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

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**November 2016**

**Thanksgiving**

*O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. 2O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. 3O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever.* – Psalm 136:1-3 NRSV

Each month throughout the year carries a slightly different mood and conjures up images of different events. As the month of November arrives, we think of things like harvest. Most of all, however, our minds turn to our national day of thanksgiving, held on the fourth Thursday of the month. As our minds turn to Thanksgiving Day, they also naturally turn to images of stuffed turkey, cranberries, mashed potatoes, and varieties of pie. After overindulging in these things, our minds turn to watching parades and football games.

Thanksgiving Day has been an annual tradition in this country ever since President Abraham Lincoln declared it to be a national holiday in 1863 during the height of the Civil War. But the tradition of having a special day set aside for thanksgiving didn’t begin with Abraham Lincoln. It dates back much further, all the way to colonial America, and actually has its roots in Europe.

Most schoolchildren can recall being taught the story of the “first” Thanksgiving Day: a group of English Calvinist Christians (Puritans) had a hard time making it through the winter of 1621 after landing on Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts. A group of Wampanoag Indians helped these Puritans by teaching them how to grow corn. As a result, the Puritans invited these Indians to participate in their harvest feast. It’s a lovely story of cooperation, friendship, and gratitude.

This story may or may not be true. Regardless, this story has so influenced our modern understanding of Thanksgiving that we miss out on hearing about the regular Puritan practice of thanksgiving, a practice much different than our modern observance. In fact, if English Puritans could see our modern thanksgiving observances, they would likely be aghast; the two observances, Puritan and modern, bear little resemblance to one another.

Unlike today, thanksgiving holidays for Puritan Christians in colonial America were deeply spiritual. Unlike today, where food is consumed in large amounts, thanksgiving days among the Puritans were days of fasting and prayer. English Calvinists (Puritans) rejected the observances of holidays such as Christmas and Easter as unbiblical. Their perspective was that if something was not directly commanded in the Bible, it was prohibited, a perspective not shared by Lutherans. In place of such holidays, they declared certain days to be thanksgiving fast days, days that were set aside for communities and individuals to repent of their sins, to seek a new direction in their lives, to look to the redemption of God that comes to a sinful world from Jesus Christ. There was no turkey, no pie, no parade, no football. All there was was a sinner and a merciful God, a God that they dared to believe would show mercy on them in spite of their inability to love God with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind, and their neighbors as themselves.

The Puritan Christian tradition is basically extinct in our modern world. Nevertheless, our Lutheran tradition does share some common elements with the old Puritan faith. I know firsthand that it is a challenge to move beyond mere lip service when it comes to Thanksgiving Day. Nevertheless, I encourage everyone to make time to “count your blessings” either as an individual or as a family before sharing the traditional meal. As we observe yet another Thanksgiving Day later this month, let us be thankful first and foremost to the source of all good gifts, the source of our lives, the source of creation, and the source of our salvation: our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

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.



For November of 2016, we remember the life of **Søren Aabye Kierkegaard**, a Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, and religious author. He lived from 1813 to 1855. He is commemorated on November 11.

The life and influence of Søren Kierkegaard is difficult to describe or summarize adequately in a few words and phrases. At the risk of oversimplifying, Kierkegaard is known for his emphasis on a person’s experience of faith as absolute commitment to God. He was critical of what he called “cultural Christianity” and the state Lutheran Church of Denmark, as he felt it reduced Christianity to formality and outward participation in rituals. The true meaning of life comes from a person’s radical commitment to the will of God. He often wrote books under pseudonyms as a way of bringing various perspectives in conversation with each other. His writings have influenced the fields of philosophy, psychology, and theology.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Saints**

*I shared this article that I wrote some time ago, but given that All Saints Sunday is at the beginning of November, I felt it was appropriate to reprint this month.*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithfulin Christ Jesus:Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

– Ephesians 1:1-2 ESV

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches have a long list of people they consider “saints,” people who have done extraordinary things for God while on earth and lived as examples for everyone to follow. After going through a process called “canonization,” which takes place years after their death, a person might earn the title of “saint.” For example, the woman known as Mother Theresa, an Albanian nun who headed the Missionaries of Charity in India, was recently declared to be a saint. Usually, the process of canonization can begin five years after someone’s death at the earliest, and before canonization, two miracles need to be attributed to their intervention.

Lutherans and other Protestants tend to use the title “saint” in a different way. And in the Bible, the word is usually in the plural. As in the verse from Ephesians above, the Apostle Paul addresses the congregation in Ephesus as “the saints.” The way Protestants have seen it, Christians are not saints because of the extraordinary things they do. They are saints because of what God has done for them through Jesus Christ and because of their faith in God’s amazing grace.

It sounds odd thinking of having the title of “saint” in front of our names. We probably don’t feel like we deserve it. And we don’t! That’s the point. We are holy because of what God gives us and our faith in the promise of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

But when God declares us to be his saints, we don’t just sit on our hands. God calls his saints to live and serve in the world in any number of ways, and as we do we bear witness to the same gift of Jesus Christ that we have received. We bear witness in our families, among our classmates, in our workplaces, wherever God places us.

As a historian, I enjoy studying the lives of many saints of the past. Like us, they were not perfect. Like us, they were weak sinners who discovered God who is strong. Some of these saints have done some remarkable things, but their road was often not an easy one. Their lives are reminders that following God’s way is not always the path of least resistance. Who are the saints that have influenced your lives?

**Reminder: the Thanksgiving Eve worship service will be on November 23 at 7:00 PM. There will be no confirmation class that evening.**

**Featured Hymn for November**

***Come, You Thankful People, Come***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 261*

1. Come, you thankful people, come; raise the song of harvest home. All is safely gathered in ere the winter storms begin. God our maker does provide for our wants to be supplied. Come to God’s own temple come, raise the song of harvest home.
2. All the world is God’s own field, fruit unto his praise to yield. Wheat and tares together sown, unto joy or sorrow grown. First, the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear. Lord of harvest, grant that we, wholesome grain and pure may be.
3. For the Lord our God shall come and shall take his harvest home. From his field shall in that day all offenses purge away, give his angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast, but the fruitful ears to store in his garner evermore.
4. Even so, Lord, quickly come to your final harvest home. Gather all your people in, free from sorrow, free from sin, there, forever purified, in your garner to abide. Come, with all your angels, come, raise the glorious harvest home!

* Henry Alford, 1810-1871

*Note: Alford was Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. A scholar, he studied and translated many Greek epics and poems.*

**Monthly Watchword for November**

“And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

* 2 Peter 1:19 ESV

**Ushers for November:**

* Head Usher:
  + Lacey Barger
* Ushers:
  + Les and Amy Johnson
  + Randy and Karen Hanson
  + Jim and Sarah Petersen
  + David and Diane Kumm

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC:** You can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses:

* **http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters**
* **http://thenalc.org/newsletter/**

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Annual Meeting:** Will be on the third Sunday of November, which is the 20th. This is also Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of the church calendar.

**Bright Horizons Donations:** Thank you to everyone who contributed to gathering donations for the Bright Horizons shelter in Norfolk! They are appreciative of what we have brought them.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer: The Conclusion**

***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.***

*What does this mean?*

*It means that I should be certain that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this manner and has promised to hear us. So we pray with confidence: “Amen,” meaning “Yes, it shall be so.”*

**November 2016**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  | 1 | 2  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:00 PM | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6  No Sunday School (Daylight Savings time ends)  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion at altar rail  White | 7 | 8 | 9  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:00 PM  Church council, 7:00 PM | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13  Sunday school, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Green | 14 | 15 | 16  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00 AM  Confirmation class, 5:00 PM | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion, continuous line  Annual meeting after worship  White | 21 | 22 | 23  Pr. Tom in Lindy  No Confirmation class  Thanksgiving Eve worship service, 7:00 PM | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Blue (First Sunday of Advent) | 28 | 29 | 30  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:00 PM | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

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