



The Branch

July 2019

The monthly newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church



Join us for Vacation Bible School!

Sunday, July 28 – Thursday, August 1

6:00-8:30 PM

Kids age 4 thru those entering 6th Grade can register online until Friday, July 26. T-shirt orders are due by Sunday, July 14.

Adults and teens are still welcome to sign up to help!



“The Challenge of God’s Grace”

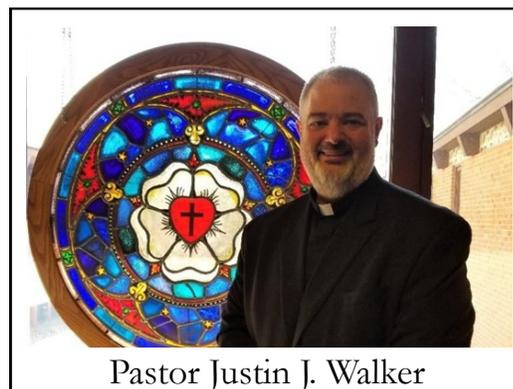
“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.” + Galatians 3:27-29

Greetings members of CLC!

For this month, I want to talk about something I find challenging in our Summer Adult Bible Study which is reflecting on Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia. The challenge is not that this is a difficult class to teach. Nor is it because there are any issues with the group. In fact, we are off to a great start and is a true pleasure for a dozen or so members to gather every Thursday at 9:30am and All Are Welcome (there is my plug for the month). So, the challenging part of this Bible Study for me is facing Paul’s proclamation of the gospel message and then taking into account and applying all that it means. In Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia, he touches on exactly what the grace of God is and how God’s grace changes everything. He chides other Christians – including Jesus’s star disciple Peter personally – for not following living faithful to God’s grace. As Paul proclaims, God’s grace is life changing and life giving. It overpowers all human-imposed divisions, especially those to which society regularly clings. It causes us to face our own stumbling blocks which often take the form of unnecessary judgment. And in the place of these issues, it gives us uplifting grace.

Paul was frustrated with the churches of Galatia when he wrote to them. When he left them, they were ministering in a healthy way, treating Christian sisters and brothers with differing backgrounds equally. Then, some people came and shared a different message. Soon, these churches were separating their membership into groups of who were Jewish from those who were Gentile – even while they were all Christians. Paul’s ire was stirred when he learned about the Christians being treated differently and wrote that in Christ, there is a unity which is more important than any point of division. The Scripture I included above from Galatians 3 is among the most quoted of Paul’s letters because its proclamation of inclusivity. If we truly find unity in God’s grace, then the distinctions of this world fall away. These distinctions may still remain important to us personally, but not in terms of our relationship with God and our relationships with one another.

Then we have Paul’s proclamation about how God’s grace changes everything in the world and is the challenge I mention above. The grace of God in Christ Jesus is all that is necessary and is it completely sufficient for unity in the church. God’s grace: that is what church life is all about. And by clinging to former divisions, argues Paul, those churches had completely lost their way. Once more, Paul argues that unity of the gospel is the foundation of all unity in the church. Now Paul lived in a different time. He did not have congregational constitutions or bylaws to follow nor categories of membership. He



Pastor Justin J. Walker

didn't have to worry about where to find a parking spot on Sunday mornings. [Although he may have had a favorite place to sit in worship – we do not know for sure.] But does Paul's proclamation to the churches in Galatia hold for us today?

It may be easy to agree with Paul in principle, but the rub for us comes when we look at how grace changes all the world including us. It is one thing to say that we are saved by grace through faith; it is another thing to live it. It is a call for us to let go of much of what we have learned or inherited from our places of origin to make way for God to have a larger share in our lives. This can be disconcerting because we like to keep and hold on to what we know. God may call us to change the world in small or large ways. Are we ready to respond to God's grace and break down that which divides us today? Are we ready to embrace openly those who have been pushed to the side as "outsiders" and know that we are actively taking steps towards Christian unity based on God's grace? Change is difficult; but know that if we follow our Christian calling, God has our backs – and the Holy Spirit will sustain us every time!

In closing, it is good for us to be challenged. It is good to encounter Scripture and be changed. My prayer for the members of CLC and beyond is that we keep being challenged and learn to live in the world changed forever by God's grace – because that is the only world that there is. And as part of this challenge, may we find unity in Christ – just as those in the churches in Galatia did – as a response to the brokenness of this world.

May God's Blessing and Peace be with you!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Justin



*Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator
at Christ Lutheran Church*

Christ Lutheran Church is seeking to hire a Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator who desires to encourage, inspire, and nurture the faith formation of children, teens, and adults in our church community which includes being the Senior High Youth leader. We seek an energetic and confident person to build upon established programs using their own creativity, interests, and expertise. This position requires the individual to invite, equip, and encourage a team of volunteers to carry out the programs offered. The ideal candidate must have excellent interpersonal and organizational skills, the ability to collaborate and work effectively with staff and church members, and support the ELCA's mission and vision. A Bachelor's degree in a related field is preferred.

A complete job description can be located on our church website, clcwyoming.org. Please send resumes and letters of recommendation to youth@clcwyoming.org
Subject: Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator

Second Best Sale 2019

We will again sponsor a fall sale to benefit an outreach ministry as our church's "God's Work. Our Hands" project. Our sale will take place **September 27-28**. As you clean or sort through your clothing and household items, please consider donating them to our sale. Items should be clean and in good condition. As we get closer to the sale, we will be looking for volunteers to ready items for the sale, workers for the sale and bakers who are willing to donate some of their specialties. We will begin taking donations some time in August. Watch the Weekly Announcement page for further information!



I just wanted to express my sincere thanks to the congregation and staff of Christ Lutheran for the many gifts, cards, prayers, and words of well wishes that you have shared with me in the past couple of weeks. You are all so special to me and it has been my privilege and honor to serve you in these past years. I look forward to continuing to worship and serve **with** you for many more!

In Christ's love,
Suzanne Snider

A huge thank you to this family in Christ at CLC. All of the love shown, cards, prayers and the beautiful plant that was sent to my family were overwhelming and greatly appreciated. The loss of my 6-year-old nephew is heartbreaking and your thoughtfulness and caring have been a huge support to me and my family.

*Thank you from the bottom of my heart,
Audrey Geers*

When God Comes Calling

You might be familiar with the story of God's call to Samuel. It is a lesson in hearing and understanding that is not lost on our current generation. We speak often in our Lutheran faith of our "response." A key component of our belief is that we don't owe anything for our salvation. It is the free gift of God. No works required. No service owed. In fact we never hear the word "ought" in a sermon or a good Sunday School lesson. Instead, we speak of being moved to respond to the reality of what God has done for us in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Just how we respond is different for each of us. We each have different gifts and abilities. Some of us have the gift of hospitality. Some of teaching. Others have musical talent. If we think long enough I'm sure that we can develop quite a list. Now, you probably think you know where this is going. Another reminder for us to be mindful that we're all called to some form of service. And you would be right, but not in any way that you might anticipate.

This month I participated in a course for the use of Spanish in ministry. Since I had not been in an environment where we spoke only Spanish in quite some time, it was a challenge. Eventually, the memory banks kicked in and things got much easier. In addition to the issue of language we were reminded of cultural differences that often divide the Latino and Anglo communities. The capstone event of the week was a meal hosted by a Latino family. From the moment the class entered Marta's house her strong gift of hospitality was evident everywhere. From the warm greeting to the precisely set table to the rich array of food it was clear that we were the guests of honor.

Among the black beans with garlic, the handmade tortillas, the stewed beef with onions and the freshly made horchata (a unique blend of milk, sugar and cinnamon) I did not expect to hear God calling. But like Samuel whose call started as a whisper and grew louder as the night went on I heard God more clearly than ever before. You see, after dinner the group was discussing ways in which communities could work together. Things began to get emotional. I heard many times the equivalent of "we are a poor but proud people." Rather than ask for any kind of monetary help or support, I was struck by a single comment. Looking directly at me, one of the family members said "You have white privilege. You have a voice that can help. We are brown and our voices don't seem to count. Will you please find a way to use your white privilege to give us a hand up?"

At first I was taken aback. The term "white privilege" was fraught with all sorts of political overtones, subjects which I usually stay out of. But this wasn't the Evening News. It was real life and I knew that the person asking the question had only the sincerest of intentions in her question. Then I had the unmistakable feeling that I was hearing God's voice. I don't know what my response will be but the question is giving me serious pause. As a church the ELCA is a strong advocate of diversity but we remain 95% Caucasian. Our congregation here at Christ Lutheran is virtually a mirror image of the national church. We have the power to be the voice of many groups whose voices gets lost in the majority. Samuel grew up to be a strong voice for the Lord. While I don't know what God might be saying to you I encourage you to listen carefully for the ways in which God might be speaking. We are all privileged in many ways.

How might you respond? Let's have some coffee and talk about it.

Patrick



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Please Pray for the Youth Mission Trip

From July 7—13, fifteen people from CLC are going on a mission trip to Hazlet, New Jersey: Please pray for their safety and that they may be blessed as they are a blessing in whatever activity or task they are assigned. The following youth and adults are planning to serve:

Abigail Corey, MacKenzie DeGennaro, Margie Evele, Kat Flynn, Jake Gillich, Maggie Gillich, Sara Miller, Gwen Paulson, Nora Paulson, Rebecca Snider, Wally Snider, Haley Steele, Andy & Whitney VanGessel, and Lauren Wilterdink

Did You Know?

All loose quarters put in the collection plates on Sundays are collected specifically to benefit ELCA World Hunger. Your quarters make a difference!!



Notes From the Office

Office Hours:

Monday: 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Jim)
Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Audrey)
Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Audrey)
Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Jim)
Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Audrey)

**If you need to connect with us outside of these hours, please give us a call and make an appointment.

Weekly Announcement Deadline:

Friday morning, 10:00 a.m.

Next Branch Deadline:

Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at 10:00 a.m.



Musical Notes: A Canon of Song (Part II)

by Sara Miller, Minister of Music

In the spring, I started a series of articles on developing a “canon of song”: the relatively small number of hymns used regularly in worship and chosen to be singable, theologically sound, and representative of our diversity of background and experience.

Some of those hymns come from our particular tradition as English-speaking American Lutherans — but others come from our shared experience as 21st-century Christians.

Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), also called **Praise and Worship** music, is a genre that arose out of the Jesus Movement of the 1960s and '70s and the exchange between hippie culture and evangelical Christianity.

Early CCM tends to resemble folk and folk rock, but the genre has been influenced by every other style of popular music, so you can find CCM that sounds like anything from jazz and soft rock to hip hop and metal.

Taking full advantage of the CCM resources available means drawing from three generations (so far) of musical history. These divisions are a little arbitrary, and the labels are mine:

“Tried and True” (1975-1995). The liturgical-folk style of CCM is very singable and easy to learn, and these songs have been around long enough that we’ve had a chance to let some of the less effective writing drop by the wayside. “Light the Fire” by Bill Maxwell is from this generation, and so is “Holden Evening Prayer.”

“Familiar Favorites” (1995-2015). This is the Hillsong generation of CCM and the period where “contemporary worship” was becoming common even in mainline Protestant

churches. It’s also what most of the our band has come of age listening to, and it’s what the youth sing on Sunday night. “Like a Lion (God’s Not Dead),” “Everlasting God,” “Happy Day,” and “Oceans” all belong to this generation.

“Cutting Edge” (2015-). These songs are obviously the trickiest to find and teach and use, because they were written the day before yesterday. “Chain Breaker” by Zach Williams is in this group, but there are probably still those who will say that’s an “old song,” because it was released way back in 2016!

I was interested to know what the freshest, hottest new CCM songs are, and I don’t really have a great way to evaluate that, but Billboard rates songs by popularity! These are the top ten this week:

“You Say” by Lauren Daigle
“God Only Knows” by For King and Country
“Haven’t Seen it Yet” by Danny Gokey
“Scars” by I Am They
“Raise a Hallelujah” by Bethel Music
“Symphony” by Switch
“Resurrecting” by Elevation Worship
“Alive” by Big Daddy Weave
“Build My Life” by Pat Barrett
“Greatness of Our God” by Newsboys

While CCM encompasses much of the popular religious music that’s been written over the past fifty years, “contemporary” is a bit of a moving target. What does “contemporary” sound like to you?

In peace,





For 26 years, our church sanctuary has looked the same. The carpeting, the colors and design appropriate for 1993-94. Despite the best efforts of our custodial staff and the careful use we have exhibited over the years, the carpeting shows signs of wear and tear and things need to be replaced. Now is the time to upgrade our sanctuary. It is time to proclaim, to witness to those who come to worship in this special space, a place for reverence, welcome & celebration in a setting made more current and inviting. Every place which wants to grow and renew itself often starts with facility and ways it can be improved to be more inviting to those who enter. For example, both Meijer and Family Fare in Wyoming are being upgraded and improved, GR First has had many improvements renewing their commitment to location. Trinity Lutheran completed a major renovation of its facilities with the same motivation and focus: How can we make our worship space contemporary, inviting and supportive for our many activities?

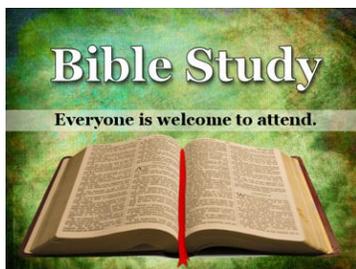
Let's review the process we will use to finalize our plans: In February, 28 interested members assembled to discuss what could be done and subcommittees were formed to review the options. Property Committee chaired by Tom Goetsch has had subsequent meetings and preliminary plans have been shared with Council. We plan on convening meetings with the subcommittees and Council to discuss the options and gather insight of members to make the changes which reflect our collective insights. The process will be announced and I am confident it will reflect changes which are appropriate for the next decades and beyond!

The sanctuary is our church's "living room." Many of our most significant events in congregational life are centered in our worship space. Baptisms, funerals, weddings and Eucharistic worship take place along with holidays and special events. New life, death, promises for the future and Affirmations are made on a regular basis, extending the past into the future. The goal is to do the work by the end of the Summer or early September. Using the established Building Improvement Fund, we will re-carpet in this first phase. Next year, we can consider reupholstering the pews since that also needs replacement. Yes, we will get the job done and with our members insight and support, I am confident we will improve our church and witness to all who join us in this special place.

This task at hand reminds me of Psalm 96: "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all peoples!Honor and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary....Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord glory due his name: bring an offering and come into his courts! Worship the Lord in holy array....".

Jim Ward
Council President

Summer Adult Bible Study



Come join our Bible Study with Pastor Justin this summer. We will meet each Thursday at 9:30 AM and gather for about an hour. We are studying Paul's letter of Galatians, which proclaims God's grace and gives us a foundation of what it means to live as Christians.

Whether you are available every week, or only occasionally, come join us— all are welcome!

A Note From the Nominating Committee

The nominating committee of Christ Lutheran Church is in the process of looking for new Church Council members. Each year a few Council members reach the end of their terms and need to be replaced by members who have not recently served on the Church Council. The election will take place in November. Newly elected Council members begin their new terms officially in January. The nominating committee would like to have a slate of candidates for the congregation to consider before this fall.



If you feel called to serve at this time, or know of someone you think would be able and willing to serve, please feel free to contact one of the nominating committee members: Sarah McKenney, Jim Barritt, Brian Crane, Jane Ward, Suzanne Johnson, Ray Panches, Darryl Larson, Curt Johnson or Pastor Justin.

If you are contacted by one of the nominating committee members, please prayerfully consider responding to the call to serve. "The Ministers of this Church are the People."

Listening Sessions for the Sanctuary Project

Greetings! As mentioned in the President's article, the Property Committee of CLC has been working hard at getting plans together for renovation and renewal of our sanctuary space. We are working with a proposal now in the hopes of having the installation take place in August. We welcome your feedback and are offering two

Listening Sessions when we will describe the current proposal and listen for your feedback.



Help us make the best decisions for our sanctuary and congregation by attending one of our Listening Sessions:

Tuesday, July 2 at 6:30 PM
Sunday, July 7 after worship

News from our Mission Support Committee



As the Mission Support Committee we want to look at Stewardship not just as the pledge drive or how we give financially to the church but to also highlight the outreach work that is done in and outside of Christ Lutheran Church that is fulfilling our mission of the church.

From our believe statement: “As evidence by our ministries, we believe strongly in outreach and care of our fellow human beings. We seek to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others through the gift of time, talent and treasures with which God has blessed us.”

Based on this, we want to share with you some of the outreach that is done each month by CLC. During Lent the offering is given to a specific outreach. This year it was split between two different outreach programs: Personal Care Pantry and Family Promise of Grand Rapids. We are going to hear from Tamara Wright about how this year’s tithing was put to great use to minister to the needs of others:

This year for Lent we chose to help support our Personal Care Pantry and Family Promise of Grand Rapids.

Personal Care Pantry is an amazing ministry that is held twice a month to supply thirty plus families who are less fortunate, with basic items such as toilet paper, soap, paper towels, shampoo/conditioner, etc. These essential items that are provided are not available through government programs, so unless families have enough money left over in their budgets it is a struggle for them to buy these items. What we take for granted is not so easy for them.

Christ Lutheran Church sets up the products in a manner that is as much like a shopping experience as possible to allow the families to select their products. Along with this we provide a meal that allows the families to sit down together.

Family Promise of Grand Rapids gives parents the hope and encouragement they need to create a better future for their kids and end the cycle of homelessness. Through their emergency shelter, housing services, home ownership opportunities and aftercare services, they have helped nearly 2,000 families build a stronger future.

The overall goal and purpose of Family Promise is to provide children and their families with shelter, basic needs and assistance as they seek permanent housing. Family Promise is unique in that it does not split up families during their crisis.

I am proud to say we collected \$2200 and boxes and boxes and more boxes of needed items, everything was divided equally. With the money that was donated PCP can purchase items needed that haven’t been donated and Family Promise can provide shelter and basic needs for one family until they find a home. So thank you CLC, you are amazing.

