

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

Build on Solid Rock

Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matthew 7:24,25).

If you had to evacuate your home because of rising water following severe storms, imagine how difficult it would be to return and assess the damage: muddy floors, moldy walls, and worldly possessions headed for a dumpster. It would be emotionally devastating to observe the physical destruction that the waters caused.

Jesus told a story about building on a location to avoid destruction. He compared a wise builder and a foolish one. The foolish builder built his house on a nice sandy stretch by the water. It was a beautiful place to live, until the storm hit. There was no defense against the rising waters—a complete loss (maybe even a loss of life!). In contrast, there was a wise builder. He built his house in the hills; he spent the extra time and money to firmly position it on solid rock. It was worth it. The building remained high above the flood waters and stood strong against the wind.

Jesus' short story speaks volumes for our lives. He wants us to think carefully about the foundation on which we build our lives. It needs to be strong when life's storms strike. When the company is downsized, we want strength to keep a positive outlook. When conflict loosens family ties, we want tight knots to hold it together. When we've really messed up, the guilt must not sweep us away. When bad news comes, there needs to be a rock-like endurance to get us through.

There's much advice today about successfully building our lives: build up a network of reliable family and friends, develop more of a positive attitude, get different forms of insurance for rainy days, and pursue proven avenues of achievement. But in the end, they're all "sand foundations." The storms that overwhelm human hearts and hopes are far too violent. We need something stronger to build on.

Jesus tells us to build our lives and futures on the solid rock of His Word. It takes some time and effort to build that way, but Jesus says it's worth it. Hearing of His sacrifice on the cross brings us the lasting peace that we're forgiven. Hearing that Jesus rose and ascended to rule over all things gives us firm hope in the midst of life's uncertainties.

Don't build your life on shifting sand. Build on solid rock. That's Jesus. His teachings give you the strongest foundation for life. Confidently build your life on Him.

PRAYER LIST

As a loving earthly parent, God our heavenly Father surely provides for everything we need. But Jesus also encourages us to pray in His name for the greatest of God's blessings, an ever increasing measure of the Holy Spirit.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Prayers that were offered this last month include the following people. Please continue to pray for them.

- * Please continue to pray for Doug and Robyn Dinse. Doug needs hip surgery and Robyn continues to experience debilitating pain;
- * Jimmy Schnell continues to be in great pain and doctors cannot find what the problem is. Ask God, if it is His will, to provide pain relief and healing;
- * Tom Finney has a cousin by the name of Michael William Kitty who was sentenced to 10 years in jail. Please ask God to use this opportunity to reach Michael and to bring him closer to God;
- * Barbara Strackbein has had various hormone tests done and needs to have several cancer tests to see if her bone marrow cancer has spread before she can receive the hormones the doctor wants to give her. Please pray that if it is God's will, she will be able to take these hormones and that, if it is God's will, they would relieve some of the pain in her right leg;
- * Joy Hahn's father had a light stroke. He needs your prayers as he continues with heart tests; and
- * Pastor Paul Johnston has a brother, Brad Johnston, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Brad's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. Please ask God to bless the therapies used by the doctors and to keep these two people strong in their faith.

Please thank the Lord that:

- * Bob Wagner, brother of Dorothy Deards, is cancer free after his last check up;
- * Darlene Kidd's heart work went well;
- * Thad Schnell and his wife, Monica, were granted the gift of a new baby boy, Hayden; and
- * Byron and Dina Shoumaker have requested your prayers for them as they celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary on May 8th. May God richly bless your lives as you accompany each other on the path to eternal glory. One last thing – Thank the Lord for Easter and the sure hope it gives us all that sickness and death do not have the last word. To God be the glory!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School will be from June 15-19, 6:30-8:30PM. The theme will be *“Dive In”* and will use different sea creatures to illustrate the point of each day's lesson.

Day 1 - Genesis 3 - *“God Promises A Savior From Sin”*

Day 2 - Matthew 4:1-11 - *“Jesus Says No To the Devil”*

Day 3 - Gospels - *“The Savior Dies and Comes Back To Life”*

Day 4 - Exodus 14-17 - *“God Protects His People”*

Day 5 - 1 Samuel 18 & 19 - *“Jonathan Serves God by Helping David”*

Make plans now and think about which friends you will want to invite. If there is enough interest, Pastor will present a Bible Study for adults on how to train children in the Lord.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

Jeremy Zimdars is a young single man who has transferred his membership to us from our sister congregation, St. John's, in Libertyville, IL. Jeremy has been with St. John's for 28 years, so Holy Cross is a new beginning.

Jeremy went to Shoreland Lutheran High School for four years, graduating in 1999. After that he graduated from College of Lake County, Gray's Lake, IL in 2002 with an Associate Degree in Science. In 2005 he graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in general studies. In 2007 he obtained another degree from the same institution in Meteorology. Jeremy obtained a job in 2008 working as a Manager of an Osco grocery store. At the recommendation of a friend he applied for a meteorology job in Norman, and got it. His job title is Marine Synoptic Meteorologist. His company gives routes to ships in the Atlantic based on weather patterns, voyage requirements, cargo, etc.

Jeremy is a trumpet player, likes science, history, softball and travel. He has made trips to California, Las Vegas, Florida and Ohio.

Jeremy, WELCOME to Holy Cross! We hope you will grow to love the people here. They are easy to love. We especially pray that the Word of God that you hear will strengthen your faith and lead you closer to your Lord. We also pray that you will be a blessing to your family members here at Holy Cross. There will be many opportunities for you to use your spiritual gifts. May God richly bless you here in Oklahoma!

MARY-MARTHA GUILD

Mary-Martha ladies met on Saturday, April 13th. Their Bible Study, taken from 1 Kings 10, was about Solomon and his relationship with God. God blessed Solomon with great wealth and made him greater than the other kings of the world. A letter was read about an urgent need for donations for the Central Africa Medical Missions.

Information was also presented about the *“New Beginnings”* program which is aimed to help young mothers in need and support for their newborn babies. After the meeting the ladies placed the lily baskets on the cross and live Easter lilies around the altar for the Easter services. The ladies will meet next on Saturday, May 9th at 9:30AM.

DEBT FUND OFFERING ENVELOPES

In the box of offering envelopes you received at the beginning of the year are envelopes titled *“Debt-Fund Offering.”* There is an envelope for each month during the year. Since Holy Cross congregation does not have any outstanding long term debts to apply these offerings to, the Voters' Body of Holy Cross passed a resolution that all offerings received in these envelopes would be placed in the Expansion/Renovation Fund. The Expansion/Renovation Fund is to be used for future expansion or renovation of Holy Cross church. Please use these envelopes if you would like to contribute to this effort.

ASCENSION DAY SERVICE

Ascension Day will be celebrated in a special service jointly with Gethsemane Lutheran Church at Gethsemane on

Thursday, May 21st at 7:00PM. Next year they will come and join us. Make a point to attend. It is a good reason for worshipping the Lord. It is also an opportunity to get to know better our fellow WELS brothers and sisters and share some fellowship with them.

NEWSLETTER CORRECTION

Oops! We goofed again. The April newsletter article *"Let the Little Children Come to Me!"* was written by Robert Barnett, not Paul Barnett. Sorry Robert and Paul, we will try and do better next time.

SOUP CAN LABELS/CEREAL BOX TOPS

Thanks to all who have brought soup can labels and cereal box tops. Gethsemane Lutheran School redeemed the last collection of labels and box tops for \$175.00. These proceeds are used for school supplies. So please continue to bring your Campbell Soup labels and box top coupons and give them to Dina Shoumaker.

CLEAN-UP DAY THANK YOU

Thank You to all who helped at the spring clean up on Saturday, April 25th. Many things were done to beautify God's house.

LITURGY EXPLANATIONS

Have you ever wondered why the pastor usually wears a robe? It is not commanded in the Bible, but it does have some very good symbolic reasons. 1) It hides his individuality to focus our attention on the message and not the person. 2) It distinguishes him as the one we have chosen to share with us a message from God.

What do the altar colors symbolize?

BLUE = hope and heavenly grace (Advent)

WHITE = joy (Christmas/Easter)

VIOLET = repentance (Lent)

BLACK = mourning (Good Friday and Ash Wednesday)

RED = fire of Holy Spirit (Pentecost, Reformation, Ordinations)

GREEN = spiritual growth (after Pentecost until Advent)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Relocation/Renovation Committee has received the design drawings for the church renovation. Plans call for building a new sanctuary and converting the present sanctuary into a fellowship area. The new sanctuary will provide seating for approximately 300 people. Also included will be new bathrooms, a pastor's office, a secretary's office, along with additional storage areas. Having a new fellowship area will allow the present fellowship/Sunday school area to have permanent walls dividing it into classrooms to conduct Sunday school and pre-school classes. The Education Committee is continuing to gather facts about the potential of conducting an "Early Childhood Ministries" program for members and non-members of Holy Cross congregation. A program such as this is a means for Holy Cross to reach out to the community in a mission effort. They are determining the number of personnel required to conduct such a program and what the start-up costs will be. After the program is started it will become a self-supporting program without funding from Holy Cross.

The Norman Mission Committee is studying the report prepared by WELS Regional Mission Counselor, Pastor Ed Schuppe, who was asked by our District Mission Board Chairman to research the potential mission viability in the Norman area. His report was a very strong "Yes." He spoke to the congregation at one of the suppers prepared by the ladies for one of our Lenten services, and then spoke again after that Lenten evening service.

One of the main concerns voiced at that time was the possibility of losing too many members from Holy Cross because the potential land sites on Tecumseh Avenue are relatively close to Holy Cross. Pastor Schuppe disagreed. He said, "If Moore is growing faster than Norman, I think Holy Cross would have more than enough outreach potential to keep itself busy in Moore than to concern itself over possible loss of members to a new mission in Norman."

In the final two paragraphs of his report he said, "Holy Cross definitely wants to do something whether it is the expansion of their present facilities which would allow them to do a mother's day out program and then lead into a preschool program, along with other programs for the community, possibly a soccer field, etc., or the new mission to Norman. There seems to be a real mission spirit at least among some in the congregation. Hopefully, this will be true of the whole congregation and there will be a unified mission mind-set in the congregation as they move forward in making that decision in July.

Pastor Strackbein would serve the new mission in Norman as a multi-site from Holy Cross. We have discussed how

this would work. We discussed the scheduling of time for Pastor Strackbein in regard to the new mission effort. Pastor Strackbein would devote time to them as if they were a new mission under District Mission Board auspices although Holy Cross would actually be funding the operation. The District Mission Board would be contributing Pastor Strackbein's services to this effort. Pastor Strackbein would try to visit them every 6-8 weeks or as needed. He would work with them on finding a rental facility, canvassing, direct mail campaigns, soft opening (maybe in January/February 2010), grand opening on Palm Sunday 2010, purchase of land, etc."

Even though Synod will not fund it, Holy Cross would be eligible to ask for funding from WELS Kingdom Workers for a Mission Vicar. Many new missions obtain money for land, chapel and pastor from wealthy WELS members who have a heart for missions and want to give to special causes. He would help to obtain such connection when it is time to obtain land.

The ideas from all the committees will be presented at the congregational fellowship meeting on Sunday, May 31st. Please attend and share your thoughts and opinions with the committees.

STEWARDSHIP and EVANGELISM

The Stewardship Board would like to invite every member of the congregation to attend a pot luck after church on May 31st. Three committees have been working for about 3/4th of the year to develop detailed plans and ideas to help Holy Cross focus on an outreach plan. Each committee will be given 1/2 hour to explain the Mission Outreach Program they would like to see Holy Cross adopt and answer any questions. A final vote on their proposals or proposal revisions will take place in the July Voters' Body Meeting.

There are a lot of people in the community around the church that are not Christians. If they do not come to true Christian faith before they die, they will go to hell forever. The mission God has given us is to reach out to these people and share the good news of the salvation won for them on the cross and certified in the resurrection.

The question is, how can we best go about fulfilling the task God has given us as individuals and as a congregation? Based on a survey of the congregation given a year ago by the Stewardship Committee, as well as input from every Board, three areas of outreach were selected by Holy Cross voters. These areas were assigned to the three committees already mentioned.

There are several areas to be researched. First of all, early childhood ministries. Several things were to be researched, but the main focus was to see whether there was a need in the community, and if it would be financially feasible for Holy Cross to start an early children's ministry program. The mission connection would be the many young couples who would come in contact with our church and members. Our hopes would be that many of these couples would hear the Gospel and become members.

The second was the possibility of starting a mother/daughter mission in Norman. There are over 45 communicant members that are closer to Norman than they are to Holy Cross. It is possible that two congregations would have the potential to reach out to more souls per year than just one. In addition to that reason, the Norman mission was selected as one of the three areas to research as a possible principle mission focus for Holy Cross. The District Mission Board asked Holy Cross to research this possibility at the last Pastor/Teacher/Lay Delegate conference. In the congregational survey one year ago, this was listed as 5 out of 15 areas of ministry to consider.

Third was the possibility for renovation and expansion of our current facilities. In two surveys, one given two years ago and one given last year, this was listed as the number one area to focus on. The entry way is congested and the bathrooms are in need of refurbishing and are a hindrance to mission prospects that come to Holy Cross. Having a new fellowship hall or church building would allow for walled-off Sunday school rooms. If a "mother's day out program or pre-school program" arises in the future, the refurbished or new facilities would be invaluable for the success of that program.

Make it a point to come to this meeting. The opportunities to do the Lord's work are exciting. The meeting will help all of us get the information we need to make decisions about how we can best serve our Lord with the time, talents and resources He has given us. Ideas and comments presented at this meeting will be charting the course of Holy Cross congregation for years to come. This is one of the most important meetings Holy Cross has had since its inception. Be sure to attend!

EDUCATION - WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO TRAIN AND NURTURE THE YOUNG CHILDREN?

Parents specifically have been given this responsibility. Scripture identifies the family as our first and most enduring relationship. It teaches that children are a "heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3), and that God gives parents the direction to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). It is no secret that family structures have changed dramatically over the years. At one time, the word "family" referred to a father, a mother, and 2-4 children. Today, "family" also means single-parent families (one parent in the home),

blended families, skip-generation families, childless couples, and single-unit families (one parent).

A congregation's Christian Early Childhood Ministries (ECM) support parents in carrying out this responsibility. Christian early childhood programs are ministries to children and parents. They are carried out with an awareness of the family setting and are responsive to the needs of the family. From the time of the child's birth, ECM works directly with parents in providing materials, activities, and training in the privilege of being their child's most important teacher. When the parent enrolls the child in an agency of the congregation, this ministry includes the child directly as well as the parent. Parents are included in this training and instruction of the Lord by involving them meaningfully and appropriately in the activities of the ECM.

Early childhood education has grown in importance in both church and society. The care and education of young children outside the home has become almost indispensable in our society. Early childhood education in the church reflects society's trends as well as the church's concern for the Christian nurturing of young children and their families.

An early childhood ministry (ECM) program is one means that Holy Cross can use to reach out to our community, serving children and their families, and proclaiming the Gospel. Ministry and outreach are a shared responsibility. ECM participants, as well as congregation members, need to feel a responsibility to use their God-given time and talents. Teamwork between all involved is an important factor for successful outreach to families. This teamwork will encourage and assist parents in meeting their responsibilities toward their children, and it will endeavor to emphasize the joys of taking the privileges of Christian education to heart.

Come and listen to the Education/Norman Mission and Expansion/Renovation Committee presentations on Sunday, May 31st. After the pot luck all of them will give detailed explanations, including cost estimates of how we can reach out to those who are unchurched. All of them have been working hard to develop a mission vision and strategy for Holy Cross. As you listen to them, ask yourselves, How can we as a church best serve our Lord and get the Gospel out into the community? A vote will take place on our mission focus in July.

Do we have the means to offer a mother's day out program and then expand it to day care down the road? You might be surprised at the possibilities as they are presented by the Education committee.

MARRIAGE SEMINAR

At the present time, Pastor Strackbein is planning to have a marriage seminar starting in June on either Mondays or Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00PM. It will be open to couples and singles. The six-week study will be based on the movie *Fireproof*, and it will include video clips from the film as part of each session. In the Bible Study you will be issued a challenge -- to love first, to love better, and to love for a lifetime. The sessions will each state a theme and answer a central question. They are:

Theme: *He Said/She Said* - Question: How do we fulfill our God-given roles in marriage?

Theme: *He First Loved Us* - Question: Do you know God's love? Do you reflect that love to your spouse?

Theme: *Love For A Lifetime* - Question: Do you understand the "covenant" nature of marriage vows?

Theme: *Breaking Free* - Question: Are temptations or addictions threatening your marriage?

Theme: *Forgiveness* - Question: Is a lack of forgiveness hindering your relationship with God or with your spouse? Is there anything for which you need to ask forgiveness?

Theme: *A Better Way Of Loving* - Question: Do you love your spouse unconditionally?

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for those who want to participate. A study guide is available to participants for \$8.95, but is not required.

GOD'S STARS ARE GRATEFUL!

Brief devotion by Pastor Mark Jeske

"I knew it! I always pick the slowest line! I'm always the last chosen. If only I were making just \$100 more! I can't ever seem to get a break."

Ever catch yourself indulging in that kind of self-pitying, bitter talk? Satan is trying to poison your mind by suggesting to you that you're on your own, that nothing ever goes right, and that you are destined to be a loser. He wants you to feel cheated, convinced that God is disengaged from your life.

In fact, if you take a careful look around, you will see that your life has been filled with blessings from God. Blessings are God's interventions in your life to make it better. Your friends, education, government, rainfall, food, and family are all gifts. They are signs that God loves you!

What is the antidote for self-pity and bitterness? How about St. Paul's prescription: "*Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Thankful stars figure out cause and effect in their lives. They look at their happy and sad moments and notice more

and more the loving fingerprints of God all over them.

* Underlined words added by Pastor Strackbein.

MAY GREETERS

May 3 - Shawn & Charity Stuever
May 10 - Craig Ballinger & Andrea Smith
May 17 - Paul & Aimee Barnett
May 24 - Tom & Georgia Bigaouette
May 31 - Al & Carol Cardwell

MAY CLEANING LIST

May 2 - Tom & Janet Finney/Gerry & Mary Cartwright
May 9 - Joe & Kim Glass/Jeff & Anice Glass
May 16 - Bill & Fran Shoumaker/Cheryl Littlejohn
May 23 - Jack & LaVon Post/Andy & Jeanie Quam
May 30 - Marlon & Karen Henry/Al & Carol Cardwell

MAY NURSERY SCHEDULE

Nursery (Bible Study) -- Nursery (Church Service)

May 3 -	Regina Hahn	Open
May 10 -	Aimee Barnett	Everett Peters
May 17 -	Andrea Smith	Open
May 24 -	Joyce Hendrickson	Everett Peters
May 31 -	Regina Hahn	Open