**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**April 2016**

**Easter**

*It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended. The victory remained with life. The reign of death was ended.*

* Martin Luther, 1524, *Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands*, LHCH 157

Easter. It came early this year. Why? The Council of Nicaea in the year 325 AD, the same folks who made official the belief that Jesus, the Son of God, is of one substance with the Father, declared that Easter Sunday would be the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Because the date of Easter is based on this decree, it skips around on our calendar. For us, Easter cannot be before March 22 and cannot be after April 25.

Easter. What is it? Surprisingly, a good percentage of people in Europe and even in North America, when asked what Easter is about, respond with the following answers: “eggs,” “the Easter Bunny,” and “flowers.” Because Easter skips around on our calendar, it makes it difficult to market as a holiday. But nevertheless, eggs, bunnies, and flowers carry the banner of Easter for us in this part of the world. This shouldn’t surprise us all that much. Images of eggs, bunnies, and flowers are much more marketable than images of a man who had been dead for a few days climbing out of a tomb.

Easter. That’s what it’s all about. It’s not first and foremost about eggs, bunnies, or flowers. It’s about the one we know as Jesus Christ climbing out of a tomb after having been raised from the dead by God his Father. But this Jesus that we see isn’t marketable. Jesus didn’t come out of that tomb clean and groomed like young children getting ready for church on Easter morning. It wasn’t an easy process that led to his resurrection. He had been brutally killed by the Roman Empire’s practice of crucifixion on Good Friday, “for our offenses given.” A friend named Joseph of Aramathea took his bleeding body down from that cross and laid it in his own tomb. People thought this was the end of the story.

But God said otherwise. God raised Jesus from the dead as a way of proclaiming to us the forgiveness and mercy that belong to us as children of God because of what Jesus has accomplished for us, his self-giving on that Good Friday cross. As we see Jesus resurrected, we can’t forget his suffering and death that preceded it for our sake. “It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended,” wrote Martin Luther in his powerful Easter hymn. Our celebrations of Easter will only be meaningful if we see Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection as *one event* whereby God proclaims to us his great good news. Our celebrations of Easter will only have meaning when we understand the great battle Christ fought on our behalf in order to get to the point where he pulls himself out of that tomb (Colossians 2:15). When we understand that, then we can truly shout “hallelujah!”

Basking in the Easter afterglow,

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

As you probably know, Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present. We should never assume that we cannot learn something from them. So, each month, I will highlight the life and witness of a significant Christian person from the past.



For April of 2016, the person is a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He is often commemorated on April 9.

Bonhoeffer was born in Breslau, Germany in 1906, the youngest son of a professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Berlin. He amazingly earned his first doctorate at the age of 21 and became a professor of theology at the age of 25. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church, the center of Protestant resistance to the Nazis. He organized and ran the illegal seminary of the Confessing Church. He wrote a number of books that are read to this day, the most famous of which is *The Cost of Discipleship,* which attacks what he calls "cheap grace," meaning grace used as an excuse for moral laxity. In 1939, his brother-in-law convinced him to join a group planning the overthrow of Hitler, and he reluctantly contributed to their work. He was arrested in April 1943 and imprisoned in Berlin. After the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life in April 1944 and when the full extent of his activity became known, he was sent first to Buchenwald and then to Schönberg Prison in southeastern Germany. On Sunday 8 April, 1945, the second Sunday of Easter, he had just finished conducting a service of worship at Schönberg, when two soldiers came in to escort him away for his execution. As he left, he said to another prisoner, "This is the end, but for me, the beginning of life." He was hanged the next day, April 9, 1945, less than a week before the Allies reached the camp. His life stands as a testimony of “costly grace,” the conviction that our Christian faith impacts how we live.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Featured Hymn for April**

***Like the Golden Sun Ascending***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 156*

1. Like the golden sun ascending, breaking through the gloom of night, on the earth his glory spending so that darkness takes to flight, thus my Jesus from the grave and death’s dismal, dreadful cave rose triumphant Easter morning at the early purple dawning.
2. Thanks to you, O Christ victorious! Thanks to you, O Lord of life! Death now has no power o’er us, you have conquered in the strife. Thanks because you did arise and have opened paradise! None can fully sing the glory of the resurrection story.
3. For my heart finds consolation and my fainting soul grows brave when I stand in contemplation at your dark and dismal grave; When I see where you did sleep in death’s dungeon dark and deep, yet you broke all bonds asunder, should I not rejoice and wonder?
4. Though I am by sin o’ertaken, though I lie in helplessness, though I am by friends forsaken, and must suffer great distress, though I am without a friend, and by all the world condemned, though the dark grave yawn before me, yet the light of hope shines over me.

* Thomas Hansen Kingo, 1634-1703

*Note: Kingo was considered the poet of Easter and morning light. This is his most important Easter hymn, but it is also useful for morning. The last stanza is frequently used as a funeral hymn.*

**Monthly Watchword for April**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. – 1 Peter 2:9 ESV

**What is a “Watchword”?**

The Moravian Church (a close cousin to Lutherans) began the practice in 1731 of selecting daily texts (Bible verses) for prayer and reflection, which continues to this day. Many Christians around the world use these Daily Texts as a part of their prayer life. They are included each year in a book available from Mount Carmel Ministries near Alexandria, Minnesota.

In addition to this, they began to select a theme verse for each week, called a “watchword.” You will notice in the bulletins for worship on Sunday mornings that I include that watchword for each week and begin worship by speaking that verse out loud, setting the tone for worship with that word from God.

The Moravian Church also selects theme verses for each month as well as for each year. Lutherans and other Christians in Germany are much more familiar with using these “watchwords,” and I am glad to have learned of them from my time spent there. For your own reflection, I will include the monthly watchword in the newsletter each month.

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Lord’s Prayer: The First Petition**

***Hallowed be thy name.***

*What does this mean?*

*God’s name is indeed holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy also among us.*

*How is this done?*

*God’s name is hallowed when his Word is taught in its truth and purity and we, as God’s children, lead holy lives in accordance with it. Grant this to us, dear Father in heaven. But whoever teaches and lives in ways other than what God’s Word teaches dishonors the name of God among us. Prevent us from doing this, heavenly Father.*

**Ushers for April:**

**Head Usher: Ushers:**

Jeff Barger Garry and Bev Kumm ; Darren and Vicki Jensen; Jeff Hanson; Nancy Magorien

Beth Barger

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC:**

If you are interested in learning more about these groups, you can visit their websites. For LCMC, www.lcmc.net. For the NALC, www.thenalc.org. Additionally, you can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses: http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters and http://thenalc.org/newsletter/

**Bible Study:**

For those available on Wednesday mornings, please feel free to join Pr. Tom for Bible study! Typically we will hold Bible study every other Wednesday, usually the second and the fourth Wednesdays of the month. We will gather between 10:45 and 11:00 and then proceed until about noon.

**Website:**

Good Shepherd now has a website! It is basic at this point, but additional things will be added to it eventually. There are already some photos that have been uploaded. The web address is as follows: www.gselclindy.weebly.com

**Scholarship Applications:**

For graduating seniors are due on April 15 and are available at church.

**Committee Meetings:**

The music and hymn selection committee will meet on Wednesday April 20 at 7:00 PM. The membership record committee will meet on Wednesday April 27 at 7:00 PM.

**Scripture Readings and Watchwords for Sundays in April:**

**Second Sunday of Easter (April 3):** Jesus says, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” - John 20:21 NRSV

*Psalm 148*

*Acts 5:12-20*

*Revelation 1:4-8*

*John 20:19-31*

Color: White

**Third Sunday of Easter (April 10):** “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” - Revelation 5:12 NRSV

*Psalm 30*

*Acts 9:1-22*

*Revelation 5:1-14*

*John 21:1-14*

Color: White

**Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday (April 17):** “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” – Revelation 7:10 NRSV

*Psalm 23*

*Acts 20:17-35*

*Revelation 7:9-17*

*John 10:22-30*

Color: White

**Fifth Sunday of Easter (April 24):** “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.” – Revelation 21:6 NRSV

*Psalm 148*

*Acts 11:1-18*

*Revelation 21:1-7*

*John 16:12-22*

Color: White

**Bishop Bradosky’s Easter Message**

Dear Disciples of Jesus throughout the North American Lutheran Church,

May the Lord bless your journey with Him through the Easter Season!

We are all on a journey through this life. It’s important to realize how special a day this is as we travel that journey. The first Easter day included the journey of two disciples traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Sometimes the journey of life can be overwhelming. That feeling is manifest in exhaustion, a lack of energy, emptiness, a lack of meaning and hope, and feeling trapped by past or current circumstance. So it was for those two disciples on their way to Emmaus on that first Easter day.

They are two despondent disciples, exhausted not by the seven-mile journey but by their grief. From my own personal experience I know that no matter how physically fit you may be nothing will drain your energy and strength faster than grief. There were days following the death of our son that it was all I could do to get out of bed. Standing in a funeral home for hours receiving friends is not physically exhausting, but emotionally debilitating. People all around us are carrying with them the exhausting burden of grief.

When I am exhausted I know it affects my perceptions. I don’t see or hear as well as I normally do. It is harder to engage in meaningful conversations and make important connections between content and context. My reaction time is diminished. For this reason it is dangerous for pilots and professional drivers to reach the point of exhaustion. For everyone’s safety laws govern their time for work and periods of rest.

As those two disciples walked and talked, Jesus joined them and walked with them. But they didn’t recognize Him. They have grief written all over their faces, and Jesus asks them, “What are you so concerned about?” I love their opening line with Jesus: “You must be the only person around here who hasn’t heard.” “About what?” Jesus asks. Those two disciples begin to recount their grief. They are telling Jesus about Jesus as if He has no idea! “We were following Jesus from Nazareth who worked wonders, performed miracles, was a mighty teacher, highly regarded. But others arrested Him, condemned Him to death and crucified Him.” (Every time I read this text I imagine Jesus saying under His breath, “You don’t say!” “Really!” “I can’t imagine.”) Of course He didn’t say any of those things. He understood their grief, pain, loss and despair. He understood their exhaustion, and He gave them His presence.

Two thousand years later He still understands our loss, our grief, our pain, and our exhaustion and wants nothing more than to be present with us. He is willing to be a constant companion on this journey. When Kristi and I are traveling by car and we are exhausted, we rely on one another to keep the driver awake and safe. We talk, ask questions, encourage and support one another. Jesus offers us His presence for the same purpose: to keep us safe and to give us strength, spiritual strength! He is willing to be present with us even when we fail to recognize Him. He is alive and with us!

Those travelers on the road to Emmaus were also experiencing emptiness. They were searching for meaning, trying to make sense of their experience, longing for fulfillment and wholeness. It sounded as though they once had it but somehow lost it. Three words in the text tell us what they were missing: “We had hoped.” Their hope is in the past! They had hoped Jesus was the Messiah, the one who would save and redeem God’s people. Their hope was anchored in their own expectations, desires and plan for what was going to happen and how it would all unfold. When we lose hope we have no peace. When we lose hope it is quickly replaced with anxiety, fear, and the loss of meaning and purpose.

Dr. Carl Menninger, founder of the Menninger Clinic in Kansas for the treatment of mental illness, writes about the single most important factor in caring for people. It is hope. Hope is necessary for survival. It is hope that causes us to rejoice and to have peace. Our hope must be anchored in the future, not the past. Hope draws us forward into the future. Hope will be a fleeting goal and evade us if we fail to surrender our expectations. We may not be able to change our circumstance, but we need not give up hope if only we surrender our expectation to Jesus. The hope He longs to give us is for all time — past, present and future. Our hope and assurance is that our past has been redeemed, our present is fulfilled, and our future is certain. For our emptiness, Jesus gives us His peace.

Those two disciples on the road to Emmaus were also trapped by their fear and regret. What would they do now? If the religious leaders had Jesus crucified, perhaps the same leaders would destroy the disciples as well. Perhaps these disciples felt trapped by their guilt. Could they have done more to save Jesus? Perhaps they felt trapped by their own bitterness and anger: Why did God let this happen? How could Jesus fail to meet their expectations? When fear pervades our lives, all power is gone.

Jesus does three important things to empower those weary travelers. Jesus offers them revelation. Jesus opens up the Scriptures and reveals to them the deeper meaning of God’s Word regarding who He is and the nature of God’s plan for redemption and salvation. His suffering and death paid the price for our forgiveness, covered our sins, and fulfilled God’s deepest love for us. And that includes justice. Through the work of His Holy Spirit, Jesus continues to reveal the truth of who He is and His will for us through His Word. In the midst of our own powerlessness there are answers as close as the Scriptures. This Word of truth sets us free.

Jesus offers them a renewed relationship. The disciples invited Jesus to stay with them. They offered Him a place to sleep and shared a meal with Him. In the midst of their hospitality, Jesus reminded them of the last meal He shared with His disciples by what He did. When He blessed the bread and broke it, something amazing happened. “Suddenly, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.” Jesus so loves us that He never forces His way into our life. Scripture says that He stands at the door and knocks. He enters when we invite Him in. This relationship empowers us for any problem we face.

Jesus offers them the greatest empowerment of all, the reality of the Resurrection. These disciples had heard the report of the empty tomb from the women who were there early that morning. They heard that an angel told them Jesus was alive! They knew that other disciples had confirmed their report. But now they had direct evidence. Jesus appeared to them. The Resurrection is real. Jesus is alive! He had already spoken to His disciples numerous times regarding the Kingdom of Heaven. He appeared to His disciples, as well as appearing to many others following the Resurrection, because He wanted us to live with the assurance of eternal life. In the midst of our grief-filled lives Jesus offers us His presence, hope, peace and the power of the Resurrection anchored in the truth of His Word, and He graciously invites us to follow Him.

This is the power that brings new life, transformation and complete confidence for the future. The best that life can offer is Jesus, and Easter proclaims that life in Jesus is eternal, abundant in meaning, clear in purpose, and selfless in direction. Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! - *Bishop John F. Bradosky*

**April 2016**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
| 3  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  First Communion | 4 | 5 | 6  Bible Study, 10:45  Confirmation instruction, 5:00 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 | 11 | 12 | 13  Confirmation instruction, 5:00  Church council, 7:00 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Rite of Confirmation | 18 | 19 | 20  Bible Study, 10:45  Confirmation instruction, 5:00  Music committee, 7:00 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 | 25 | 26 | 27 28 29 30  Confirmation,  5:00  Membership  Committee, 7:00 | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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