

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

How happy can I be when I'm scared of dying?

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." Revelation 14:13

Many things are scary. Watching your infant wiggle out of the car carrier that you had momentarily set on the table—that's scary. Witnessing a car swerve into oncoming traffic—that's scary. But of all the scary things, death for many people is the scariest.

It's scary because of what we know and don't know. We know death is certain. Its cloud hangs over us at every traffic intersection, on every consult with our doctor, and during every violent storm. What we don't know is what dying is like or what, if anything, happens after death.

If there is no God, then death is the end and that's it. If so, then death may be final and sad, but it's hardly something to be afraid of. However, if there is existence after death and God is waiting to judge us for all the things we have done, then death is more than sad. It's scary.

God does exist. There are no ifs about that. The Bible pinpoints the greatest fear about dying and facing God: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Yes, that's scary! So how happy can I be when I'm scared of dying?

If it were up to us to find happiness in the face of death, we would be on an impossible journey. What we need to calm our fears and to find happiness is for someone to do something about death. The good news is that someone has.

God, who awaits you after death, sent Jesus to destroy death's fear. Jesus began that work by obeying God's laws for you. Then he traded places with you. He gave you his perfect life in exchange for your sins. And so, with your sins laid on him, he suffered a most horrible death, which earned God's forgiveness for you. With all sin forgiven, death lost its power. So, three days after his burial, Jesus rose to life from the dead. He defeated death so that it can no longer hold the lives and bodies of those it has claimed. God will raise all people from the dead.

Believe this good news and know for sure that God waits for you with open arms to welcome you into his heaven. This is why God tells us in the Bible: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (Revelation 14:13).

The unknown experience of death may still be scary for you, but because death has been conquered by Jesus Christ, you can live happily, now and ever after.

VOTERS' MEETING

The quarterly voters' body meeting will be held Sunday April 17th following a pot luck dinner after the worship service. Items of general business will be presented and discussed. All men of the congregation are voting members of the voters' body, so all men plan to attend. Ladies are also encouraged to attend.

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

The endowment committee would like to thank everyone for the comments on the proposed endowment amendment to the constitution. The committee will be making minor revisions to the proposed amendment. After final revisions, the committee plans to present the proposed amendment to the Holy Cross church council for consideration on presenting it to the voters' body for adoption.

MOVIE NIGHT

The Stewardship Board will be having a movie night on Friday April 15th and will be showing "The Passion of Christ" with Mel Gibson. All members and friends are welcome to come. Desserts would be welcomed by participants. Drinks and hot dogs will be provided by the Board members.

PRAYER LIST

Prayer to the true God is a form of worship. When Jesus said on the cross, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," he was worshiping the Father. When the thief on the cross said, "Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," he was worshiping Jesus. That is why we include a lot of prayer in our worship services. When you pray before you go to bed, and before meals, you are worshiping God. When we pray for our fellow spiritual family members, we are worshiping our Lord. What a reason for finding reasons to pray!

During the month of March we had special prayers for Phyllis Wallace, the Grandmother of Autumn Krawczynski who is in an ICU after a botched surgery; for Duane Stuever who had shoulder surgery; for Hayden Gartner, Janet and Tom Finney's Granddaughter; and for Tamra Binning's mother who was suffering a lot of pain.

-We also asked God to bless the marriage of Autumn Krawczynski and Philip Class. Please continue to pray for them as well as for Carolyn May and her family. Carolyn's mother was sent to glory on March 16th in Chicago.

-Please also pray especially for our two adult Bible Information Class (BIC) students who are preparing for membership at Holy Cross. They are Tamra Binning and Bernie Nelson.

MAUNDY THURSDAY/GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES

Special services will be conducted on Maundy Thursday, April 21st and Friday April 22nd at 7 PM. It is a special time of year. Please make plans to attend. God's Word will not return empty to you but will fill you with blessings.

The Maundy Thursday service will celebrate the last celebration of the Passover and the institution and first celebration of the Lord's Supper. Holy Communion will be served. The word "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word for "command." The "Maundy" in Maundy Thursday refers to the command Jesus gave to the disciples at the Last Supper, to do this often.

The Friday service is taken from an early Christian service called Tenebrae. The name Tenebrae is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows." In this service we will experience only a small portion of Christ's pain and suffering the day of His crucifixion. One of the most conspicuous features of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. As it gets darker and darker we can reflect on the great emotional and physical pain that was very real for Jesus that evening. Toward the end of the service, the Christ candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil over good. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of his death (Matthew 27) and his resurrection (Matthew 28:2). At the moment of the earthquake, the temple veil was torn apart, making the Holy of Holies exposed to public view. This is understood to represent God's change toward us with direct access to him, no longer requiring the ceremonial acts of the priests for our forgiveness of sin. The hidden candle is then restored to its place, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. By this single light we all depart this service in silence.

EASTER SERVICE

"The god of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead...We are witnesses of these things." (Acts 5:30,32) Death no longer automatically leads us to hell. Thanks to Jesus and His resurrection death has lost its sting. By faith in Christ, we have an eternity of life with Christ in heaven. What a reason to not only celebrate Easter but also to invite our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. There will be three distinct services. Sunrise service begins at 7:00 AM April 24th. followed by the traditional Easter breakfast, and Sunday School. The regular Easter service will be at 10:30 AM and the service at Grace in Norman will be at 1:00 PM.

EASTER LILIES

What does the lily have to do with Easter? There are many explanations. but think of the color. What does it usually mean? Why do we have white altar clothes at Easter? Why will we

wear robes of white in heaven? White represents purity and holiness. Easter is a time of rejoicing because

1. It proves that Jesus is God. He conquered death.
2. It is proof we will rise again also and
3. It is the proof that God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus and declared us not guilty of our sins.

Easter is the proof that we are justified and therefore Holy. The whiteness of the Easter lily beautifully shows the purity that God sees in us for the sake of His Son. Can you imagine being clothed in heaven with something as beautiful and glorious as an Easter lily?

If you plan to buy some Easter lilies for Easter, please consider lending them to Holy Cross for the Easter festivals. The more we get the better!

Easter morn with lilies fair
Fills the church with perfumes rare,
As their clouds of incense rise,
Sweetest offerings to the skies.
Stately lilies pure and white
Flooding darkness with their light,
Bloom and sorrow drifts away,
On this holy hallow'd day.
Easter Lilies bending low
in the golden afterglow,
Bear a message from the sod
To the heavenly towers of God.

-Louise Lewin Matthews

EVANGELISM

Our outreach board was very busy last month. God richly blessed their efforts with a new class at the Legacy apartments. In addition the board helped the four Wisconsin Lutheran College students who came down to campus Norman for a week.

Next month plans are being made for a concerted effort to invite our friends to come to church. Materials and explanations of how everyone can become involved in this friendship evangelism effort will be passed out in the bulletin. A canvass and a mass mailing of cards to invite neighbors who do not know us are also being planned. Watch the church bulletins for further information.

Lately we have had a lot of visitors come to church. How can we make them feel welcome? Pastor James Huebner, first vice President of our Synod, wrote the following in a Mission Counselor Newsletter in May of 2,000. What he wrote still makes sense today. Here are a few clips of what he wrote.

“How do we make visitors feel welcome at worship without sacrificing the integrity of Lutheran principles of worship? There is a way to do that. Might I suggest that you treat guests and visitors who come to worship at your church the same way you would treat an honored guest or visitor who comes to your home?” None of the things listed below actually convey the gospel. They fall in the realm of common sense.

Parking: If you invited guests to your home, you would expect them to park in your driveway or in front of your house. But if you lived on a crowded street or in an apartment building, you would probably indicate where to find a convenient space. Maybe you would even give up your space. Having special visitor parking spaces near the entrance will make them feel welcome.

Nursery: Should your congregation offer a staffed nursery during worship or not? Some will say: ‘Children have to learn how to sit quietly in church. We don’t need a staffed nursery.’ Then again, another will say: ‘I was standing in the narthex one Sunday when visitors arrived with twin toddlers. They asked where the nursery was. When I told them that we don’t have one, they left. We need a staffed nursery.’ Who’s right? You’ll have to sort that one out in “Christian love at your own congregation”. Just be sure that in the discussion of whether or not to offer a staffed nursery, someone speaks up for unchurched visitors. Their expectations may be different than those of established, active church members.

Greeters: Guests who are invited to your home would expect you to come to the door and greet them. Only your closest friends or relatives would expect just to walk in and look around until they find you sitting out back on the patio. Greeters at the door welcome guests to the

Lord's house. (Our Outreach Board and certain evangelism committee members do this every Sunday at Holy Cross).

Ushers: Even if you live in a small home or apartment, first-time guests appreciate it when you indicate in which room and in which spot they should sit. They may even need directions to the bathroom. What if visitors arrive late for worship and are ushered all the way down to the front row? They won't know on which page the liturgy begins and when to stand and sit. Ushers may well be your most important greeters. They should ask visitors where they would like to sit and offer a spot near helpful members.

GRACE NEWS

Last September, Holy Cross members who attend worship at Grace in Norman asked for permission from the Board of Outreach to apply to Kingdom Workers for funds to have a team of college or seminary canvassers come down from Wisconsin. The request was approved by the Board at Holy Cross, the Home District Mission Board and Kingdom workers. Grace had to pay \$400.00, the students who requested the privilege of serving had to pay \$100 each, and Kingdom Workers paid the rest. Grace paid for their food, the hand out materials and provided a car for the canvassers while there were here.

Four Freshman students came from Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee and stayed at the home of Don Chaddock. They were, team captain, Jen Yatso, Cate Aisbet, Jessie Mctrusty, Alyssa Schumacher. The young ladies attended our Wednesday Lenten evening service and gave a report on their work and their college after the Sunday service on March 27th. Holy Cross members joined them as they canvassed on Sunday the 13th. Others, including Pastor and Jonah Schoneborn helped canvass during the week. During their stay they visited the zoo, Bricktown, and went for a hike and fishing with the Shawn Stuever family at the Wichita Mountains. Hundreds of homes were visited in Norman and a pretty good list of potential prospects was compiled. Pastor and Grace members will need to revisit those on the list. God blessed the effort richly. May His name be praised.

MARY-MARTHA GUILD

The Red River Circuit of LWMS was held on Saturday, March 19 at Abiding Faith Lutheran Church in Ft. Worth, TX. Al Cardwell graciously volunteered to drive six ladies from Holy Cross to the Rally. The ladies wish to thank him as it was a spiritually enlightened day for all the ladies. The theme of the Rally was "Spreading the Word in Southeast Asia". The guest speaker was Pastor Stephen Vallesky who reported on the mission work being done in Nepal and Pakistan and what can be done to help spread the Word in these areas. The mite box offering from Holy Cross was \$226.08 and we thank everyone for their contributions. The total offering from the Circuit was \$3442.50 and will be going to "Vicars in Mission" and the "Russia Project".

The 48th Annual LWMS Convention will be June 23-26, 2011 in Milwaukee, WI. All of the information about cost, hotels, meals etc., is posted on the Mary-Martha bulletin board at church. Anyone interested in attending, should speak to Joy Hahn.

The next meeting of the ladies will be April 9th at 9:30 AM. All ladies of Holy Cross congregation are invited and encouraged to attend.

CONCERN FOR JAPAN

Last week Japan was jolted by the largest earthquake ever recorded in that country. Within minutes, one catastrophe was followed by a second, as a devastating tsunami crashed into coastal areas, literally erasing everything in its path. To make matters worse, in the days since the quake, there are new dangers from damaged nuclear reactors and the radiation that they could potentially release. Thousands are feared dead. Hundreds of thousands are homeless or displaced. An entire nation is traumatized.

Our thoughts naturally turn toward our brothers and sisters in faith in Japan. Our missionary Brad Wordell was out of the country when the quake hit, and his wife and five children living in metropolitan Tokyo are safe. The three national pastors in our sister church in Japan are also safe. We are aware of one member among the 400 served by the church's six congregations and three preaching stations who is not accounted for. She lives in a city devastated by the tsunami, and prayers are requested for her safety. There have been no reports of major damage to the churches or property. For this we thank God for his gracious care and protection.

Still, the disaster offers WELS members the opportunity to show Christian love and mercy for those who have been affected. Our WELS Christian Aid and Relief committee has already granted \$10,000 in aid to the relief agency CARE to provide immediate assistance to those in need. Christian Aid and Relief is also making available \$10,000 through our missionary and the national pastors to provide some immediate assistance to any of their contacts who may have suffered loss. Even though Japan is a well-developed country with great resources, the effects of this disaster are so devastating that any help or assistance from other countries and from relief organizations will be welcome and helpful.

As in the past, we know that WELS members will want to demonstrate their Christian love by offering their help and assistance to relief efforts. In the early stages of a relief effort, monetary gifts are the most helpful. Contributions can be made at www.wels.net/relief

You can also send a gift through the mail to WELS Christian Aid and Relief, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222.

Certainly, during this time of Lent our thoughts are focused on the love that Christ showed for sinners like us and on the sacrifice he made to help us in our greatest need. There is no better time for us to reflect that same love for those in need than now. Please continue to pray that God will provide his almighty care to the Japanese people. Pray even more fervently that he will use this crisis as a means to bring his saving gospel to many in Japan who do not know Jesus as their Savior.

Thank you and may God continue to bless you this Lenten season.

Serving in Christ,

Synod President, Mark Schroeder

SOUTH AMERICAN MISSION WORK

Posted by Kathryn Strackbein

Saturday, January 15, 2011: Decision Made to Move LATTE Professor to Bolivia.

As many of the readers of this blog know, trips to Bolivia have been made twice a year by LATTE Professor Larry Retberg since November of 2007. These trips began because a group of Lutherans in Bolivia has expressed its desire to become Confessional Lutherans in fellowship with the WELS.

Significant progress has been made as a result of the trips made by Larry Retberg. However, the desire was expressed to be able to advance more rapidly in conservative theological studies. For this reason, in a meeting of LATTE professors and the Administrative Committee for Latin American Missions in November of 2010, Professor Philip Strackbein was asked to move with his wife Kathryn from the Dominican Republic to Bolivia early in 2011 in order to continue these studies with the Lutheran leaders in Bolivia full time.

Monday, March 7, 2011 No Hay

In early February, we spent the entire day trying to advance work on our Bolivian visas. We got up at 4:30 am to get the early bus to Santo Domingo. When we got there the line for the bathroom was quite long, so we walked across the street to use the bathroom in the mall. Now came the first clue of the day! All of the cleaning ladies were standing in front of the men's bathroom and wouldn't let Philip in. He asked politely to get by, but they kept saying, "No hay - there is none" No hay servicio -there is no service, No hay entrada - there is no entrance". First clue of the day!!

Then we got a taxi to the Bolivian consulate. We found it and got in without any problem. She looked over our papers and we were quite hopeful of a positive answer. She said, "All your

papers look good. You have everything you need. Everything seems to be in order". So just as we were getting our hopes up, (GASP!!) she speaks those two dreaded words -- No hay - there is none!! No hay timbres - there are no stamps! No hay sellos - there are no seals! She said it would be about 10 - 15 days until she expected to receive more stamps and seals from Bolivia!

So, on to step three. Since we are going to have to wait for them to get their supplies, we decided to go to the US Consulate to see about getting additional pages put into our passports. We had to wait a couple of hours until that specific office opened. When we got up to the window, the lady looked at our papers and said everything looked ok. She could do it right away, but (GAAASP!!) NO HAY cajero - there is no cashier!! The cashier had gone home for the day. Come back on Monday!!!

So after a 14 hour day, five hours on the bus, six taxis around town, and one meal - No hay - there is none!

This past Friday, Missionary Philip and Kathy Strackbein received their entrance visas for Bolivia after two additional trips from Santiago to Santo Domingo.

Friday, March 18, 2011, Arrived Safely in Bolivia

Kathy and I have now arrived safely in La Paz, Bolivia. Guillermo, the president of the church put us up in a small apartment that he owns until we can get a place of our own. The apartment does not have internet service, however. So I am writing this from the hotel where Missionary Larry Retberg is staying. Guillermo promised that he would get us set up with internet service soon. The apartment also does not have a phone. We purchased a cheap cell phone, but still have to get it registered before we can use it.

Our first day of activities include:

- Installing Wireless USB internet connection -- it is slow, but workable
- Registering our cell phone
- Finding out that our residence visa paperwork will take at least one month to process
- Receiving a personal guia (guide) from Guillermo to accompany us on all our errands to receive our visa
- Meeting the lawyer who will be helping us get our visa
- Making copies of passports, getting photos taken, etc... for visa paperwork

-Meeting with the lawyer again to get started on obtaining the two required good conduct certificates for our visa.

HC - MARCH GREETERS

April 3 - Jack & Lavon Post

April 10 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker

April 17 - Paul & Aimee Barnett

April 24 - Al & Carol Cardwell

MY REFUGE

by Delores Staats

Lord, help me remember Your blessings

Whenever I'm feeling alone!

When clouds of self-pity enshroud me

And my heart seems to turn into stone.

Remind me again how You've blessed me

With more than I ever could need.

You've supplied me with wonderful sermons

And more books than I really can read!

Remind me Your Word is a refuge;

Relief for my spiritual pain.

Your promise to always be with me

Will help to restore me again.

Oh, fill me with praise and thanksgiving

For all of Your wonderful ways!

Your Fatherly love and protection

Will keep me the rest of my days!

SPRING CLEANING/WORK DAY

It is the time of year for a spring cleanup. Everyone is invited on Saturday, April 16th at 8:00 AM to participate. Cleaning inside and outside is planned. If you can spend an hour or three, or four, come and join in the activities.

HC - MARCH CLEANING LIST

April 2 - Tony & Shelia Taylor & Alecia Taylor

April 9 - Mary-Martha

April 16- Diane Ritter Coco & Chris & Mindy Chaddock

April 23 - Ricky Poulin & Andy & Jeanie Quam

April 30 - Fred & Gina Potter and Sue & Wesley Pina