

The Messenger

October 2017

St. Paul Lutheran Church and PreSchool
1327 Vaughn Road, Wood River, IL 62095
Dr. George J. Gude, Vacancy Pastor

Pastor's Comments

The beginning of the reformation is often dated to October 31, 1517, when Luther posted 95 theses regarding indulgences, entitled "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," for the purposes of scholarly debate. Actually, in reading these theses, Luther has not yet quite resolved the critical issue. The first clear and indisputable evidence that he has resolved the issue comes in a sermon, which he preached in March 1518. But in any case, the posting of the 95 theses produced a storm of opposition, and for this reason it can correctly be identified as the beginning of the reformation.

But for Luther the critical issue was, "How does one become fit to be in God's presence?" Luther was well aware of the reality of God's judgment, and that each individual would be called before God to give an account of his or her life, which would then be followed either by condemnation or heavenly bliss. The problem was that because all are sinners, there is absolutely no one who would not be condemned by God, whom the scriptures portray as just.

So what hope did anyone have? In the medieval world, the focus on how one became right with God was on the good works that were done to make up for the sins that had been committed.

Luther's problem with this was that if you were to do only good works throughout your life, this would only be exactly what you were expected to do. But if there was a failure, sin, how could any good thing that was done make up for it, since every good thing was already expected.

Then when the scope of every person's sinfulness is considered, such a hope for being fit for God was impossible. There was no way to get the scales to balance.

The problem was that over the centuries medieval theology had obscured the way in which the New Testament used the term righteousness. In the medieval world righteousness was understood to mean that God was totally just and holy, which of course is true, but which is also the opposite of what a sinner is. Luther struggled with this for years, until, through his studies of the writings of Paul, he realized that in the New Testament the term righteousness has an additional far more profound meaning.

The righteousness of God is not simply that God is righteous, but primarily that God declares sinners righteous as a result of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, who was bearing the full burden of human sin. And, those who have faith that this is what was happening in the death and resurrection of Jesus receive the full gift of forgiveness that he came to bring. Forgiveness means that the forgiven sinner is now fit to be in the presence of a just God because there is no sin to disqualify him or her. It was this discovery which gave Luther

himself relief from all of his inner terror at the prospect of standing as the sinner he knew himself to be, before God, who would judge him in justice. There was nothing to fear. Jesus had taken away his sin. There was no sin to condemn him.

It was this message then that he proclaimed as the heart of his reformation.

OKTOBERFEST 2017

Come one, come all, to this year's celebration on Sunday October 22, 2017 from 11:30 – 2:00. All you can eat brats, pulled pork, hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad, German potato salad, sauerkraut, apple sauce and desserts. Ticket pricing is adults \$9.00, children (4-12) \$3.00, under 4 free. In addition to good food and fellowship, there will be a bounce house and activities for the kids.

We will have limited whole pork butts, (average 8-10 lb.) for sale at \$35.00 each with advance reservation. Call Bruce Seehausen at (618) 288-5341. Also, that day we will have 8 oz. or 16 oz. pulled pork for sale at \$4.00 and \$7.00 respectfully and brats 3 for \$5.00.

We are soliciting desserts from the congregation. A sign-up sheet will be in the narthex for your award-winning or family favorite dessert.

One final plea, if you would like to help, there also will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex or just come to our next meeting October 9th at 6:00 pm in the educational parlor.

Next Step in the Call Process

We have completed the first phase of the call process involving the “Congregational Self Study.” The next step is that members of the congregation will be invited to submit the names of ordained ministers who are on the roster of the Synod. These forms will be available on the tables in the narthex, beginning with the Saturday service on October 7, 2017. The deadline for returning these forms suggesting names of individuals to be considered for pastor will be Sunday, October 22.

This list of names will then be submitted to the district office, which will provide the Self Evaluation Tool (SET) and Personal Information Form (PIF) for each of the names submitted. In addition, the district president will add names, based on the Congregational Self Study, and his personal knowledge of the congregation. The names he adds will be individuals he believes would be good for the congregation to also consider.

Hopefully we would have this information by the end of November, at which point the call committee will begin the process of evaluating the information received and propose a recommended list to a special voters meeting. According to the constitution of St. Paul, the call committee consists of the elders, the chairman and vice chairman of the congregation, the circuit visitor, and the vacancy pastor.

Pastor Gude

An Older Adult Ministry at St. Paul

Being Senior Sensitive

Before Pat and I joined St. Paul, we belonged to St. Paul's in Des Peres, MO, where I was offered the opportunity to begin developing an "Older Adult Ministry" (OAM) program. At that time I felt pretty inadequate to take on such a project, partly because I didn't even think of myself as being ready for that category. However, as I continue to research and collect resource material, I am coming to the conclusion that aging in America is changing dramatically. In the past 100 years, about 30 years has been added to the life expectancy of the average American. These additional years have disrupted the retirement plans of millions of older adults. But with the new challenges of greater longevity also come new opportunities. One question we might start asking ourselves is, "What is the purpose of living longer if it is not to fulfill the purpose of God?" After recent discussions with the Elders, it seems appropriate that we begin looking at this question and how we might make it relevant to our members here at St. Paul.

The suggestion has been proposed that there is going to be an "age wave" in most churches in America, and many churches will miss one of the greatest opportunities in American history. Most congregations still assume that the future of the church is its youth. However, there is a growing belief that a more accurate description is that the future belongs to the old, and there is a demographic shift which is occurring in our country. One study indicates that for the first time in our history there are more older adults than teenagers, and in less than 20 years there will be a 74% increase in the number of folks over the age of 50, and only a 1% increase in those under 50. According to the Social Security Administration, 11,000 "baby boomers" are turning 65 every day. So the question becomes "Are our churches becoming 'Senior Sensitive'?" I won't try to get into more detail here, but hopefully I will be able to expand on that in future articles. For now, think about this . . .

Younger than 50 (A temporary condition that heals over time)

God calls us for the *whole of life*. The amazing thing is that we all share one thing – we are all aging. Those who are younger need to realize there is no cure for it, so if not presently, you will eventually have the opportunity to benefit from an emphasis on older adult ministry. I would also suggest that rather than trying to pretend that aging is not taking place, it would be much more attractive to embrace it and make the most of the new opportunities.

I think it is appropriate to suggest we have been convinced that youth is to be promoted and worshipped, as evidenced by much of the advertising. But most existing senior adult church groups are operating on the assumption that grew out of a different time and place. Today's senior adults are far different from our parents or grandparents. It would be good to realize that all seniors aren't seniors. A new generational grouping has emerged in our society during the past generation. Their members are called "middle adults" and include those people between 50 and 70 years of age. They are, as U.S. News & World Report says, "a new generation, different not only in size, but in vitality and outlook." Older adults are living healthier, more active, productive, longer lives. In reality, a person 50 or 60 can expect to live fifteen, twenty, thirty

more years. These are, indeed, our middle years. We are not, certainly in our own minds, senior adults.

A common attitude among older people is that retirement leads to the end of service. However, it is a real shame when Christians who have been engaged in ministry, possibly for decades, call it quits too soon. Billy Graham once said that he couldn't find any reference in the Bible that says we can retire from God's service. I believe he was right on with his suggestion. Following Christ is a life-long pursuit, and the talents we have been given (referring to the parable in Mt. 25) do not have a shelf life of only 65 years. The generation that is approaching retirement is 78 million strong and when you add the Boomers you have an incredible pool of talents. The question now becomes "as a follower of Christ, how are we planning to use the remaining years God has given us?" That seems to me to point directly at the intent of an Older Adult emphasis here at St. Paul.

One last but not least point needs to mention my hope that there are a few to several members who are interested in working with me as a "focus group" to begin looking at starting to develop an Older Adult Ministry here at St. Paul. This is a unique opportunity to consider what might be meaningful to our members. I have some thoughts and plans to start that process, including a survey that should help to get input from our members. One point to make is that this program isn't intended to reflect only my interests or values, but rather those of the adult members of the congregation. I am planning to have relevant articles in each future newsletter.

Regarding the focus group, anyone who would like to become part of the "ground floor" planning of this ministry is encouraged to contact me, and we can talk about your thoughts and ideas. My cell number is 314-488-8997, and my email address is Robert.List@att.net, or feel free to talk to me at church. I would love to hear from you. This does not require a long-term commitment, but hopefully you will get caught up in the special nature of opening up opportunities for further service to the church, or to help think about activities of interest to those members we hope to serve. With God's direction we will be able to move forward to help our "older" members find ways to continue ministry service that will contribute to making St. Paul an even greater tool for strengthening the message of the Gospel for our members.

Conclusion

My hope and prayer is that this is the first of many articles, either distributed as special mailings or included in the Messenger, that will continue to focus on issues of ministry to "Older Adults". In addition, subjects of interest to anyone thinking about, or planning for retirement, how to make mature life more meaningful and enjoyable, and opportunities for service and fellowship, may be offered. Any thoughts, suggestions and prayers would be greatly appreciated.

Adult Information Class

An Adult Information Class is currently meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 in the lounge. We should complete the material by the end of October.

Bible Study to Assist in Dealing with Grief

Pastor Randy Fischer from Messiah, Alton is leading a Bible study to assist those dealing with grief. It meets on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 in the yellow classroom.

Deadline for the November News Letter

The deadline for the November News Letter is October 27. Please submit articles to the editor, Pat List, or to the church office.

Golf Scramble Update

Thanks to the golfers, committee and sponsors, St. Paul's 17 Annual Golf Scramble was a huge success, raising over \$1000 to benefit St. Paul's hurricane relief efforts. The first place winning A-flight team members were JoAnn and Danny Prusa, Matt Langendorf and Brian Stahlhut. The winning B-flight team members were Cody and Larry Farrell, James Mumme, and Steve McCommas. Closest-to-the-pin honors went to Danny Prusa and Jeff Fletcher and Longest-drive honor went to Jeremy Loemker. Our thanks goes to Carla and Ken Trammel, Kathy Opel, Lynn Koch, JoAnn Prusa, and Jen Farrell for their work and contributions to the scramble. Thanks again to all the golfers for a great day of fellowship and fun! See you next year!

St. Paul's Braille Crew

Each of the five congregations taking part in the Braille project in the Southern Illinois District needs to furnish a crew of 10 workers. Our workday is on the second Tuesday of each month at 9 am. For many months we have been producing 12 copies of a 65/page book containing I and II Corinthians. In August we started working with a new set of plates; the Book of Psalms, Vol. I (72 pages) and Vol. II (60 pages). It's like we're doing two projects on the same day.

First we make six copies of Vol. I and during break, the plates and covers are switched. Then we make the six copies of the smaller Vol. II. Even though we're dealing with more pages, we've managed to deal with the extra pages in just a few minutes more.

The first step in the assembly line is numbering pages – just for our own use. The second person punches the binding holes in the pages and then they're divided into groups of 10 to match the groups of plates.

Our crew members in September were: Bill & Mary Birdsell, Wayne & Elaine Poenitske, Jo Brady, Jane Aper, David Richards, Dotti Hachman, Mary Lou Oelzen and Vi Pinkerton. If you would be interested in spending two hours helping a worthwhile mission effort, please call the Poenitskes at 618-254-3653.

Circuit 500th Anniversary Reformation Service

Our Metro-North Circuit will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by holding a joint Communion service for the entire circuit on Tuesday, October 31. The service will start at 7:00 and will be held at Faith, Godfrey. The message will take the form of a dialog tracing how Luther came to understand that the righteousness of God meant that God forgave sinners, which was the heart of the message of the Reformation. The characters in the dialog are Martin Luther, Johann von Staupitz, and Jerome Emser, who will be portrayed by pastors from our circuit.

Membership Happenings

Barbara Coffman, Foxes Grove, 395 E. Edwardsville Rd., Wood River, IL 62095

Elaine Bense, 7 Alby St., Apt. 6, Alton, IL 62002 618-917-5959

Travis & Sara Mouser, 950 Old Oak, East Alton, IL 62024

Carolyn Large, 618-920-8949

David Grace, No Forwarding on File

Wedding

Carly Strasen to Andrew Arnold 9/2/17

Death

Eugene Pearson 8/28/17

Transfer In

Elaine Bense from Christ The King Lutheran Church, Orlando, FL

Wedding

David Skinner to Wendy Leach 9/23/17