



ST JOHN AMELITH PARISH NEWS

June 2024

From The Pastor

As we step into those summer months, everything feels like it is slows down at least for churches. Maybe it is because after Pentecost there are no more major festivals to celebrate. Maybe it is because schools are no longer in session. Maybe it is because there are just so many things to be doing outside this time of the year. Whatever the case, the first Christians did not see things this way. The history book of the New Testament gives us a glimpse of what happened right after Pentecost. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (2:42). These early followers of Christ lived in times and seasons, but wanted to be "in the Spirit" of the Gospel as it came by God's holy Word and Sacrament.

There is a particular relationship with the community we call, "The Church." It is not in a building or even familial connections to a group of people. Many Christians in Africa after baptism end up rejected by their families and social places. While they have far more on a given Sunday than us, they barely have enough money for a church building. Such things sound unreal to us who live in a nation of prosperity and protection. What is keeping those people together compared to so many congregations in North America? The answer is the same as the early church, a devotion to partake in God's grace given through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

That word "Devotion" in the Greek language has a much deeper meaning than what we might consider about community. Much of our associating is here, there, and everywhere especially in the summer. Yet, devotion can have far more value when we, "Hold fast to, cling to, pay persistent attention, attach oneself, be loyal to, or spend much time in." We could say those early Christians had a fixation on God's service of love for them and fervent love for one another. He truly created and redeemed them to be His people as promised in baptism. This was not to satisfy the fleshly assemblies of men, but truly what came conceived by the Holy Spirit with faith in Jesus; being gathered around the teachings of the apostles that had a witness, mercy, and life together centered on the Gospel.

Martin Luther on the Third Commandment describes how devotion was less a strength of men, but a work of God. This is the community that arises naturally by resting in God, for Luther writes, *"Therefore you must continually keep God's Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. For where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasure, and new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations. (Tappert 379:100ff.)"*

True devotion exceeds commitment but when sinners grab hold of Jesus, grab hold of forgiveness, and grab hold of comfort from one another, this is the treasure of Christ's Church that gathers and lives around Him. It does not matter whether it be in America, Africa, or anywhere else. There are no smoke and mirrors with the work of the Holy Spirit. Only the purely preached Word and faithful administration of the sacraments calls together the community of Christ. It is a living faith worked by the Spirit with people who desire forgiveness, won and delivered by Jesus. From Him is community and that relating will take on witness, mercy, and love. To be Lutheran is to enjoy the fullness of Christ, confess His Word boldly, and share this hopefulness together in prayer, praise, and giving thanks.

Enjoy your summer and abide in our Savior!



***Rooted in God's Word, Growing in Christ's
Love, Branching Out to Serve, Bearing
Fruits of Faith***

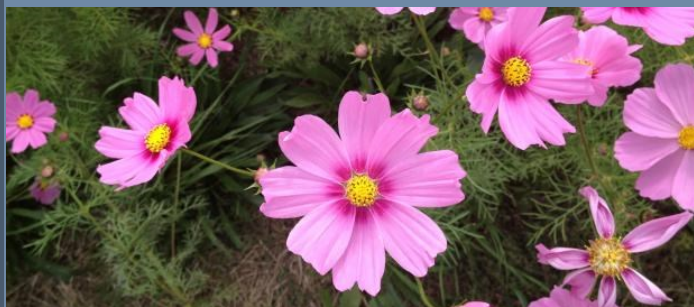
Pastor

CONGREGATION NEWS!

Donations - Congregation members have been generous this past month. Funds have been low from previous months, so it is still a struggle from day to day keeping payroll and bills paid. Jim Meddaugh has been working hard to make sure that extra deposits are made to help cover payroll this past week. We will probably need to be borrowing from our Church Extension Fund account. Please keep our financial issues in your thoughts and prayers.

The BOTTLE/CAN Drive to help offset costs for the school will continue through the summer. There are two barrels outside the school entrance for you to place your bottles/cans in. If you'd prefer to have someone pick them up from your home, please contact Jill @ 989-714-3811.

Flower Committee - Plants and flowers as well as weeds are growing so nice in the flower beds. Planting, watering, weeding and trimming bushes are needed all summer and fall. If you are able to help keep everything looking nice, please contact Debbie Fisher 989-397-5304.



CELEBRATE
the Savior
Jesus Gives Us Joy

VBS 2024

**Come "Celebrate the Savior"
at Vacation Bible School.**

When: June 17 - June 21

Time: 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Where: St John Amelith Lutheran School

**There will be a potluck Lunch on Friday
after the closing chapel.**

St John Financial Status May, 2024



**PRESIDENT DAVIS
UPDATE ON
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
ANN ARBOR**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKFITHqQsJM

In his May 30, 2024 update, President Davis shares the following:

- Upcoming CUWAA Board of Regents Meeting
- Michigan District Board of Directors Involvement
- A Communication document from the Michigan District for Congregations of the Michigan District, their Members, and Other Supporters of Concordia University Ann Arbor
- Prayer and Praise Gatherings, June 5 and 6

This is a pivotal week. Please pray for the upcoming Board of Regents meeting next Thursday, June 6.

September 14, 2024
Save the Date!

St. John Amelith
Church and School
1664 Amelith Rd
Bay City, MI



Music
German Food
more details to come!

Oktoberfest In Amelith

Many of us remember Emma (Ledford) Jensen, who was a music director here at St John for a short time before moving with her husband to Germany. If you would like to contact them, their address is:

Pastor Nathaniel and Emma Jensen
Danzigerstrasse 7
66849 Landstuhl
Germany

VLHS *Ministry Update*

VALLEY LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL Commencement Service

WE CELEBRATE THE

Class of 2024

SUNDAY, JUNE 9
2:00 PM

DOORS OPEN 1:00

SAVE THE DATE
VALLEY LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL'S
25th
ANNIVERSARY
GOLF
Outing
**APPLE MOUNTAIN
GOLF COURSE**
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024

MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.VLHS.COM/GOLF

We continue the series of articles about every Sunday communion for our newsletter. There are plenty of things that we need daily if not weekly in life. David celebrates this care of our Good Shepherd feeding him in Psalm 23 declaring, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...” (vs. 5). Truly the table of our Lord is today His true body and blood to eat and drink for us men and our salvation. Our Lutheran Fathers made every Sunday communion part of their defense at the time of the Reformation. They confessed, “At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass (Lord’s Supper), but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord’s Day and on the other festivals, in which the Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. (Augsburg Confession, Apology, Article XXIV).

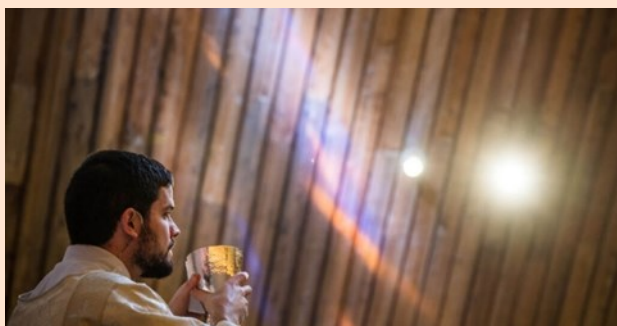
God’s peace be with you in Christ Jesus,

Pastor

Do You Always Need it?

December 7, 2020

By Kenneth Wieting



The second article in a series on weekly communion.

2. Do you always need what Jesus does in the Sacrament?

This marvelous truth is foundational for Holy Communion: The living Christ, here and now, in the flesh, does this. “Why should He serve His gathered guests each Lord’s Day?” In part, because His gathered guests are real sinners. His very name was given with our sins in view (Matt. 1:21), and Jesus walked to Calvary to receive our due for sin. Let us consider the forgiveness of sins He bestows at His altar.

Jesus taught us to pray the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer daily because of our daily need for God’s forgiveness. We have lost God’s image; we are no longer holy, as He created us. We are broken, not whole. We are twisted, not straight. We are rebels, not conformists to God’s holy will.

The “Christian Questions and Answers” portion of Luther’s Small Catechism gets directly at this disease by asking: “Do you believe that you are a sinner?” It does not begin with specific sins, but with the mother lode: Adam’s image. In the Large Catechism, Luther writes: “[I]n God’s presence all must tuck their tails and be glad that they can gain forgiveness. In short, if God does not forgive without stopping, we are lost” (LC III 90, 91).

“Why should the living Christ do this for His gathered

guests each Lord’s Day?” Because His guests need His forgiveness each Lord’s Day. A “good” week does not make a Christian less sinful. A “bad” week does not make a Christian more sinful. A Christian examines his life in light of the Ten Commandments, but not to tabulate a list of sins of which we may or may not be aware. Rather, the Christian examines his life to repent of his sinful condition.

True repentance

We cannot manufacture true repentance. True repentance starts as God unleashes His holy Law on the human heart:

This is God’s thunderbolt. By the Law He strikes down both obvious sinners and false saints. He declares no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer. As Jeremiah says, “Is not My Word like...a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (23:29). This is not active contrition or manufactured repentance. It is passive contrition, true sorrow of heart, suffering, and the sensation of death. This is what true repentance means. Here a person needs to hear something like this, “You are all of no account, whether you are obvious sinners or saints in your own opinions. You have to become different from what you are now. You have to act differently than you are now acting, however great, wise, powerful, and holy you try to be. Here no one is godly.” (SA III III 2–3)

You have to become different, yet you have no power within yourself to do so before God. You have to act differently than you are now acting. Everyone! To do so, the strength must come from outside of you, from God. God gives this repentance by the preaching of His Word. He sends His thunderbolt, the holy hammer of His Law, and crushes the sinful heart. As He does so, He also prepares sinful hearts to receive the Gospel of forgiveness and life. But if such strength and forgiveness come from God’s proclaimed Word, why should we receive the Sacrament as well?

This question once again shifts the Sacrament away from Jesus’ doing to ours. What Christ loves to do (give to us) is pushed aside. “Why should we receive?” It’s almost as if we can measure out God’s grace just so, to strengthen ourselves just enough. This week I feel like I need God’s holy body and blood with the treasures of heaven He delivers, but maybe next week I won’t feel the need. Seeking to measure our need for God’s gifts of grace with our feelings is perilous.

Jesus did not measure according to our feelings or in a limited way when He said to forgive seventy times seven. Jesus did not measure partially or with reservation when, from the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them.” Since questions about the Sacrament are rightly asked with God as the doer of the verbs, the question “Why should we receive?” is best replaced with the question “Why should the living Christ do this for us?” Answer: Because from His fullness comes grace upon grace (John 1:16), the immeasurable riches of God’s grace (Eph. 2:7). Our Lord loves to give and His grace is beyond measuring. There is nothing partial or limited in His giving or forgiving. Our sin from one man’s trespass is present every Sunday — and beyond measuring. The abundance of grace the one man, Jesus Christ, comes to serve us at His Table is also beyond measuring. Our need cannot be measured with our feelings. Our need is constant. So is the blessing and beauty of His gracious giving in His promised gifts.

Omissions and commissions

Sometimes we begin to sense our astounding need. Sometimes our lack of hallowing God’s Name, of seeking His kingdom and His will, our lack of contentment, our lack of trust in God and gratitude toward God, our slowness in prayer, our lack of love for our neighbor, our lack of fulfilling our vocational duties, our slinking from suffering, our refusal to confess our fault — sometimes these things produce guilt in our conscience. Sometimes we begin to get it, and we hate our lack of obedience.

Sometimes the sin that fills us crushes what we lack. Coveting, pride, impatience, lust, sinful anger, an untamed tongue, an undisciplined body, a cold heart, a mind divided by worry, self-pity, self-promotion, blame-passing and wasted opportunities shroud our conscience in overwhelming ugliness. We begin to see it. Our conscience connects the dots, the sinful stains, and we hate what we have done. Other times, however, we mistakenly think our works meet the mark (James 2:10).

Sometimes we sense neither the depth of our omissions nor the mountainous height of our commissions. Sometimes, we are clueless, numb in our feeling, slow in our thinking, confused or cloudy in our conscience, just keeping on keeping on.

No matter the state of our conscience, we never sense all our sin, errors and faults before God’s holiness. As we learned from the catechism, “What sins should we confess? Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer.” Our confessions also quote Psalm 19:12 with frequency, “Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.” The Confessions state that “most sins we neither remember nor understand” (Ap XI 65).

Create in me a clean heart

Jesus, however, sees them all. “The Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7) and knows what comes out of it (Matt. 15:19). Therefore we approach the Lord’s Supper singing the Offertory, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” The living Christ, here and now, in the flesh, comes among us with His holy body and His holy blood because of our heart problem.

Our wicked hearts may tempt us to leave the Sacrament of the Altar with false hope. We may hope that we can return next time more meritorious to approach the Table of the Lord. We may hope that with enough time and effort we will be worthy of a seat at His Table.

We should surely seek to amend our sinful lives, before Christ serves us again in Holy Communion. But not to merit a better seat at His Table. We will never get right in this life what only God’s forgiveness in Christ makes right. Our efforts to live in repentance and turn from sin flow from faith that the Lord, through His sacrificed body and His shed blood, makes us fully right before God.

The hymn stanza helps us see. It confesses:
You see my sin yet seat me at Your table;
Lord, as a guest, I surely am the least:
Unclean, unfit, of worthy deeds unable —
My heart prepare for this most holy feast,
My heart prepare for this most holy feast.
(*LSB 635:3*)

Indeed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (*LSB*, p. 192–93).

Gospel healing

Being turned to God in true repentance begins as God’s holy Law is unleashed on the human heart. It continues as the heart receives healing through God’s holy Gospel.

But to this office of the Law, the New Testament immediately adds the consoling promise of grace through the Gospel. This must be believed. As Christ declares, “Repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). That is, become different, act differently, and believe My promise. ... The Gospel brings consolation and forgiveness. It does so not just in one way, but through the Word and the Sacraments. (*SA III III 4, 8*)

Our Lord of plentiful redemption wants to come among us with His food of forgiveness on our day of rest because He loves us. He who rested on the seventh day of creation invites us to His Table with the sweetest of invitations: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28; see LC V 66). His tender summons exhorts us for our highest good. Here, He gives rest from that futile effort of trying to mop up the sloppy stains of our sin. He even removes the sin we fail to recognize (Psalm 130:3–4). The blood the Lord gives you to drink received in faith cleanses you from all sin (1 John 1:7). The splendid truth is that the living Christ, here and now, in the flesh, does this.

The gifts are in the feast,
Gifts far more than we see;
Beneath the bread and wine
Is food from Calvary.
The body and the blood
Remove our ev’ry sin;
We leave His presence in
His peace, renewed again.
(*LSB 602:5*)

About The Author

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth W. Wieting is a retired pastor and author of *The Blessings of Weekly Communion and Lutheranism 101 - The Lord's Supper*, both available from Concordia Publishing House.

<https://witness.lcms.org/2020/do-you-always-need-it/>

Hardy to serve as Concordia University System president

REPORTER STAFF
MAY 29, 2024

On May 28, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Board of Directors announced that the Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy has accepted the call to serve as the next president of the Concordia University System (CUS). Most recently, Hardy has served as president of the LCMS English District and associate pastor of Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hartland, Mich. In addition, he has been a voting member of the CUS Board of Directors since November 2022.

Announcing Hardy's acceptance of the call, CUS Board Chairman Rev. Mark Braden said, "Dr. Hardy is uniquely qualified to help, support and lead our universities in continually strengthening the Lutheran identity on our campuses. As chairman, I look forward to working together with Dr. Hardy to do the good work with which our Synod in convention has charged us."

In his message of acceptance, Hardy called his time as district president "a great honor of my professional career" and asked for prayers for his family, the CUS and "especially for my beloved English District as they continue to move forward in serving the Lord and proclaiming His grace."

Hardy will begin his new role on July 15, with a formal installation to follow. More information will be provided when it is available.

<https://reporter.lcms.org/2024/hardy-to-serve-as-concordia-university-system-president/>



Bruss to serve as CTSFW president

REPORTER STAFF
MAY 21, 2024

On May 18, during a special prayer service at Kramer Chapel on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), CTSFW Board of Regents Chairman Rev. Dr. Scott Murray announced that the Rev. Dr. Jon S. Bruss, CTSFW associate professor of systematic theology, will serve as the seminary's 17th president. Murray said Bruss "comes with superb gifts and experience for this leadership challenge. ... The board pledges its full support to Dr. Bruss, and we ask for the prayers of the church that Concordia Theological Seminary would continue to be your Christ-centered seminary that teaches the faithful, reaches the lost and cares for all."

Bruss will succeed the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., who announced last fall that he would retire from the presidency at the end of the 2023–2024 academic year and return full time to his role as professor of historical theology at CTSFW. Bruss's installation will take place during the opening service of the academic year on Sunday, Sept. 8.

"I'm both humbled and deeply honored by the electors' action today," said Bruss. "After nearly six months of prayerful consideration as a nominee, and with the wise counsel of fellow Christians and brother pastors, I'm moved to accept this call and hereby do. ... I ask for your prayers for me, my family, and above all, our seminary, which has been and remains a singularly effective instrument for forming faithful servants of Christ and His church. Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word."





Bruss joined the CTSFW faculty in 2022 with extensive experience in higher education and pastoral ministry. He earned his Master of Divinity in 1995 from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (Evangelical Lutheran Synod) in Mankato, Minn. From 1991 through 2002, Bruss taught languages, ancient history and world literature at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, during which time he pursued master's and doctoral degrees in classics at the University of Minnesota.

After completing his Ph.D. in 2001, Bruss taught classics at his undergraduate alma mater, St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., then taught at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn., and the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He colloquized into the LCMS in 2006. In 2013, he took a pastoral call to St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Topeka, Kan., where he served as assistant pastor (2013–2015), then senior pastor (2015–2022) until joining the faculty at CTSFW.

Bruss's many scholarly contributions include co-editing Brill's *Companion to Hellenistic Epigram* (Brill, 2007) and translating various works of Martin Luther, including sermons and the *Annotationes in Matthaem*, for Luther's Works (Concordia Publishing House). From 2019 to 2022, Bruss served on the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors as well as the Synod's 2019 Resolution 7-03 Task Force, which was charged with proposing a new governance plan for the CUS.

Bruss and his wife, Kristine, CTSFW's chief communications officer, have one daughter, Ingrid.

"The Lord ascended and gave gifts to men, apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers. The Lord continues to give His gifts. Today that gift is Rev. Dr. Jon Bruss," said LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, who gave a short homily at the prayer service. "This seminary has a venerable past and a bright future. Thanks be to God."

The Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Egger, president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, CTSFW's sister seminary, offered Bruss his congratulations, saying, "The Lord has entrusted a beautiful work to our two seminaries in preparing servants of the Word for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and for confessional Lutheran churches around the world. Our church is blessed when our seminaries approach this sacred task with mutual encouragement and fraternal partnership. ... I hold Dr. Bruss in the highest esteem and ... look forward to the prospect of working closely with [him] for years to come."

Outgoing President Rast also expressed confidence in his successor. "Dr. Bruss has been a wonderful addition to our faculty, and I am delighted that he will follow me as president of CTSFW. I have every confidence in his ability to lead our seminary through the joys and challenges of the coming years."

<https://reporter.lcms.org/2024/bruss-to-serve-as-ctsfw-president/>



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