

## PASTORS PENNINGS

### Jesus Helps the Paralyzed

“That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. ...” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God (Luke 5:24-26).

The house was at capacity. Standing room only. Those not able to squeeze in strained to catch a glimpse through the doorway. They were there to see Jesus who was teaching a crowd. But one man in particular could not get into the house. He could not peer over heads. He could not even stand. He was paralyzed.

Yet he and his four friends were determined to see Jesus. So his friends clambered up to the roof. They removed the tiles and then the thatching, enough to fit their friend through. Using the mat upon which he was lying, they lowered him down. Right at the feet of Jesus.

Some might call them crazy. Others might say they were obsessed. Jesus called it faith. The paralyzed man and his friends were confident that Jesus was able to make him whole. And Jesus did with five small words: “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

It’s not what many in the crowd expected to hear. It may not be the answer you want to hear when paralyzed with problems. We want real answers for our real problems. We want a cure for cancer. We want an end to family fights. We want money to cover our debts.

What about the problem of death? Death is the debt that we all must pay. But death is only the beginning. God’s judgment upon sin lasts forever. In hell. That’s what we deserve for thinking we have better answers than God does for life’s problems.

God’s answer? Jesus. God loves you so much he transferred your debt to his Son. On the cross, Jesus suffered for your sin. For you he endured hell’s eternal fire. For you he died. And for you he rose to life victorious. His victory is your victory!

The paralyzed man’s most critical problem was sin. So Jesus forgave him. Then, to prove to us that he is the perfect Son of God and the world’s perfect Savior with the perfect answer to all our troubles, Jesus restored the man’s legs. The man got up and walked home, praising God.

Have you been brought low? Troubled by sin? We welcome you to learn about and praise the miraculous Savior you have in Jesus. He has forgiven your sins. He has the power and desire to get you back on your feet. Whatever your woes, Jesus is the answer every time!

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP -----Faith Focused Finances  
Getting a Clearer Picture of the Struggles we as Christians Face

#### 1. The synod’s financial picture

By all indicators, 2009 was a difficult year for both domestic and global economies. The synod budget was not immune. Market depreciation resulted in an investment loss of \$7 million for the fiscal year. The economic downturn also meant a key individual donor was unable to fulfill a \$3 million gift commitment 2008-09 to the synod.

As a result, expenses of \$80.0 million for the 2008-09 fiscal year outpaced support of \$74.4 million by \$6.5 million. The difference was offset through available reserves from the operating surplus in fiscal year 2007-08 and through other resources on hand within individual areas of ministry.

A bright spot in the support picture was Congregational Mission Offerings (CMO), those gifts given by congregations for the collective work of the synod. Despite the ongoing recession in the United States, CMO for calendar year 2009 remained remarkably stable. As of the end of 11/09, CMO offerings for the year were almost 100% of the level committed by congregations back in 1/09, despite historically high unemployment rates.

Those gifts from congregations, along with individual gifts and memorials, are the two most significant sources of support for all of the ministries provided by the WELS. Without these gifts, it's fair to say little of our ministry could continue.

Holy Cross Lutheran's congregation exceeded the budget goal of \$29,500.00 by \$2366.27, for a total CMO of \$31,866.27 for 2009. We thank all of our members for their support and pray that we can continue to meet or exceed our commitment of \$27,000 including both Norman and OKC congregations in 2010.

## EVANGELISM

### No More Empty Promises!

The dad who promises to take his kids to the circus, but cancels because of yet another late night at work. The boss who promises a raise this year conveniently forgets he ever mentioned anything about it. The friend who promises to be there on time never shows up.

Empty promises. Aren't they discouraging? Don't they make it hard to believe a person the next time they make a promise?

Some people thought Jesus was full of empty promises. He told people that He was the Son of God. He taught people to believe in Him for eternal life. He promised that He would conquer sin, death and the devil. But He was killed like a common criminal on the cross. Who would want to put their faith in a failure like that? It appeared He was full of empty promises. Yet the third day after Jesus was crucified, the only thing that was empty was the tomb where He was buried. He had risen from the dead!

Now the empty tomb is full of promises. Jesus said, "Because I live, you also will live (John 19:24)." Just like Jesus rose from the dead, those who put their faith for eternal life in him will rise from the dead also. They will rise to a new life in an eternity of heaven!

As spring time bursts forth in new life, may we be reminded that through Jesus' resurrection, we can someday burst from the grave to a new life in heaven. The empty tomb is full of promises that we need but also that our friends, co-workers, family and neighbors need.

Why not use this month to identify someone who is sick of broken promises, someone who needs to be invited to our special Easter services. Once you have a target, pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them to church or talk to them about the Savior. Keep your eyes open for the opportunity He provides and then do it.

One other opportunity knocks on our door this month. Our Outreach Board will be inviting the youth of our church to hand out 1,200 post cards with invitations to attend our Holy Week and Easter festivals. Why not join them. They will meet at the church on Saturday, March 27th, at 10AM..

#### PRAYER LIST

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." Psalm 40:1-3a.

We prayed for several people since the last time this news letter was written. On January 24th a lot of prayers were offered for Cooper Scott Trowe who was baptized on that day. Please pray that Cooper will continue to grow in his faith through a continued connection with the Word of God.

Kristy Fletcher, daughter of Terry Eischen still is in need of our prayers. She lives in El Paso, TX and is in very week condition. Lupus has attacked her brain causing her to lose motor function. She has begun a round of chemotherapy treatment and will increase the number of treatments in each of the following two months. Please pray that she does not lose courage and hope and that this experience drives her ever closer to her Lord.

Please pray for the Hahn family. Doris Hahn's granddaughter, and Gary and Doug Hahn's niece lost her life at the age of 29, leaving three children behind. Ask the Lord to give them strength and wisdom as they try to cope with their loss.

Please thank the Lord for sparing the life of Kathleen Baker, daughter in law of Mrs. Roberta Beckelman who was in intensive care in Arizona due to a viral infection. Kathleen is now home We will want to thank the Lord especially for the privilege of having had Roberta Beckelman as a member of Holy Cross. She should have moved to Arizona by the time you read this. We will miss her smile and radiant love for her Lord. May God bless your new life with new witness opportunities and new ways to serve the Lord!

#### SEMINARY CHOIR

The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary all male Choir will give a sacred concert at Holy Cross on the first Thursday after Easter, April 8th at 7:00PM.. This will be an experience of a life time for many of you. Last year, the Michigan Lutheran Seminary (Synod Prep. High School) sang. This year the singers will be those men who are training to be our future pastors. They are very good singers. Gethsemane, Mount Olive here in Oklahoma will be invited as will our WELS congregations in Wichita and Salina, Kansas. The Outreach Board will find ways to make the concert known in the community. Our children have been invited to sing one song with the choir. Gethsemane children have been invited to participate with our children. Expect a packed church, so come early.

As with the choir last year, we will need 22 families to host 42 men and one married couple. Please sign up to be a host. There is a paper on the bulletin board for that purpose. All hosts are asked to give the students breakfast and have them back at church by 8:30AM. The ladies of the church have agreed to have a meal for the choir at 5:30PM. There will be a free will offering taken for the seminary choir.

#### CANVASSERS FOR NORMAN AREA

On Palm Sunday, March 28th, thanks to a grant from WELS Kingdom Workers, four canvassers from

the U. Of Wisconsin in Madison will be arriving to help visit prospects who attended our new mission, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church's grand opening for the Norman community which will have been held that afternoon. In addition they will be giving personal invites for the second part of the grand opening on Easter Sunday. The names of the students are, Lisa Albrecht(Senior), Bryan Carlson (a senior), Michael O'Brien (a junior), and Kelly Dercks (a sophomore). Two to four homes are needed to host these young Lutherans who are using their Spring break to share the Gospel. The hosts would need to offer breakfast and have them to the church before 10AM. Our Outreach Board is sponsoring the event and is looking for people to sign up for hot lunches to be served at Holy Cross at 2PM on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, March 29, 30, and 31. The group will be free on Thursday, April 1, and then will need lunches on Good Friday at 11:30AM and Saturday at Noon. The group will receive cash from the Outreach Board to buy their own supper after they have finished canvassing. There is a signup sheet for housing and for food volunteers. Please be a part of this mission endeavor.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Norman Mission

The Norman mission has a new name. It is Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. We have had several visitors and are making preparations for many more. A grand opening for the public in Norman is being planned for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday at the regular time of 1PM. Not only will the four Kingdom Worker college students be helping with this event, but about 37 special thirty second radio spots and 71, fifteen second spots are in the works one week before Palm Sunday and during Holy Week on KTOK, KXXY and KTST radio stations. Mass mailings, flyer distributions and the possible rental of an electronic bill board sign on I-35 are being planned to let the community in Norman know that there is a new church. Funding for this mass media blitz has come from a WELS family foundation which loves to help new mission start ups get off their feet. This is a huge effort. Please pray that both the advertizing and the big grand opening will reach many souls.

### MARY MARTHA FOOD PANTRY

Remember the Mary Martha Guild food pantry for helping members of Holy Cross congregation as well as others who are experiencing difficult times due to the sagging economy. Anyone who wishes to donate to the food pantry may bring non-perishable food items and leave them in the kitchen area. This is an ongoing project so you may contribute to the food pantry at any time or receive items from the food pantry at any time. If you have questions contact Joy Hahn (632-4524) or one of the Mary Martha ladies.

### LUTHERAN MENS RETREAT

The Annual Lutheran Men's retreat has been well attended by Holy Cross men in the past. Men are asked by God to lovingly exercise authority that God has given them in the same way that Christ used his authority when he came into this world. He used it in a way that was best for the church even though it meant his own suffering and death. Christian men need encouragement and training to be the kind of leaders that imitate Christ. That is what the men's retreat does. In the past we have been led by the Synod President, our District President, and other fine Synodical leaders. This time it will be led by Pastor Mark Zarling, President of Martin Luther College, our Synod's future pastor and teacher training school.

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 16 at 6:30PM until Sunday, April 18th at 11:00AM. It will be held at Camp Shiloh. The fee is \$99 till April 1st when it goes up to \$114.00.

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

#### PIONEERS/YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES

A great time was had by the Pioneers and Youth Group members with their pine cars. The weather caused rescheduling the pine car building, but all were completed in time for the big race at Gethsemane Lutheran church Sunday February 20th. The racers were divided into three divisions determined by their ages. Each car got to race all the cars in its division twice. There were over 25 cars total in all divisions. Trophies were given to the three fastest cars in each division and trophies were also given for the best designed and painted cars. Holy Cross cars were some of the fastest cars and won many races. Everyone is looking forward to the races next year. Thanks to Byron and Dina Shoumaker and all who helped make the car building and race a success. Watch the Holy Cross Facebook page for pictures of the racers and cars.

#### MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASS

During the season of Lent the Monday night Bible Class will not be meeting. The next Monday night Bible class will meet on April 5th.

#### CALENDAR OF EASTER EVENTS

March 3rd thru March 24th - Each Wednesday, Lent services 7:00 PM - Offerings Synod Missions

April 1st - Maundy Thursday Communion Service, 7:00 PM - Offering Dan Way Memorial

April 2nd - Good Friday Service, 7:00 PM - Offering to Synod Missions

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

- Easter Breakfast following sunrise service - Service by Holy Cross Church Council

- Easter Worship Service, 10:30 AM - Offering to Holy Cross General Fund

#### SYNOD PRESIDENT 'S PASTOR MARK SCHROEDER'S COMMENTS:

Synod President Pastor Mark Schroeder the address the South Central district convention held in Dallas, TX in January. The following is his remarks to the convention:

We can often forget what is right in front of us: Which is God's Grace. My first year as the synod president was a very difficult one, with having to make decisions like where were to make cuts in the Mission fields, and who is going to stay, and who's was going to go. And it was easy to forget that God was in front of us. As we look back we see God's blessings has made our Synod and our church bodies stronger. Simply by the means of grace. At the 2009 Synod convention we saw nothing but good things, and the best thing was we still have committed people to serve in our Mission fields, some at no help from Synod funding. So in the future our Mission work will solely thrive off what the congregations can produce through CMO giving. We were only \$220,000.00 short of our Synod mission goal of 21 million which as only short by 1%, and we ended up the year for CMO giving at 98%. Our Jubilee offerings came in at just 4 million and another has trickled in to the amount of \$550,000.00 and it's still coming in. We are looking at an 8 year plan at the Synod level, and the money we thought we were going to get from the Schwann foundation we only got 50%. they have some concerns about the synod sitting on their

money for a year and not spending it . Something about taxes and such. We at the Synod probably did some things wrong in the beginning but please don't poke us in the eye , bear with us and we will get better, with God's help. Missions will be a priority in the future along with Home Missions. We will not assign anyone to the mission field unless we actually have the funding to do so. Which means we may have to set on some monies for a year to get a good projection of who can stay and where we can reassign. Any funds outside the CMO will go into a holding pattern for a year so we can get a solid projection. Which means we won't spend money we don't have. There were some projected Synod level cuts that did not have to happen after all, and that was a blessing. NPH is struggling and has reduced their strength in the main store and is starting to consolidate in other areas. So when you have the chance use NPH when possible. and keep them in your prayers. We are having some discussion with our ELS brothers and hoping for some good news in the future here. The end of Pastor Schroeder's report

#### WELCOME FESTIVAL

Thanks to God, we at Holy Cross have a lot of new members. The last time we had a celebration in their honor was June 3 of 2007. Since then the following people have become new communicant members. In 2007 there were, Doug and Robin Dinse, Andrea Smith, Brandon and Curtis Buchanan, Natalie Schnell, Sheila Taylor, Theresa and Alecia Taylor, Amanda Kis, Arthur Wolf, Diana Ritter Coco, Tom and Beth Oaks, Amanda Kis and Peter Strackbein. In 2008 there was Joyce Hendrickson, Kate Brisker, Kelsey Stuever, Kaitlin Hahn, Destiny Taylor, and Aimee Barnett. Last year, in 2009 there was Roberta Beckelman, Kelly Lawson, Robert Hahn, Everett Peters, Peyton Buchanan, Troy Thomas, Ricky Poulin, Chad and Whitney Walker, Michael and Latischa Huller, Jeremy Zimdars, Christian and Leah Eisenbeis, Chuck Cateora, Philip Class, and Timothy and Robin James. So far this year there is Janice Gallarneau. There are others who joined but who now have transferred out

How many of these people can you recognize and do you know personally? Speaking of the Christian Church, God tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:12,13 "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all of its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink....(vs. 25) ...There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." In order for us to be one body and know each other better so that we can weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice, it is good for us to bond with each other with the love of Christ. That means it is good to get to know each other better.

To facilitate that process, the Board of Stewardship is planning a day when all new members that have joined since June 3, 2007 will be invited to a meal in their honor followed by entertainment and fellowship. The day has been postponed a couple of times but definitely not forgotten. We would like to try and have the celebration on Sunday March 21st after Church. For old and new members, please mark your calendars and plan to attend. We appreciate all of you members. You having been gifts of God to us and we pray we have been gifts of God to you.

If anyone would like to be a part of the talent show please put your name on the signup sheet on the bulletin board or contact Terry Eischen or Paul Barnett.

#### HOLY CROSS FACEBOOK PAGE

Holy Cross now has a "Face Book" page. If you have joined Facebook, simply do a search for Holy Cross. It will be under the listing for GROUPS page. There are a number of Holy Cross pages so select the correct one. If you are not a Face Book member go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and register. It is a free site and once you have registered you are a member with all privileges. The Holy Cross page is under the Board of Outreach and is intended to reach out to the community. If you have any

suggestions please address them to the Board of Outreach.

#### MARY MARTHA GROUP NEWS

The Mary Martha Guild met on February 13, at 9:30 am. For the devotion, Pastor Strackbein presented another video from his trip to Israel. The tour group met at the head of the Jordan River in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. There is a large rock formation where there are ruins of an old pagan temple and grotto. The devotion used by tour group Pastor was taken from Mark 8: 27-30 where Jesus asked the disciples "Who do people say I am?" And Peter replied "You are the Christ."

The Circuit Women's Retreat at Camp Shiloh, TX is March 12-14. The cost is \$99.00. The Spring LWMS Circuit Rally will be April 24 at Our Savior in Arlington, TX. The ladies will be leaving the church at 5:30 am. All ladies from our church are invited to attend. If anyone has been collecting money in the LWMS Mite Boxes, please return them by April 1st, because the total collected must be send in before the Rally on the 24th The annual Synod LWMS convention will be June 24-27 in St. Louis. The costs are in a brochure on the church bulletin board. Pastor Phillip Strackbein will be one of the speakers. Anyone interested in attending either of these meetings, contact Joy Hahn. The WELS Seminary Choir will be presenting a concert at our church on April 8th at 7:00 p.m. The ladies will be serving them supper at 5:30. A signup sheet is on the bulletin board for food and housing.

The next Mary Martha meeting will be on the 3rd Saturday, March 20th at 9:00 AM. Because of the retreat at Camp Shiloh on the 2nd Saturday. All ladies of Holy Cross are invited and urged to attend the meetings, which are usually held on the 2nd Saturday of the month.

#### BOARD OF OUTREACH

The canvassers will arrive on March 28th and will be leaving April 4th. There is a signup sheet on the bulletin board to help out with food and housing. The next outreach board meeting will be on March 27th at 10:00 am. We will be handing out postcards for Easter after the meeting. Everyone is welcome to come and help. We should start around 11:30 am. THE CHURCH YEAR

Have you ever wondered about the colors up on the Alter and what they mean?

Well, let's take a look and see.

1. WHITE is the color of purity, Eternity, and Joy. Used at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Epiphany, Baptism of our Lord , Transfiguration, Easter and Holy Trinity .
2. RED is the color of zeal (Fire) Blood . Used at Pentecost May 23rd and Reformation Oct. 31st and the last Judgment Nov. 7th
3. GREEN is the color of Life, Refreshment, Regeneration, Used on the Sundays after Pentecost June thru October.
4. PURPLE is the color of Royalty , also sorrow and repentance . Used during the Lent Season.
5. BLACK is the color of mourning, humility, and death. Used on Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday.
6. BLUE is the color of Anticipation. Used during the Advent Season.

All of these colors are used in accordance with the church year which begins with Advent at the end of November and spans the next four weeks before Christmas. Advent means A coming A and is a time of quiet reflection in preparation for the coming of Christmas and the coming of Christ at the end of the world.

Epiphany : is a Greek word that means A Appearing A We remember the appearing of the star to the wise men, telling us that Christ is the savior of all nations. We also see Christ appearing to his disciples making him known as the promised savior as he begins his ministry.

Lent: is time for humble and solemn meditation on the seriousness of our sins and the depth of Christ's love for us that he took those sin upon himself. The word is derived either from an Anglo-Saxon term meaning spring or from a German original which refers to the lengthening days. The outstanding feature of the season is that of a fast preparatory to a feast.

EASTER : The sorrow of lent is broken by the triumphant celebration of Easter, The highest of the Holy Days for Christians. We rejoice in victory for the risen Christ over all of our enemies.

Pentecost : It begins 50 days after Easter and covers the remaining half of the Church year. During Pentecost we focus on the teachings of Christ and their application to us.

Now you know.

Al Cardwell Board of Elders

#### MY BIRTHDAY

Oh, Lord, another year has passed  
And only love like Yours will last.  
I thank You for Your tender care  
And for my spouse whose life I share.  
You've kept me on the narrow way  
And found me when I went astray.  
And thanks for peace from sins forgiven;  
The blessed hope that waits for heaven.

You wean me tenderly at last  
From all the ties that hold me fast;  
You make my focus brighter still  
'On that fair city on a hill!  
My longings evermore increase  
That here my pilgrimage would cease;  
To leave this vale of tears behind  
And there with You my treasure find.

'Til that blest day You will fulfill  
Your purpose that I do Your will.  
To share Your love with those still lost;  
To let them know You paid their cost!  
You took their sins; were crucified  
To ransom all, the day You died.

I ask this blessing from above  
To ever keep me in Your love!