

June 2012

LS *Online*

Lutheran Sentinel Online

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod



"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

The Perfect Church

Is that where you worship every Sunday? Don't be too quick to answer. Have you thought of your congregation as similar to a marriage?

Spouses know that not everything in a marriage is glamorous. If we choose to concentrate on warts, we can find them in the other person. Self-checks in the mirror can also be revealing! If working at marriage is like making an extended trip, the road bumps will be there. Some may test the shocks, even shock the shocks! But making things work calls for all eyes on the whole road, not on every dip or crack in the pavement or stone at the edge. Real barriers, of course, need removal, yet, many obstacles are overcome on the marriage highway simply by *where* spouses prefer to focus or not focus.

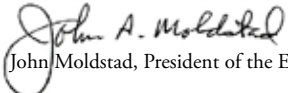
What does this have to do with your church? Are you looking for warts and bumps or do you see your place of worship as an avenue that directs wart-filled sinners (you and me) to Him who alone is the Way to heaven?

When one reads the first summary of the early church (Acts 2:42-47), the report is glowing: devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, treasuring fellowship, sharing freely with each other in need, regular use of Communion (Breaking of Bread), and much use of prayer. This is a truly bright report for the church embarking on its mission-oriented future, right? Oh, how we wish the Pentecost mindset could have carried through in every decade and every century!

Warts and bumps were sure to come. We have heard it said—where the Lord's group builds a cathedral, the devil is sure to set up a chapel nearby. Read Acts, read Galatians, read the letters to Corinth. They dealt with challenges because of envy, pride, and a lack of true Gospel focus. All these evils wormed their way into the chancel décor of what followed that first Jerusalem church basking in the joy of multiple baptisms. The apostles' teaching: dashed by Galatian false teachers directing people away from Christ's grace alone for salvation (Galatians 1). Fellowship and sharing: dashed by the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Breaking of Bread: note the Communion disturbance Paul had to deal with in 1 Corinthians 11. Prayer: James, the brother of the Lord, had to exhort: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (James 4:3).

Let's get back to your congregation. Perfect? Amid the challenges and bumps, your church with its pastor(s) and teachers is a wonderful blessing that holds out perfection—our perfect Savior, the Lord Jesus, is presented there! He washes and proclaims sinners to be "without stain or blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). In Him we trust!

Thank God, and also thank your faithful pastor for your "perfect" church.


John Moldstad, President of the ELS

Why Are Our Three Creeds Built Around the Trinity?

A quick glance at our familiar Apostles' Creed reveals that it contains three paragraphs. Looking closer, we find the three paragraphs describe the person and work of the three persons of the God-head: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Examining the less-familiar Nicene Creed, often confessed in many congregations during Communion Services, we see the same thing—three paragraphs describing the Trinity.

The Athanasian Creed, traditionally confessed but once a year on Trinity Sunday, is a much longer statement of faith, containing many paragraphs. It describes the Trinity in clear and unmistakable Scriptural terms, even at times appearing to be repetitive.

The Athanasian Creed boldly states, “And the true Christian faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity” and “Whoever will be saved is compelled thus to think of the Holy Trinity.”

Often when using this creed, questions are asked: “Isn't this going too far when there are so many other saving teachings in the Bible? Why do all three of our Christian Creeds focus so exclusively on the doctrine of the Trinity?”

The formulators of all three Creeds found it necessary to stress the doctrine of the Trinity because this most basic truth about God was a foreign idea in their world and society. This concept, impossible even for Christians to fully comprehend, was under constant and vicious attack, making it necessary to simply state the facts from Scripture. We find this reaction just as true today as it was in the first five centuries of the Christian Church.

Note, however, that other doctrines are not slighted in the Creeds. All of Scripture's saving doctrines are encompassed in the Trinity. For the Triune God alone is the God of our salvation. He alone, without any help from us or anyone else, has single-handedly brought about forgiveness and eternal life for helpless, hell-bound sinners.

In eternity, our Triune God planned our redemption and in time by His almighty power, He has controlled all history to carry out the sinner's justification through Christ's

death, thus reconciling him with God. By His boundless grace, He has entered into our individual lives to make us partakers of his mercy by His message of forgiveness in Jesus.

God the Father created us along with all things. But an even greater creative act is that the Father sent His own Son into a lowly womb and world to take unto Himself our human flesh and blood, becoming one of us, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, true God and true man in one Person.

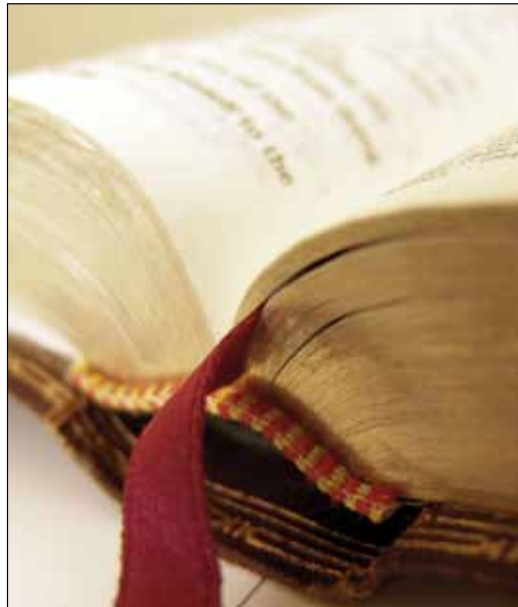
God the Son lived a perfect life in the stead of sinners, earning for us God's own righteousness, which alone avails before God. On His cross, Jesus suffered our punishment, paying the full price for every sin. He rose from the dead, triumphant over our sin, death, and hell, opening heaven to sinners redeemed.

We sinners, who are dead to God, enemies of God, and unable to accept or believe the truth, could never apprehend this great salvation by our own reason.

God the Holy Spirit, using Word and Sacrament, worked the miracle of saving faith in our hearts, sustains that faith to this day, and will keep us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith to eternal life in heaven.

This is our one true God, the God of our salvation. Each of the three persons works individually, yet they are united as one Lord and one God. Within this Holy Trinity is comprehended every doctrine of our salvation, which God has accomplished for us. What an

eternal privilege and blessing to confess the one, true faith in this one, true God in our three creeds!



Joel Willitz is co-pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

The “Testament” of Paul Gerhardt for His Son (Early 1676)

Paul Gerhardt was a pastor in Berlin, Prussia, and a great writer of Lutheran hymns.

Now that I have reached the 70th year of my life and also have the joyful hope that my dear, holy God will soon rescue me out of this world and lead me into a better life than I have had until now on earth, I thank Him especially for all His kindness and faithfulness which, from my mother’s womb until the present hour, He has shown me in body and soul and in all that He has given me. Besides this, I ask Him from the bottom of my heart that when my hour comes, He would grant me a happy departure, take my soul into His fatherly hands, and give my body a peaceful rest in the ground until the dear Last Day, when I, with all of my [family] who have been before me and also may remain after me, will reawake and behold my dear Lord Jesus Christ face to face, in whom I have believed, but have not yet seen. To my only son, whom I am leaving behind, I leave few earthly goods, but with them I leave him an honorable name of which he will not have to be ashamed.

My son knows that from his tender childhood I have given him to the Lord my God as His possession, that he is to become a servant and preacher of His holy Word. He is to remain now in this and not turn away from it, even if he has only few good days in it. For the good Lord knows how to handle it and how sufficiently to replace external troubles with internal happiness of the heart and joy of the spirit.

Study holy *theologiam* [“theology”] in pure schools and at unfalsified universities and beware of the syncretists [those who mix religions or confessions], for they seek what is temporal and are faithful to neither God nor men. In your common life, do not follow evil company, but rather the will and command of your God. Especially: (1) Do nothing evil in the hope that it will remain secret, for nothing is spun so small that it is not seen in the light of day. (2) Outside of your office and vocation do not become angry. If you notice that anger has heated you up, remain still and speak not so much as a word until you have first prayed the Ten Commandments and the Christian Creed silently. (3) Be ashamed of the lusts of the flesh, and when you one day come to the years in which you can marry, then marry with God and with the good advice of pious, faithful, and sensible people. (4) Do good to people even if they have nothing with which to repay you, for the Creator of heaven and earth has long since repaid what humans cannot repay: when He created you, when He gave you His beloved Son, and when He accepted you in Holy Baptism as His child and heir. (5) Flee from greed as from hell. Be satisfied with what you have earned with honor and a good conscience, even if it is not all too much.

But if the good Lord gives you something more, ask Him to preserve you from the burdensome misuse of temporal goods.

In summary: Pray diligently, study something honorable, live peacefully, serve honestly, and remain unmoved in your faith and confessing. If you do this, you too will one day die and depart from this world willingly, joyfully, and blessedly. Amen.

[Translated by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, 5/4/2007]

The Heavenly Feast

*“People will come from east and west and north and south,
and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Luke 13:29*

Sunday, April 22, Holy Cross Lutheran Church of Madison, WI, hosted the 20th anniversary of Gift of Life (GoL), originally the Medical Clinic on Wheels. The Mission Festival began with services of thanksgiving. The Rev. Steven Petersen, ELS Mission Counselor and Administrator of Thoughts of Faith (ToF), who had served the Holy Cross congregation in the past, was welcomed as the guest preacher. After the services, Nicholas and Kerry Laper, GoL administrators, made a presentation on “Gift of Life—Hope to People in Need.”



A Ukrainian style lunch was served to over 140 people complete with sparkling grape juice, canapés (colorful open face sandwiches), veronicky, borscht, and other Ukrainian dishes. Attending the luncheon were those who masterminded and spearheaded the original outreach. Several of the first volunteers who traveled with the clinics to Ukraine in 1992 were also present. GoL consultants, former ToF board members, pastoral mentors, and various other past volunteers were honored as well.

Later, following the luncheon and speeches, a young woman said, “that was just heavenly!” Well! I am thinking to myself that the dinner was not as authentically Ukrainian as it could have been. Interrupting my thoughts she said, “Oh! the food and drinks were colorful, beautiful, plentiful and tasty and the speeches, very interesting. But then as I looked around I saw close relatives, old friends and new people I’d

just met, strangers and even those I’d given Christian witness to. And so, I had a vision of heaven. Look! There’s Saint Peter, there’s John and Paul—we’re all gathered at the table enjoying God’s blessings together.”

Through the generosity of Cross-stitch and many others, nearly \$12,000.00 has been raised to help GoL provide humanitarian assistance to the most needy in Ukraine. Twenty years later, the clinics and counseling centers continue their mission of mercy, saving babies’ lives and doing good for thousands every year. More importantly, Gift of Life provides opportunities to tell of God’s love found in Christ Jesus, His Son, who suffered and died to pay for our sins, rising and ascending into heaven to seal our salvation. Because of the Holy Spirit working through His Word and through you, who knows whom you will see at the eternal feast!



To God be the glory!

Nicholas Laper is co-administrator of Gift of Life Ukraine

If you would wish to receive more frequent updates on the work of Gift of Life please email: nklaper@yahoo.com or go to <http://us.giftoflife.org.ua>



On the Synodical Scene...

New Peruvian Leaders Elected

On April 15, 2012, the Peruvian Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church elected its new junta directiva, the board which oversees the church body's affairs. Its members: (left to right) President Andres Robles, Treasurer Jaime Cortez, Secretary Guillermo Carrera, Santos Melendez, Celso Benites. The first four men are pastors.

Among the tasks to be taken up in their two-year term will be the preparation for hosting the 2014 convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. The bandage on Carrera's forehead is the result of a spirited soccer game among Peruvian pastors and vicars a day earlier!



Easter Sunrise at St. John's Cemetery

The air was chilly and the sky cloudy, but hearts were warm and voices strong as the congregation of St. John's Lutheran in Frankenmuth, Michigan, and their guests greeted the Easter morning. Choirs of birds enhanced the idyllic setting of the green hillside with the Cass River flowing below. Well over 100 sturdy souls attended the outdoor Easter sunrise service. The Rev. Kyle Madson led the assembly through the timeless Resurrection accounts in the Gospels and Epistles, assuring all that through faith in Christ, we, too, will rise from the dead. Several traditional Easter hymns were sung and the congregation was privileged to enjoy the chiming of the carillon.

This was the second year St. John's held an outdoor sunrise service in the cemetery. The unusual setting and most appropriate occasion has drawn visitors both years. Attendees were most vividly reminded that the first Easter occurred in a cemetery and assured that because of Christ's resurrection, our graves will one day be emptied as well.

Faith Lutheran, Oregon, Wisconsin, Hosts Great Lakes Conference

The town of Oregon, Wisconsin, is about 30 miles south of Madison. Faith Lutheran Church and its pastor, the Rev. Karl Hermanson, welcomed 40 pastors of the Great Lakes Conference who came from congregations in the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Wisconsin. The Rev. Ron Pederson is the conference chairman and the Rev. Karl Hermanson serves as secretary. The ladies of Faith Lutheran Church served lunch on both days of the conference.

The pastors heard reports from ELS President John Moldstad, Bethany Lutheran College President Dan Bruss, and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary President Gaylin Schmeling.



Pres. Schmeling also presented a paper entitled "The Divine Liturgy and its Use." The Rev. Bernt Tweit spoke on the topic "Ministering to Young People Struggling With Homosexuality in a Changing Culture," and the Rev. Kyle Madson's paper was entitled "Clear and Present Danger: Is 'Alien Righteousness' Becoming Alien to the Preaching and Teaching of the Church?"

The next Great Lakes Conference will meet in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on April 23 and 24, 2013.

Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *The motto on the cover of the Lutheran Sentinel is “Engage others with Jesus.” My congregation seems so unfriendly. Are Lutherans generally unfriendly? If so, doesn’t this interfere with engaging others with Jesus?*

ANSWER: The Evangelical Lutheran Synod is indeed in the middle of an effort to encourage every believer to consider himself to be a missionary. We are encouraging every congregation to think of itself as being a home mission. Christian congregations that do not seem friendly certainly will make this effort more difficult.

This pastor does not think of himself as being particularly unfriendly, yet he is shy. This may well be the case of other Christians. Some things are more comfortable to us than other things. It is true in most organizations. This pastor tried to get to know people at the local American Legion and was ignored by everybody except the chairman of the group, whose welcome seemed perfunctory. Other legionnaires were very talkative to those they knew. They pretty much ignored the few of us who were newcomers. How many newcomers will return?

Most of us like the familiar. We like to sit in the same pew. We feel more comfortable with those we know. We have something in common with them to talk about. We have common interests. It is comfortable.

We may not feel comfortable with those we don’t know. Being friendly with strangers takes work. Deep in our hearts, we might wish we could be more outgoing, but it is a struggle. It takes effort.

It is something we can learn. Congregations work on overcoming these barriers. We train greeters to welcome everybody. We have fellowship activities so members know each other. We encourage friendliness. During fellowship meals at our congregation, we have tried to imagine what it would be like to be a first-time visitor. We walk through a visitor’s visit trying to empathize, trying to think of ways we can make them feel more comfortable. We discuss these things among ourselves.

Many Christians imagine that their faith in Jesus is a private matter between the individual Christian and God. These Christians tend to view their membership in the church as a matter of worshipping Jesus and little more. Such Christians may well quickly find their place in the pew

and leave church just as quickly. They may not take the time for conversation and fellowship.

Education also will help here. The Bible is clear that Christians need each other. God’s church is a gathering of brothers and sisters. We are a family. We need each other. We need to interact with each other. And God encourages us to reach out to those who do not yet know Jesus. Gently, sermons will help every Christian understand his privileged position in the church. See I Corinthians 12:12-31.

Jesus welcomed those who came to Him. Sometimes, as with the Syrophenician women (Matthew 15:21-28), His disciples were not so welcoming. Jesus set an example. We sing in the hymn, “Jesus sinners doth receive.” We rejoice that He reconciled us to our God by removing our barrier of sin by taking it to His cross and paying our debt to God for us. We believe we are now His forgiven children. We are

brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are loved eternally by God for Jesus’ sake. We are no longer strangers and foreigners. We are His people.

We also know that Jesus came to rescue all sinners. Only those who exclude themselves by unbelief are outside His family. We have millions of brothers and sisters in the faith. There are also millions more Jesus wants for His kingdom.

It takes work. It won’t come easily. It takes practice and determination. It should begin with you and me. We can be the friendly folks in our congregation. And we can encourage others to join us.

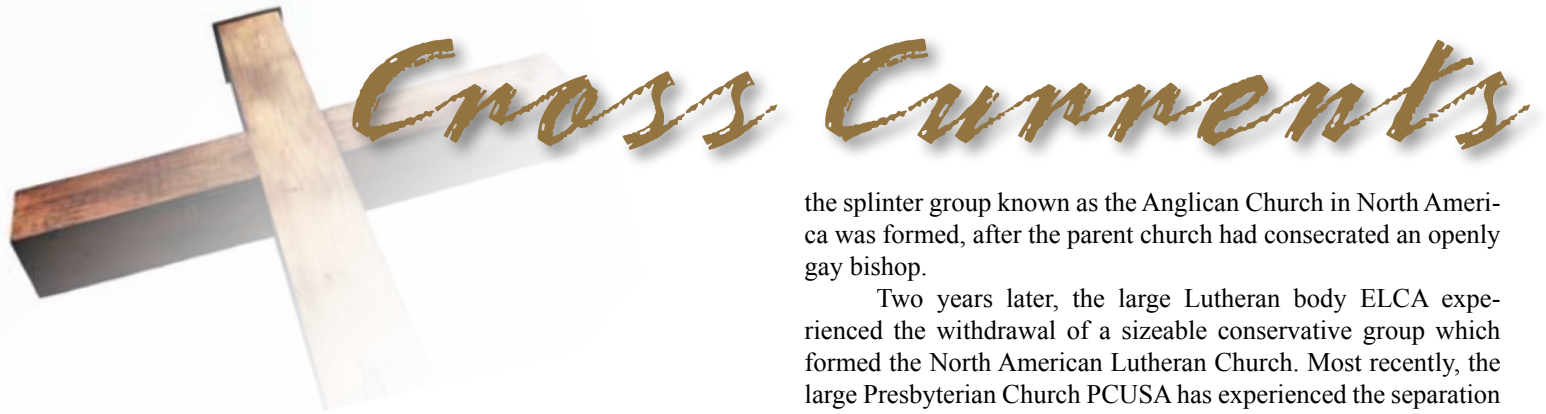


Send your questions to:

Pastor Charles Keeler
117 Ruby Lake Dr.,
Winter Haven, FL 33884
or email: cjohnk@aol.com



Charles Keeler is pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.



the splinter group known as the Anglican Church in North America was formed, after the parent church had consecrated an openly gay bishop.

Two years later, the large Lutheran body ELCA experienced the withdrawal of a sizeable conservative group which formed the North American Lutheran Church. Most recently, the large Presbyterian Church PCUSA has experienced the separation of a breakaway group known as the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians. All three admit that the breaking point for them was the dispute over gay clergy, though other issues in theology and church bureaucracy had been brewing for some time.

There have been varied reactions to the splinter “trend.” One sociologist commented that American Protestants have been splintering since Roger Williams left Plymouth Colony in the 1630s. Some see the new denominations heading toward a dead end if their only reason for existing is their anti-gay policy. As another sociologist sees it, “Public opinion about gays and lesbians and gay marriages are changing so dramatically that at some point in the future—it’s not going to matter very much.”

Sad to say, he is undoubtedly right. We know how the slippery slope of gradual accommodation works. We refer you to the example of the fabled frog that boiled to death after starting out in a pail of warm water. Any movement for substantive change for good in the church cannot be swayed by public opinion, but must be rooted in that view of Scripture, which regards it as the very truth of God and nothing but the truth. This view goes for all of Scripture, not just some of it, as St. Paul states, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

A “Wedding” But Not “Marriage”

A reader of this column was given a case of indigestion one recent morning while eating his breakfast. The cause of the offense was a television program in which a rabbi was vehemently denouncing the Minnesota referendum against gay marriage. He charged the proponents of the referendum with bigotry, whereas, as the reader noted, in reality, the “bigot” he was denouncing was God Himself! The reader then added this discerning comment: “What apparently is not clear to many people is that homosexuals cannot marry, regardless of what any man-made laws or constitution may state.” Citing God’s design for marriage as that of one man and one woman, the reader concluded: “Homosexuals certainly may have a wedding, that is, a civil ceremony. They cannot marry; that is a spiritual determination.” To which we say, “Well said.”



Paul Madson is a retired pastor living in North Mankato, Minnesota.

“Empty Pews”

Every denomination has its concerns about empty pews at one time or another, but it has become a critical issue for the Roman Catholic Church. This has prompted several surveys among “lapsed Catholics,” one of which was a recent survey in the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, conducted by Villanova University. The survey was called “Empty Pews” (not to be confused with the Pew Forum, which also conducts surveys).

According to the report, the survey asked members of the diocese “a series of questions about church doctrine and parish life to better understand why they are staying home.” The survey was considered to be representative of almost any diocese. About two-thirds of the responders were female, with a median age of 53. One spokesman noted this as a critical demographic: “If we’re losing the 53-year-old women, we risk losing their children and their grandchildren,” he said.

So what were some of the reasons given which might explain the empty pews? As to be expected, there was criticism about the sex scandal and how it had been handled. There were a considerable number of negative comments about their parish priests, like “distant” and “insensitive.” As one responder put it, “Ask a question and you get a rule,” rather than, “Let’s sit down and talk about it.” Responders were also troubled about the Church’s view of gays and same-sex marriage (rather muddled), and about women priests. Some also expressed a desire for better homilies (Luther could help them with that), and better music (perhaps some good old congregational hymn singing might help?).

It is not a happy time in the Catholic Church, as the survey revealed, and we can sympathize with some of their people’s complaints. However, the greatest reason a person should have for dissatisfaction with the Pope’s church is its refusal to let the fresh air of the unconditioned gospel pervade its teaching so that poor sinners come to know that they are saved by grace through faith and not by the works of the Law. We’d be willing to wager that a lack of true Gospel teaching is at the heart of the problem and that if this problem were truly addressed, some of those empty pews might start filling up again.

Splinters vs. Mergers

It may not be a permanent trend, yet this development in the Protestant world is worth noting. After decades of mergers among church bodies, we are witnessing a different trend on the religious landscape—a trend toward splintering rather than merging. Back in 2008, the Episcopal Church experienced a split when



Treasurer's Report

Summary of Income from Congregations

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$213,911	\$511,089

Contributions for April, 2012:

Congregations - Budget \$48,505

Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$7,002
Home Missions	\$1,063
Foreign Missions	\$730
India	\$11,813
Peru	\$200
Chile	\$100
Korea	\$1,000
Lutheran Schools of America	\$2,523
Cross-stitch	\$800
Thoughts of Faith	\$22,262

Other

Estates	
General	\$1,487
Home Missions	\$21,230
Board of Trustees	\$8,859
MAP	\$135,000
Registrations	\$6,155
Publications	\$595

Total \$269,323

Keith Wiederhoeft, Business Adm./Treasurer
6 Browns Court Mankato, MN 56001

Memorials for April 2012

Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by

Don & Vesta Anderson

Tom Hoyord - Scandinavia, WI

June Hahn

Pamela M. Lepke - New Ulm, MN

Gloria Haugen

Conrad Faugstad - Lake Mills, IA

Elizabeth Honsey

Norman Holte

Alvin Ibsch

Rev. George and Ruth Orvick - Madison, WI

Toots Stoufer

Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Belview, MN

Norman Tostenson

Norseland Ladies Aid - St. Peter, MN

Gifts Received for the Seminary in Memory of Memorial by

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Jonathan and Dawn Tweit - Hendersonville, NC

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Rudolph Honsey - Mankato, MN

Laura Lillegard - Mankato, MN

What Does It Mean to be a Lutheran Youth...

...when it comes to dealing with other people I don't like?

The Flash Mob is becoming a very popular and trendy social phenomenon. Flash Mobs have been depicted in movies and commercials as joyous celebrations, whereby a large, seemingly spontaneous group of people join together in singing and dancing an upbeat tune. However, one does not need to look very far to discover news reports of teenagers that have used Flash Mobs in a much more nefarious manner. For example, there have been nearly a dozen incidents just this year of 30 or more teenagers gathering at the same time and place in downtown Minneapolis or the Mall of America and brutally attacking random citizens. Similarly, teens have been glamorizing random acts of aggression and violence as they post video clips of their behavior on YouTube or Facebook (Search results for Teen Fight on YouTube = 30,098 videos).

The message is clear. If you don't like the way someone looks at you, just go and get a group of your friends together and teach them a lesson. If you don't like someone, just post some cruel, threatening comments on their Facebook page. These are just a couple of the many different ways that teen culture has begun to place "honor and respect" on those who are willing to use public displays of anger as ways to deal with people they don't like. Although you may have recited the scripture verse in which we are taught to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27), perhaps you too find yourself getting extremely angry and thinking about ways that you would like to get even with teens who have hurt you. So how can you as a Lutheran youth respond to the message within teen culture in which young people are taught to respect and encourage brash outward expressions of conflict?

Anger and conflict are typical human experiences that no one is able to completely avoid. The first step in your effort to challenge the cultural and internal (our sinful nature loves the Flash Mob mentality) glorification of conflict is to



find a healthy way to deal with your own difficult emotions. Instead of trying to avoid anger, learn to recognize your own internal cues of escalating conflict. Some common warning signs for brewing anger are: increased heart rate, increased body temperature/sweating, tense muscles, and difficulty with concentration. If you notice these things, you may be more vulnerable to react to someone with actions/thoughts that you will later regret. Identify a distraction (deep breaths, counting, go for a walk) that will help prevent you from reacting impulsively in the moment. If you can "push pause" on having any reaction in that moment of anger, you have already achieved a significant success. If you can delay yourself from responding (just 2-3 seconds), you will significantly improve your chances of reacting more appropriately.

It is also very important to remember that God's Word is and always will be our best guide in life (as in Ephesians 4:21). Conflict is not a subject with which there is a shortage of scriptural guidance. Although there are many verses which describe healthy ways to handle the human emotion of anger (Proverbs 17:14,

Romans 12:17, Titus 3:10), I want to make a special point of discussing the following verse: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15). In this verse we are specifically instructed to handle disagreements with our peers directly and not to make a public spectacle of those conflicts. Furthermore, I challenge you to be courageous and speak out against the teenage social approval of Flash Mob beatings and YouTube assault videos. And remember, you are not alone.

Joshua T. Mears is a Christian counselor at Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service— Christian Family Counseling.



EDITORIAL: HONORING FATHERS

Celebrating Father's Day reminds us of the importance of the family—important to the church and the society in relationship to children. What a wonderful privilege God gives parents to take care of children and raise them up in God's Word.

Fathers and mothers have an awesome responsibility to teach their children the truths of the Bible; to instruct them in God's law to know what actions and thoughts are right and wrong; to guide them to worship God, believe on Jesus as their Savior, and to pray; and to lead them to serve God in the congregation. In the Large Catechism, Dr. Luther states that those who fail to do these things are committing a great sin against God and against their children.

Through His institution of marriage, God has given fathers and mothers a blessed vocation (calling) to nurture, teach, guide, and lead children to grow up in the Word. St. Jude wrote, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20–21). After Baptism, parents begin this work of building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets by reading Bible stories to their children and discussing with them what God's Word means in their lives.

Christian education—in the home, in church, and in Christian Day School—is vital to the work of building up that faith so that, when children are older, they will not depart from it. Christian worship—in the home and in church—is vital to connecting children with Word and Sacraments so that they are fed and nurtured on the pure Gospel.

The Christian family plays a vital role in raising up the next generation of people who continue to worship God and who serve as citizens in the nation. For if the family breaks apart, if parents and children fail to honor each other, if children give in to the sinful lifestyles of this world, these issues will also bring trouble into the society in which they live. When people disrespect others, live selfish and self-destructive lives, and do not desire to live under the laws of the state, more government resources will be needed to keep peace and order.

Parents also have the important calling to teach children to honor those in authority and to obey the laws of the state. This is especially difficult because our society tends to idolize those who protest, rebel, and disobey the authorities.

It is also difficult to teach respect and honor when the government interferes with the truths that God has revealed in Scripture. For example, students are to honor their teachers—even when they teach evolution as fact and contradict what God has revealed about His creation. They are to honor and respect their government representatives—even when they pass laws that allow for abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, and changes to insurance laws that mandate paying for them, all contrary to God's clear Word. Children

are to respect their president—even though he may support the marriage of homosexuals, which is not what God instituted as marriage.

Teaching honor and respect to those whom God has placed over us (Romans 13:1–2), while also teaching children "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) will always be a difficult distinction for them to understand. However, it is important that children learn to distinguish

between truth and falsehood, between God's Word and man's sin-filled ideas, between good and evil. For Satan will continue to attack believers with doubts and errors, to entice them with the things of this world, and to fan the flames of sinful lusts in order to lead them into sin.

The family is the foundation of society and Christian fathers who lead, teach, guide, and nourish their families are the mortar that holds families together. The generations of Christians descending from him will call him blessed and honor him for the faith in Jesus that he passed on.



Theodore Gullixson is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin.

New ELS Website Launched

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod launched a redesigned website in May, designed to complement the theme of “Engaging Others with Jesus.” The new site features easy access to online issues of the Lutheran Sentinel and synod-produced videos, as well as a custom-designed church and school locator. Browse the new website at www.els.name or www.evangelicallutheransynod.org.



Engaging Others with Jesus... ...in Latvia



Ruta Logina (second woman from left) is a member of the Riga congregation of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Latvia. She joined the congregation after a lengthy search for a church faithful to Lutheran theology. Having joined, she set about to “Engage Others with Jesus”. One by one, her sister and her two sons and their families joined the congregation. And then more friends joined the church, so that in addition to those in the photo, at least six other members became involved at her invitation. Who knows how many more she will introduce to the fellowship? Ruta is a wonderful example of quiet, patient, Christian evangelism.