



The Messenger

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Treasures, New and Old...

It was a sight that a person in church work would likely not soon forget. In the summer of 2007, I was preparing for my last year of college, working on a Bachelor of Music Education degree. I had completed all my field education work and was preparing for student teaching and had my senior recital on the horizon. It was in that summer beforehand that I was introduced to the opposite of what so many had told me.

Really since the end of the Vietnam War, and during for that matter, a war had been playing out in churches across the Western world. It was a culture war around how we worship. The theological and spiritual priorities of Christians were brought to bear on such things as music and liturgy. Some rallied around the banner of traditionalism. "We must keep things exactly as they are." Well, what they really meant was a romanticized notion of how things once were. Yet others rallied around the banner of a romanticized notion of modernity. "We have to change with the times and modernize or we'll risk being irrelevant." Somehow, it was as if our expressions of Christian faith and our proclamation of the Gospel was legitimized either by the fossilization of the church in one era or the never-ending task of chasing the false idol of modernity. Further, depending on the commitment of the one speaking, authentically and truly following Jesus belonged to either one or the other – no comprehensive middle ground to be found there.

So there I was during that hot and humid summer of 2007, the boy from Illinois had made a splash landing in that big city of St. Louis. Upon a friend's recommendation I checked out this enormous old German church – the Church of Saint Francis Xavier (Roman Catholic) – and that is where I found the opposite of what I should have found. Saint Francis Xavier Church had been turned over to a religious society within the Roman Church, a society dedicated to the preservation of the historic liturgy in the Latin Mass. Goodness did they ever! In that church, the altar was ad orientem, or eastward (the wall) facing, as so many of our own Lutheran churches were, and many still are. They made use of the traditional vestments and more incense than seemed possible to smoke out of one censor! The musical setting was a Mozart Mass with a double string quartet and pipe organ.

Here is what was unusual: one could barely move down the aisles because of all the strollers parked there. The church was not filled with the most elderly of elderly longing for a bygone era. In fact, the truth was that those folks could be found over at the Jesuit church where the guitar Masses of the 1970s were still in vogue. It was eye opening, to say the absolute least. All of the "people who knew anything at all" kept telling us that "if you want to get young people into the church" you had to be hip, modern, and always changing with the times, or, in a word, "contemporary." Interestingly, no one could ever tell you what was contemporary or modern. As soon as something is published or put in a hymnal, it is no longer contemporary. Like computer systems, that in church music and worship which bears the label "modern" or "contemporary" is obsolete the second it is purchased.

One major realization happened for me. People who are formed by and love the spirituality of traditional liturgy and worship are so often accused of making an idol out of the past and are cast in a bad light for wanting to hold onto an older hymnal or a traditional liturgy. But, I realized it is just as easy to make an idol, a false god, out of the idea of the future. We love to chase the future. "We have to move into the future," some will say. But just like the past, the future is not a place where we may dwell. It never arrives. We will never know the future. The second the future arrives is the second the future escapes us, as it is yet to come. The truth of the matter is that the tension between wanting to live in the past and live in the future is just a difficult space to occupy.

Lutheran Christians have always lived with that tension of what to reform, keep, leave aside, or create. In the 1850s and 1860s, Samuel Simon Schmucker (yes, of the Schmucker family), head of the faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, wanted to do what so many Lutherans of our own age want to do: throw it all out for the sake of popularity. Schmucker, who denied the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, wanted to jettison the Augsburg Confession, the summit of the confessions of faith found in the Book of Concord, and replace it with a set of doctrines palatable to a generalized low-church American Protestantism. Although he failed within his own synod, Schmuckerism took hold in countless places in American Lutheranism. Thus began the most unfortunate trend of American Lutherans jettisoning their uniqueness, throwing out what makes them essentially Lutheran, in order to fit in with the predominant religious culture around them.

In our own age, this trend flares up as well. My own lifetime, and yours, has seen an emptying of once-full churches. The majority of mainline American churches have been on a trajectory of decline for my entire life, if not at least three-quarters of my life. Every congregation I have served has had people who told me of what it was like when that very church was “standing room only.” That leads us to want two things: someone to blame and a silver bullet to fix it. The someone to blame almost always ends up being those who want to preserve the beauty and timelessness of the Lutheran way and the silver bullet is false idol of modernization. “If we only just make things happy and modern people will come back,” we say. “The kids want contemporary, so bring drums and guitars.” So we try that and exactly nothing happens.

Plenty of churches in plenty of denominations are trying to “modernize” for the sake of restoring their “relevance.” In my travels in northern Michigan I encountered a church that tried to modernize by taking out all their pews, gutting their liturgy, bringing in Buddhist meditation, and scheduling yoga. Likewise, last summer I had dinner with a local clergyperson who gleefully told me of a colleague who “hates” the traditional worship of their church and has thrown it out. In fact, they even substitute poetry and other secular readings in the place of Scripture readings. Guess what? Those churches emptied even faster and are in deeper disarray and chaos, even facing closure. Worshiping the idol of modernity got them nowhere. A box of chocolates and a five dollar bill are hidden in the organ bench for the first person who reads this and goes to retrieve them.

So what does all of this mean? Why on earth share this reflection? I believe with every fiber of my being that the deep, authentic Lutheran expression of the Christian faith is of infinite value to this world. Never should we try to be like other churches and do what they do. If we wanted to do that, we should just close our doors and go join them. That would be easier. The timeless Lutheran liturgy handed down to us over generations, with authentic adaptations, when necessary, serves to convey the power of the Word of God in a world that so desperately needs to hear of things such as grace, the forgiveness of sin, new starts, and the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. The historic, yet ever new, way of Lutheran worship, in its fullness, ushers us to Holy Sacrament of the Altar, where we receive those good gifts of God in the Body and Blood of Christ. From time to time, our Lutheran congregations wander from their Lutheran moorings and start to look like churches of other denominations. When that happens, we have the uncomfortable, and often unpopular task of restoring the sacred.

We may pretend that there are not a multitude of factors that have led to the decline of mainline Christianity in America, including our own ELCA. We may even pretend that the church declines because it failed to “change with the times.” But changing with the times is not a worthy goal. Remember, in the 1930s, the church in Germany changed with the times and went with what happened around it, thus giving in to the desires of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. In our own country, the mainstream of Christianity went along with all sorts of things from slavery, to segregation, and beyond. The church has endorsed all sorts of things that came around when times changed, and quite frankly, some of those things were ugly and unchristian. “Changing with the times” can be destructive and damaging, depending on what that means. The phrase may as well be removed from our vocabulary.

Rather than change for the sake of change, or holding onto things only because we want to live in the past, we should wish to grow and deepen – in our faith, in our practice, in our life. That means we do not give in

to either extreme. That means we reflect upon and evaluate a worship practice, a prayer, a hymn based not on when it was written, but by how it conveys the “faith delivered once for all to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Jesus says this another way: “And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matthew 13:52). Sometimes, we Lutheran Christians are called to take on something new and sometimes we are called to rediscover things we have lost.

In order to explore, celebrate, restore, and discover the treasures that are new and old alike, I am beginning a series of newsletter articles which will, each month, take a look at a particular worship practice of ours to understand why it is there (or figure out where it went!) and how it helps us understand something of our faith and our relationship to God in Jesus Christ. I invite you to join me in that journey.



Our confirmation students, with help from Pastor Moyers, Deacon Hiner, Ralph Smith and Lee Heinsohn, built a Blessing Box for Grace Lutheran Church on March 19. We pray that the Blessing Box helps and blesses the community as the one in Cordova has for several years.



Thank you to Lee Heinsohn for the beautiful bench in our sanctuary. It was made using one of the church's old pews.



Endowment Fund

The mission of St. Paul's Cordova is to be led by the Spirit of Jesus: praise and worship the Trinity; grow our membership with faith and love; and share our blessings with all God's people. In following this mission, St. Paul's established an Endowment Fund to receive gifts and bequests of "faithful stewards" to strengthen the ongoing mission of our church.

Contributions to the fund strengthens the congregation and provides a legacy for generations to come. The Endowment Policy requires recognition of contributions in the newsletter and bulletin on or near Palm Sunday. During 2022, there were no contributions to the Endowment Fund. Faithful stewards have contributed \$25,083.50 to the Endowment Fund since its inception in 2015.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church encourages its members and friends to think prayerfully about how they can help maintain the congregation's ministry in the long term. Information about endowment options is available in the Endowment Fund Policy, approved by the congregation on January 24, 2015, or you may speak to the Pastor, Treasurer, or Financial Secretary. Endowment contributions may be sent to the church or to Mid-Shore Community Foundation, 102 E Dover Street, Easton, MD 21601. Please make sure any contributions are clearly designated to St. Paul's Lutheran Church Cordova – Endowment Fund.



Mrs. Lyn and Mrs. Bobbie's Sunday school class decorated crosses to remind us of both the sacrifice and joy that Easter brings us!

Front row: Olivia McQuay, Collins McHenry, Aubrey Higginbottom

Top row: Bennett Sump, Charlie McQuay, Harper Callahan



The midweek services are cancelled during the week following Easter Day and in the next week, while Pastor is away. The schedule of midweek liturgies will resume on Monday, April 24th.

Pastor Moyers will be away from the parish April 15-20 as he is attending the annual conference of the Institute for Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University in Indiana. For any pastoral emergencies during this time, please contact Deacon Hiner, who will be on call.



On June 4, we will have our worship service at Tuckahoe State Park and we are asking everyone to bring a can of food. We will be using the donations to stock our Blessing Boxes in Cordova and Easton. Thank you for your support of this wonderful ministry!

In the final hours of 2021, a wildfire near Boulder, Colorado, destroyed 1,000 homes, including one belonging to Pastor Bill Stephens. His family, out of town at the time, lost all their possessions. After months of feeling buried in debris, insurance paperwork and mourning, Stephens decided that Easter 2022 would mark a fresh start.

During worship that morning, the pastor shared a photo of vibrant daffodils emerging on his charred property. Burned remnants were visible in the background, just as Easter's backdrop includes the pain and death of Good Friday. But the empty tomb in Easter's foreground means death won't win, reminded Stephens. Even when earthly life "isn't all daffodils," we have hope and eternal life through Jesus.

Easter reveals that God will "give us the joy, and it's going to be in the heart of pain that we go through as well," added the pastor. "And that just makes me draw closer to God."



Holy Thursday

Also called "Maundy Thursday"

On Holy Thursday, we commemorate three of the most important things Jesus does during Holy Week.

The foremost of those things is his institution, or beginning, of what we call the Holy Eucharist, or Holy Communion. In the Upper Room, Jesus gathers his disciples and gives them his true Body and precious Blood under the forms of bread and wine and commands his followers to continue celebrating this mystical supper in his remembrance.



Secondly, we celebrate that Jesus gives us the new commandment – love one another. This is the mandate by which he wants his followers to be known, that we love one another as he loves us. The Latin word for mandate is "mandatum." The word "Maundy" is a mid-15th century Middle English translation of "mandate," and is where the day gets its name. In many churches, according to the tradition of the church, the "mandatum" portion of the service on Maundy Thursday has been traditionally celebrated with the footwashing, where the celebrant of the liturgy washes the feet of those who come forward.

Finally, after sharing the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus agonizes in the Garden of Gethsemane and asks his disciples to stay awake in the night hours, praying and watching with him. However, they fall asleep. "Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So could you not stay awake with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40).

We will celebrate Maundy Thursday with the Holy Eucharist at 7pm at St. Paul's. Afterwards, the All-Night Vigil will be kept, also at St. Paul's until the Vigil is broken with Matins (Morning Prayer) at 7am. At 11:30pm is a commemoration of the arrest of Jesus.

Through the night of Holy Thursday into the morning of Good Friday, we keep watch with Jesus. The altar at Grace decorated as the Garden of Gethsemane and the Blessed Sacrament is kept there—the body and blood of Jesus—which will be shared by those who come to worship on Good Friday.

Through the night, parishioners are invited to come and pray with Jesus just for just one hour. There be a signup sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex of both churches and the one-hour slots will be listed.



Good Friday

The Passion and Death of our Lord

The Three-Hour Solemn Service

Consisting of the **Seven Last Words of Christ at 12:00**

Noon

And the **Liturgy of Good Friday at 2:15pm**

Both at Grace

People are invited to come and go as needed during the first two hours. The first two hours of the Three-Hour Service are a devotion around the "Seven Last Words of Jesus." During this time, there will be Scripture, hymns, and meditations, with portions of silent prayer in between. The portion which is the Solemn Good Friday Liturgy with Holy Communion will begin at 2:15pm. This portion of the service contains the reading of the Passion Gospel and the Veneration of the Cross.

Guest clergy from area churches are being invited to speak during the Seven Last Words Devotion.

The Evening Liturgy of Good Friday

7pm at St. Paul's



Easter Day The Festival of the Resurrection



Sunrise Service with the New Fire

6:00am at St. Paul's

Festival Eucharist

8:45am at St. Paul's

Festival Eucharist

10:45am at Grace

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went into the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb... John 20:1



CRUCIFERS

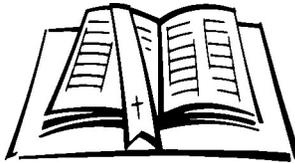
April 2 Morgan Sauca
 April 6 Gavin Corley
 April 7 NA
 April 9 Addison Rice
 April 16 NA
 April 23 NA
 April 30 NA

**Communion
 Assistant**

April 2 Deacon Hiner
 April 6 Deacon Hiner
 April 7 NA
 April 9 Betty Jean Mumford (Sunrise Service)
 April 9 Deacon Hiner (8:45 AM)
 April 16 Robert Saathoff
 April 23 Betty Jean Mumford
 April 30 Robert Saathoff

LECTORS

April 2 Bobbie Leaverton
 April 6 Betty Jean Mumford
 April 7 Robert Saathoff
 April 9 Stevi Saathoff (Sunrise Service)
 April 9 Robert Saathoff (8:45 AM)
 April 16 Donna Stevens
 April 23 Debbie Dudrow
 April 30 Bobbie Leaverton



Acolytes

April 2 Joshua Lewis
 April 6 Declan Corley
 April 7 NA
 April 9 Avery Rice (8:45 AM)
 April 16 Corey Fisher
 April 23 Couper Barletta
 April 30 Declan Corley



Tellers

USHERS

April 2 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 6 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 7 Kathy Barletta and Susan Behrens
 April 9 Keith Davis and Donnie Davis (8:45 AM)
 April 16 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 23 Lee Heinsohn and Lee Moore
 April 30 Kathy Barletta and Susan Behrens

April 2 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 6 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 7 Kathy Barletta and Susan Behrens
 April 9 Debbie Dudrow and Donna Stevens (8:45 AM)
 April 16 Henry and Lyn Hollingsworth
 April 23 Lee Heinsohn and Lee Moore
 April 30 Kathy Barletta and Susan Behrens

ALTAR FLOWERS

April 2 Palm Sunday/No Flowers
 April 9
 April 16 Henry and Rosemarie Fuchs
 April 23
 April 30



Barbara Saathoff and
 Marian Davis

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12095 Blades Road,
P.O. Box 368
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Return Service Requested

Worship Service Begins at 8:45 am
Please inform the church office of any
changes in your personal information:
Address, phone number, marriage or
divorce, or new births so that we
can keep our records up-to-date.

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Cell: 443-496-0903

Office: 410-364-5147

Office Hours: Tue. Wed. & Thurs. 9:00-3:00

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