services here at Holy Cross on Sunday.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

Once again the New Member Welcome was cancelled. The snow storm last Saturday and Sunday would have kept most of the participants away. Don't despair. Those of you that had planned to do something for entertainment, please keep your plans handy. We are tentatively rescheduling for Sunday, May 16th. Please circle the date and let us plan to have a huge activity and greet our new members.

VOTERS' MEETING

The Quarterly Voters' Body Meeting will be held Sunday, April 18th following a pot luck dinner after the worship service. Items for consideration at the meeting include reports from each Board, church membership, renovation/expansion drawings, financial restraints due to congregational expenditures exceeding offerings, and other related items. All men of the congregation are voting members of the Voters' Body, so all men plan to attend. Ladies are also encouraged to attend.

RENOVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Renovation/Expansion Committee, as instructed by the Voters' Body, has developed three renovation/ expansion drawings with approximate cost estimates. These three drawings are posted on the committee's bulletin board in the fellowship area of the church. These drawings will be presented to the Voters' Body at the April 18th meeting for discussion and action. Please take time prior to the meeting to peruse these drawings and bring your questions and comments to the Voters' Body Meeting

for consideration.

GRACE LUTHERAN NEWS

There are a lot of good things to report and thank the Lord for. The attendance high has been 32 and the low 16. The average is about 28 every Sunday. We have had a few visitors on almost every Sunday. Most are University students. The offerings have averaged around \$340.00 per Sunday. The combined Holy Cross/ Grace attendance per Sunday has been around 130-137. All energy has been expended into preparing for the Grand Opening today and next Sunday. If you travel North on I-35, South of the Embassy Suites, you will see a huge electronic sign advertising the church. Lots of mailers have been sent out along with purchases of evangelism material for the canvassers who came in yesterday and will spend the week looking up prospects and inviting them to the Easter services. Business cards and a large amount of the "Way to Emmaus" videos were purchased. Fifteen and thirty-second radio spots will be aired all week on the following radio stations. Tune in. They are well done.

Clear Channel Radio Stations:

101.9 KTST - "The Twister"

1000 KTOK - "Newsradio"

KJ103 - "Today's Best Music"

Citadel Radio Stations:

WWLS - "Sports Animal"

KATT

An offer for more financial help has come from the same WELS foundation who offered funding for the outreach campaign if we decided to seriously work with O.U. students. That will be discussed among the participants of Grace together with our Board of Outreach after Easter some time.

In a time when our beloved Synod is being forced to cut back on mission outreach, what a blessing it is to be a part of an attempt to expand it. To God be the Glory!

BARTLESVILLE HERE WE COME

On Saturday, May 15th, we will have a church trip to Bartlesville, OK. We will be eating lunch (included) at the famous Two Sisters Bistro with several entrees to pick from. We will have an early morning departure. First we will visit the New Phillips Museum. Then, we will journey to tour the original Frank Phillips residence which has all the original furnishings and fixtures. After lunch, we will have a mountain man demonstration of how life was in the early days "in those hills!" We will visit the Woolaroc Museum famous for its Native American motif. Also, we will have time to go through the Frank Phillips Hunting Lodge there on the property of Woolaroc. The Woolaroc property is a wildlife reserve with many roaming buffalo, zebras and giraffes, along with many other animals.

Come along. We are sure to have fun! Anyone is invited. The cost is \$60.00 which includes lunch. Parking will be here at the church. Thanks!

Sue Piña

SOUP CAN LABELS/CEREAL BOX TOPS

Please continue to bring your Campbell Soup labels and box top coupons and give them to Dina Shoumaker.

APRIL GREETERS

April 4 - George & Nancy McKinnis

April 11 - Scott & Carole Peters

April 18 - Jack & LaVon Post

April 25 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker

APRIL CLEANING LIST

April 3 - Eric & Diane Hanson/Paul & Aimee Barnett

April 10 - Mary-Martha Ladies

April 17 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker/Doug Hahn Family

April 24 - Chris & Mindy Chaddock

AH! SPRING

By Delores Staats, Barb Strackbein's Mother

*After winter's long cold months
When woods are silent, dull and gray;
It seems as if all life has topped-
Until Easter comes our way!
Then begins the burst of spring
With leaves of green in every hue
Mingled with the darker pine
It's really quite the scenic view!
I like to walk along the road
And smell the blossoms in the air;
To see the early flowers bloom
That spread their beauty everywhere!
Each spring You keep me mindful, Lord,
That in the resurrection
You, too shall rise me from the dead
In beautiful perfection!*

Lite Humor

As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently, I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the Kentucky back-country.

As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost; and being a typical man, I didn't stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight.

There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play.

The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. I played like I've never played before for this homeless man.

And as I played "Amazing Grace," the workers began to weep. They wept, I wept, we all wept together. When I finished, I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head hung low, my heart was full.

As I was opening the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, "I never seen nothin' like that before, and I've been putting in septic tanks for over twenty years"