

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN LCMS, PASTOR JOSHUA HAYES
11400 WEST PANAMA ROAD, CRETE, NE 68333



Come to the cross and learn of God's great love for all His people. There is friendship, fellowship, and the gift of God's word of forgiveness.

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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In the last several weeks I have received an unusual number of questions about fasting. The questions are some version of the following: "Pastor, I see fasting mentioned a lot in the Bible, but I don't know anything about it." Or: "Pastor, I think I might want to fast but I don't know how. I am afraid it might be works-righteousness." Let's see what the Bible can teach us about fasting and what it means for us as disciples of Jesus.

In the Old Testament there was only one day of the year that God commanded a fast. This was the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7). Because of its connection to fasting, it was even called "the Fast" (Acts 27:9).

Other instances of fasting in the Bible were voluntary. Some were personal fasts. Hannah fasted in prayer for her barrenness (1 Sam. 1:7). David fasted in prayer for the life of his son (2 Sam. 12:22). Anna fasted frequently in worship at the temple (Luke 2:37). Some fasts were corporate, often declared by a leader in response to some great calamity, evil, or need for repentance (Judges 20:26; Joel 1:14).

Fasting could even be done on behalf of others. Esther (4:15-17) asked people to fast for her before she risked her life by approaching the king: "Hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day." This is like asking someone to pray for you, or telling someone that you are praying for him. What a powerful statement that is to hear: "I am fasting for you."

In the New Testament, Jesus assumes that his disciples will fast, but he leaves the times and manner free

"WHEN YOU FAST."

(Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-17). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us not to pray, fast, or give for show. But Jesus still assumes that Christians will pray, fast, and give. The Lutheran reformers approve fasting and encourage it, so long as people understand that fasting, like prayer, is not done to merit God's favor: "We believe that God's glory and command require penitence to produce good fruits, and that good fruits like true fasting, prayer, and charity have his command" (AP XII:129).

The apostles and early Christians confirm that voluntary fasting is part of Christianity, and we have clear examples of them fasting (e.g., Acts 13:2-3, 14:23). Even the Small Catechism, while exhorting us that faith alone receives the benefits of the Sacrament of the Altar, reminds us that "Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training." Luther himself gives us a strong admonition: "No one should despise or ignore fasting, wakefulness, and labor just because no one is made godly through them. Even though you do not become godly through them, you should still use them, and not give free reign to the flesh and become lazy." To say, "Fasting is only for self-righteous people," is a very self-righteous thing to say.

But what exactly is fasting? Fasting is not dieting. Fasting is not the same as giving something up for Lent. The Biblical words for fasting mean, literally, to abstain from all nourishment, whether it lasts for a day, as the people of God generally practiced it (Num.

29:7; Judges 20:26; 2 Sam. 1:12; 3:35, etc.) or for several days, (two days, Neh. 1:4; or three, Esther 4:6; or even four, Acts 10:30). In a non-literal sense "fasting" can refer to everyday moderation, or cutting back on things. In this non-literal sense people might give things up for Lent, even non-food things such as TV or media use. Such bodily disciplines are good and fine, but they are not a literal fast in the Biblical sense of the word.

Here is a practical example: One might join the church's Lenten fast by giving up alcohol, sweets, or even TV. He could use that extra time and money for prayer, devotion, and giving to his church or other mercy organization. That would be non-literal fasting. Then on Holy Saturday he might literally fast during daylight hours. He could rise early, have a light breakfast, and then consume no food or drink except water until an evening light meal or even Easter breakfast. The sensations of hunger will be bodily reminders to pray and to meditate on God's Word and our great need for salvation. It is also a reminder that we live not by bread but by the Word of God, and if a day comes when we must fast involuntarily from war, poverty, hospitalization, etc., then the Lord will provide.

That is but one example. While Jesus assumes Christians will fast and the church encourages it at certain times (mostly Lent and Advent), the details and timing are entirely free. Children, the sick, pregnant or nursing mothers, and the elderly should not undertake a literal fast.

Fasting is as good and Biblical as prayer, if done in faith alone in Christ alone. If you pray or fast to earn something from God or impress Him, then you might as well forget it.

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

The Evangelism Committee met with Pastor Hayes on February 15th. Our new committee member is Donna Hillgren. We will continue to work with Pastor Hayes to visit our shut-ins, and we made plans to keep in touch with our newest congregational members with visits, cards and phone calls. We agreed to meet as needed and whenever new projects are presented to us.

Easter brings with it the sadness of Holy Week as we remember that Jesus died to save our sins and the joy of His resurrection on Easter. Other opposites we find in March are hot/cold temperatures. Living/nonliving items and sunny/cloudy skies. We will also spend time doing magical measurements and taking care of our teeth. Each day is a fun day at preschool as we observe the world God has given us to live in.

We have had a great beginning to our 2016-2017 enrollment. If you know

HOLY WEEK SERVICE SCHEDULE

March 20, PALM SUNDAY: 9am, Divine Service with procession of palms

THE SACRED TRIDUM

The Sacred Triduum, or "Three Days" is one service spread over three days which follows the Last Supper, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. It culminates in the Vigil of Easter where the Easter Proclamation is first announced.

March 24, Maundy Thursday Divine Service: 7:00 p.m.

March 25, Good Friday Tenebrae Service: 7:00 p.m.

March 26, The Great Easter Vigil: 7:00 p.m.

FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION March 27

Easter Sunrise Divine Service 6:30 a.m.

Easter Breakfast sponsored by LYF: 7:30 a.m.

Easter Divine Service: 9:00 a.m.



of families interested in a preschool for their child have them contact Rhonda Beethe at 402-826-4375. We have some excellent information available to them to help with their decision. They are also welcome to come by the preschool for a tour and to see a preschool class in action.

A special thank you to everyone who supported Lambs of Christ at our annual chili feed. The funds raised will be used to meet preschool expenses and the purchase of learning equipment and supplies. If you see any of the business people who donated items to the raffle give them a personnel thank you for their support.

Rhonda Beethe
Teacher

402-826-4375

lambsofchristcrete@gmail.com

MARCH BIRTHDAYS & BAPTISMS

BIRTHDAYS

1 Deb Ourada
6 Jacob Meinke
8 Deb Nyhoff, Deb Walker
10 Eric Dewey
11 Tessa Miller, Ryan Strufing
13 Braxton Hartman, Butch Mehl
15 Taylor Reetz, Chris Williams
17 Andrew Ellingson, Marlow Meinke, Lane Wendelin
18 Dale Kouba
19 Larry Pomajzl, Jolene Reetz
20 Bradley Pomajzl, Jr.
21 Sandra Reiss

23 Cindy Hoesche, Isaac Meinke, Maggie Wohl
25 Jerry Ferguson, Cathy Hollman
27 Marla Musil, Alice Poole
29 Dennis Kattau
31 Cheryl Langfeldt, Kurt Reetz, Whitney Tesar

BAPTISMS

2 Tory Dello
5 Logan Adam
6 Angie Louch
9 Ryan Meinke
11 Nick Hollman
12 Dave Eggert, Jerry Ferguson Jr.,

Dolyn Meinke, Allan Reetz
13 Camryn Adam, Del Reiss
14 Steve Schultz
15 Megan Korbel
16 Jace Ourada
17 Kade Nelson
19 Deb Walker
21 Peggy Bojanski
24 Noreen Wild
25 Glen Louch, Jacob Meinke, Blythe Dewey
26 Deb Ourada
29 Matt Ellingson, Ken Kahle
30 Joe Ellingson, Dan Underwood

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OUR MISSION Share the Joy
of His News by growing inward
through God's Word,
Sacraments and fellowship and
by growing outward through
words, actions, and mission
outreach.

LENTEN SERVICE DUTIES

Wednesday, March 2:

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: Roger Koch
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs.
Tim McDermott
Acolytes: Olivia & Hugo
Pomajzl

Wednesday, March 9:

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: Brent Wohl
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Gary
Meinke
Acolytes: Morgan & Mag-
gie Wohl

Wednesday, March 16:

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: Terry Reetz
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs.
Marvin Nitzel
Acolytes: Mara & Skye
Hoyer

HOLY WEEK SERVICE DUTIES

Maundy Thursday, March 24:

Organist: Jayne VanAsperen
Elder: John Reitz
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Del Reiss
Acolytes: Olivia & Hugo Pomajzl

Good Friday, March 25:

Organist: Jolene Reetz
Elder: Tim McDermott
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Bob Renner
Acolytes: Elliott Reitz & Ashlyn Adam

Easter Vigil, Saturday, March 26:

Organist: Jolene Reetz
Elder: Terry Reetz

Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Rollo Schultz

Easter Sunrise, March 27:

Organist: Jayne Van Asperen
Elder: Brent Wohl
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Byron Shore
Acolytes: Morgan & Maggie Wohl &
Colton Homolka

Easter 9am, March 27:

Organist: Jolene Reetz
Elder: Roger Koch
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Ken Tesar

FROM THE ELDERS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Have you noticed all the political activity going on? It's hard not to notice when politicians and their supporters spend billions of dollars to get our attention. Elect me and I'll give you this or I promise to do that. My opponent is or he will do this to you if elected. So how should we, as Christians, respond? First let's consider the current social and political climate from a Christian perspective. Pastor Hayes, in a recent sermon, spoke of the "War" that is raging between the Church and the forces of evil. We have enemies overseas in the form of Muslim terrorists but we also have enemies within our own country. Many individuals, groups, and even some of our government's leaders and agencies are actively opposed to Christian beliefs. The situation is critical!

So what part are we, as individuals, called to play in this war? We are called by God to fulfill our "Vocation", that is to strive to live a Godly life in the place, time, situation that God has placed us in. Our vocation is composed of many things, such as being a father, mother, soldier, farmer, laborer and most certainly including "citizen".

As citizens of the United States, we have unique gift from God in our representative form of government. As citizens, we have the power and the duty to control and change our government in ways that few others in the world do. But our citizen vocation requires us to do our best at being active and well informed about our government and those who represent or propose to represent us in that government. And as Christians, we have the duty to see that Christian ethics, morals, and virtues are imbedded in our government and in its leaders as much as possible.

We will wage this war as Christian citizens through the prism of Christian ethics, morals, and virtues. So be patient, watchful, and participate as God would have us to do. Our weapon is our vote!

Let me conclude with an example of result we are talking about: Luther's Large Catechism Part 1, paragraph 259

"To be a judge requires above all things a godly man, and not only a godly man, but also a wise, modest, indeed, a brave and bold man." and "God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools . . . and he has not been disappointed. . . . If I have brought any message today, it is this: Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ. And have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world." Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia

May God Bless Us All

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER GROWTH

Schedule at a Glance

Worship Service (Sundays)	9:00 a.m.
Sunday School (Sundays)	10:30 a.m.
Bible Class (Sundays)	10:30 a.m.
Midweek Classes (Wednesdays)	6:30 p.m.
Elder's Meeting (March 14)	7:00 p.m.
LYF	Following Worship Service
Lutheran Women in Mission (March 15)	7:00 p.m.
Ladies Aid Meeting (March 30)	2:00 p.m.

LADIES AID MINUTES

St. John's Ladies Aid met on February 24, 2016, with Dianne Kouba as hostess. The meeting opened by singing "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". Pastor Hayes led us in prayer and the Bible Study on Galatians 3:1-6.

Roll call was taken with eleven members present. Since there was no meeting in January, the minutes from December were read and approved. The treasurer's report was given and accepted. Thank you notes were passed around

for everyone to read.

OLD BUSINESS: A luncheon of soup, sandwiches, desserts and kolaches was served for the Pastor's Conference which was held on February 23rd. There were eight Pastors present. President Darleen Dittmer thanked all the ladies that helped at the Conference. She also thanked Irene Reiss for all the lovely decorations.

NEW BUSINESS: The Ascension Day service will be held on Thursday, May 5th. The

Ladies Aid will provide dessert and coffee after the service.

Anniversaries celebrated in January were: Larry and Linda Pomajzl, Marvin and LaVonne Nitzel and Dave and Deanna Eggert. The anniversary song was sung. Birthdays celebrated in February were: Bonnie Bleich and Linda Eggert.

JoAnn Renner will be the hostess in March. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and the table prayer.

Shirley Reetz, secretary

THOSE SERVING DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH

DUTY	March 6	March 13	March 20	March 27
Organist	Jayne VanAsperen	Jolene Reetz	Jayne VanAsperen	Jolene Reetz
Elders	Tim McDermott	Ken Tesar	John Reitz	Roger Koch
Greeters	Barb Meinke & Fran Sieck	Mr. & Mrs. Dave Musil	Mr. & Mrs. Brian Persing	Mr. & Mrs. Ken Tesar
Acolytes	Elliott Reitz & Colton Homolka	Ashlyn Adam & Mersadies Kvasnicka	Aaron Meinke, Madison Persing & Devon Reitz	Mara & Skye Hoyer, & Aaron Meinke