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THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

PRAYER POSTURE: With Open Hands

There are many postures for prayer: kneeling, standing, prostrate (lying stretched out on the ground with one's face downward as a sign of reverence or submission); sometimes with hands folded and other times with palms and fingers pressed flat together. In this newsletter article, I want to talk about the posture of praying with open hands before God. To pray with open hands means relaxing the tension which squeezes our hands together and accepting our existence with an increasing readiness, not as a possession to defend with hands closed, but as a gift to receive with open hands. Prayer is a way of life, for the Christian, which allows us to find stillness in the midst of the world where we open our hands to God's promises and find hope for our neighbor, our world and ourselves. In prayer, we encounter God not only in the small voice and the soft breeze, but also in the midst of the turmoil of the world, in the distress and joy of our neighbor and in the loneliness of our own hearts.

Prayer leads us to see new paths and to hear new songs in the air. Prayer is the breath of our lives which gives us freedom to go and to stay where we wish and to find the many signs which point out the way of the Lord.

Praying is not simply some necessary compartment in the daily schedule of a Christian or a source of support in time of need, nor is it restricted to Sunday mornings or mealtimes. Prayer extends itself into living. It is eating and drinking, action and rest, teaching, and learning, playing and working. In other words, praying pervades every aspect of our lives. It is the unceasing recognition that God is wherever we are, always inviting us to come closer and to celebrate the divine gift of being alive.

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PRAYER POSTURE (Cont.)

In the end, a life of prayer is a life with open hands where we are not ashamed of our weakness but realize that it is more perfect for us to be led by God than to try to hold everything in our hands as if we possess them. Such prayer reminds us that praying is living and it invites us to make this an ever-greater reality. Thus, there are as many ways to pray as there are moments in life. Sometimes we seek out a quiet spot and want to be alone, sometimes we look for a friend and want to be together. Sometimes we like to use a prayer book and sometimes we prefer prayerful music. Sometimes we want to sing out with hundreds, sometimes only whisper with a few. Sometimes we want to say it with words, sometimes with a deep silence.

In all these moments, we gradually make our lives more of a prayer and we open our hands to be led by God even to places we would rather not go.

Whatever our preferred prayer posture, may we trust that God will put His hand in ours and bring us home.

Praying with you,

Pastor Dana Allen Brones

OT Law – What Do We Do with It?!?

Well, folks. It's that time of year again. Confirmation classes are in full swing. Which means by the time you're reading this I'm probably knee-deep in the Ten Commandments. It's a joy each year to explore them with a new batch of young men and women. Please pray for them and for the process.

Those Ten Commands (and the many, many others in the Old Testament) always make me think of this question that I've heard in one form or another, well… many, many times. Several years ago, in fact, a Bethlehem member put it precisely like this: "I once attended a church in which the pastor, speaking of the laws found in the Old Testament, pretty much said, 'Don't let it worry you, you're never going to be able to live up to those ideals anyway.' I came away shocked. It is very odd to hear any pastor pretty much saying the Old Testament is a good historical read, but we graduated from having to follow 'the law'. So my question is, how does the Old Testament (Law) apply to our lives today?"

That is an excellent question and one that has been a source of considerable consternation for Christians at various points in time. To address it fully would require a few conversations – more than we have room for here. But we must try nonetheless! One of my go-to places to start thinking through this question is Martin Luther's classic, short work, How Christians Should Regard Moses. I'll base my response partly on that work, but first, it's always helpful to define our terms.

When we use the word "law" we are using an exceptionally broad word. Christians speak of two different kinds of "law:" Natural Law and Revealed Law. "Natural Law" is simply God's design and intent for His creation. We call it "natural" because it's just sort of "baked into" creation, or nature, itself. Whether we recognize and respond to it fully or not, it's there. "It's bad to murder people." "It's bad to steal." "Men and women are different." The truth of these "law" statements is clear – even apart from divine revelation. "Revealed Law," however, is the knowledge that comes directly from God to humanity – it's knowledge or instruction that humanity could not have unless God Himself chose to reveal it to us. But here's where our question comes in. Not all "revealed law" applies to everyone in the same way.

In his helpful and characteristically colorful work, How Christians Should Regard Moses, Luther points this out. Many of the laws in the Old Testament (even though they are "revealed law" and fully God's Word!) are not words of law spoken directly to us. They were given to the ancient Israelites – a largely ethnic-based theocracy formed for the purpose of bringing forth the Messiah. And you, 21st century Florida resident, are not part of a largely ethnic-based theocracy formed for the purpose of bring forth the Messiah. In other words, when reading the Bible, it's vital to ask, not just, "Has God spoken this?" but also, "Has God spoken this to me?" In this sense, Luther will be so bold as to claim, even the Ten Commandments cease to apply directly to us!

OT Law – What Do We Do with It?!?

But, of course, the last thing we want to do is sweep the Ten Commandments, (or any portion of God's word!) under the rug. In fact, we keep the 10 Commandments as an essential part of our Catechism! But we keep them, not because Moses gave them to the ancient Israelites, (although he did,) but because they are a wonderful summary of God's Law – both what is written on our hearts and in nature, as well as what God has revealed to be His will for all Christians in the New Testament.

There is so much to be gleaned from the Old Testament. Yes, there are many laws in those pages. But there is also much wisdom and insight. There are astounding prophecies concerning Christ. And wonderful examples of godly faithfulness (and unfaithfulness, too!) So don't toss out the O.T. We cannot dispense with what is revealed in the Old Testament, but we must deal with it carefully.

~ "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets [including the prophet Moses!], but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." Hebrews 1:1-2

Pastor Nate McCarty

We are His sheep, and the Lambs of His Pasture

With all the changes that have taken place for each of us, we are not without a shepherd. We have the shepherd who leads, consoles, and pursues us when we go off path. We have the Shepherd who knows our every ailment, physical and spiritual. He knows our upbringing, He knows our situations. He knows our pleas and our short prayers. He hears our "ba's" both of stubbornness and of calling out for help. He wonderfully and faithfully attends to us, talks to us, reminds us of His presence, and when we are most resistant to His grace and when we need it, He puts us on His shoulders, and shows us that everything He does is for you.

On the cross, Jesus had your stubbornness upon His shoulders as He was paying the death sentence for your sins. That's a heavy burden to bear, but His death sentence brought Him victory over the grave. It brought Him life again, it brought Him back from the dead physically, fully alive, "born again", so to speak. Our Savior triumphed Hell, the grave, and over your sins.

David in the Old Testament was a shepherd boy attending to his families' flock of sheep, and David fought off bears and lions using just his bare hands (1 Samuel 17:34-36). How much more will the King of the universe, then, protect, fight off and deliver you from the schemes of the demons? Yes, there may be thorns and ticks that annoy us, but the Lord protects us the Devil's attacks.

That's why Paul an under-shepherd of Christ wrote, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor power, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38) Shall even death cause us to fear? No. Our Lord has such a careful eye of love upon us that even through death, you will be held His loving arms. Death is only the door into your eternal home. Your shepherd sees you, your shepherd knows you, and your shepherd will carry you home.

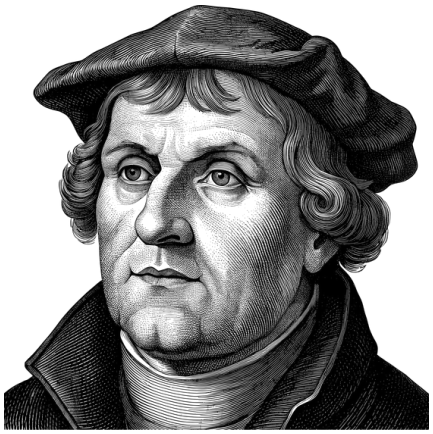
But the Savior also carefully strengthens anyone who is grieving a loved one. He gives you His strength which defies human capacity. Unbounded persistence, endurance, abiding hope, peace, comfort and consolation are what He gives to you, even though things are so overwhelming. Please know that our whole congregation is praying for you. Our whole congregation is praying that God would equip you with His boundless love and goodness. And, the Shepherd Himself is nurturing you with His voice. "I am right here with you. I see, I know, I understand. I see the hurt you are going through. I give you the strength that only I can supply. Here. And soon, you will see me face to face in heaven too."

God's peace,

Vicar Micah Cumming

Did you know...?

The Luther Rose



- Since 1520 a single rose had been known as Martin Luther's emblem.
- In 1530 a seal was designed at the behest of John Frederick of Saxony
- Luther wrote his interpretation of what he wanted his seal to look like and sent it to Lazarus Spengler who then sent Luther a drawing of this seal.
- Luther saw it as an expression of his theology and faith, and then used it to authorize his correspondence.

Grace Alone (Sola Gartia)

Lutherans confess that we are saved by God's grace alone. There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor. Salvation is a free gift won for us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Faith Alone (Sola Fide)

We receive God's gift of salvation through faith alone. Faith is not something we achieve on our own, but a gift worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through God's Word and Sacraments.

Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura)

Scripture alone is the final authority for Christian faith and life. Lutherans believe that God's Wrod reveals everything we need to know about salvation and points us to Christ, our Savior.

Meaning of the colors:

The black cross: Reminds us we are saved from sin because Jesus died on the cross.

The red heart: Reminds us we live because Jesus shed His blood for us. Our faith in Him has saved us.

The white rose: Reminds us that our faith gives us joy, comfort, and peace. White is to remind us this is peace like the angels enjoy.

The blue background: Reminds us of the sky and the hope that we will one day meet Jesus in heaven.

The gold circle: Reminds us of heaven's endless joy. A circle is an endless shape.

Luther's Works - American Edition - Volume 49, pp. 356-359

Women's Retreat Highlights:

We had a wonderful weekend of learning, fellowship, and fun! Our study of Amos challenged us to reflect on how our own comfort can sometimes blind us to the struggles of others and even contribute to injustice. We also enjoyed a tie-dye project using recycled fair trade cotton bags and natural dyes, an energizing water aerobics class led by Emma Bolyard, worship via livestream, and communion with Pastor Bicknase and Al Clawson, who made the trip down to serve us.

BLC VOLUNTEERS

ELDERS

October 4th
8:00 Paul B. EIC
Jon W.

9:30 Joe G. EIC
John H.

11:00 Dan R. EIC
Alex L.

October 11th
8:00 Paul B. EIC
Gordon G.

9:30 Joe G. EIC

11:00 Dan H. EIC
Rob Harwood

October 18th
8:00 Gordon G. EIC
Jon W.

9:30 Joe G. EIC
John H.

11:00 Bruce D. EIC
Brandon A.

October 25th
8:00 Jamie H. EIC
Gordon

9:30 John H. EIC

11:00 Al W. EIC
Al C.

ALTAR GUILD

Sat 10/3: Tami

10/4:
8 AM - Valarie
9:30 AM - Nina
11 AM - Erica & Joy

Sat 10/10: Carol

10/11
8 AM - Nancy
9:30 AM - Barbara
11 AM - Carol & Judy

Sat 10/17: Dee R.

10/18:
8 AM - Susan
9:30 AM - Tami
11 AM - Beth

Sat 10/24: Anna

10/25:
8 AM - Valarie
9:30 AM - Brenda
11 AM - Diana

SCREENS

10/04
8 AM - Patrick
9:30 AM - Brenda
11 AM - Gina

10/11
8 AM- Val
9:30 AM - Kristine
11 AM - Toni

10/18
8 AM - Susan
9:30 AM Chris
11 AM - Lloyda

10/25
8 AM - Carol
9:30 AM - Tami
11 AM - Roy

COUNTING

10/04
Bob/Terry

10/11
Allan/Barbara

10/18
Diane/Barbie

10/25
Holly/Paul

STREAMING

10/04
11 AM - Jeanie

10/11
11 AM - Bob

10/18
11 AM - Roy

10/25
11 AM - Jerry

OCTOBER

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

Brady Gordish	10/03
Elyse Matthews	10/04
Linda Reed	10/04
Erika Williams	10/05
Luke Smith	10/05
Rob Harwood	10/05
Lloyda Heilig	10/06
Michael Gregor	10/06
Nola Tostovarsnik	10/06
Alex Stubbs	10/07
Bernie Brewer	10/07
Roxana Martinez	10/07
Timothy Taylor	10/07
Caitlin Brauer	10/08
Nancy Seal	10/09
Christine Roland	10/11
Katie Satterfield	10/12
Robert Murray	10/12
Anthony Mazzeo III	10/14
Korna Boyajian	10/16
Maria Case	10/16
Robert Kickofel	10/16
Laura Gundian	10/17
Frank Swain	10/18
Kim Morris	10/18
Wynchester Heilig	10/18
James Shimp	10/19
Amelia Vincelet	10/20
Robin Leaptrott	10/20
Romaine Moore	10/20
Jeanie Hill	10/21
Brandon Avery	10/22
Dorothy Mercer	10/23
Kristen Penoyer	10/24
Shea Skorusa	10/24
Wayne Lorenz	10/26
Jasper Richards	10/28
Leila Kverne-Nelson	10/28
David Huber	10/29
Billy Maxwell	10/30
Kayla Gruhn	10/30
Matthew Gray	10/31
Pam Kessler	10/31

Anniversaries

Linda & Bob Van Ness	10/02
Ann & Nicholas Westfall	10/04
Amy & Greg Case	10/07
Jackie & Bob Fuller	10/13
Nina & Brady Gordish	10/15
Valarie & Gordon Gruhn	10/17
Lynn& Mark McGiverson	10/19
Jan & Loren Sifferath	10/20
Becky & Keith Bicknase	10/21
Leslie & Evan Ogrodwicz	10/23
Lisa & Stephen Smith	10/23
Cindy & David Huber	10/24

October 2026

Bible Studies Every Week:

Mon: ECHO BIble Study 7 PM
Weds: Elder Led Bible Study 7 PM
Thurs: Vicar's Bible Study 9:30 AM

				1 No Vicar Bible study this week	2 	3 Fall Clean Up 9-Noon
4 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School LWML Muffins for Mites	5 Senior Cards 9:30 AM Dellinger Bible study 6:30 PM	6 	7 9:30 AM Women's Bible Study (Cottage) Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	8 Chior Practice 6:15 PM Young Adults 6:30 PM	9 	10 Girl Scouts 10:30 AM
11 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	12 Columbus Day	13 Elder's Meeting 7:00 PM	14 Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	15 6 PM Preschool Board Meeting 6 PM Men's Bible Study (Disciples Hall) Chior Practice 6:15 PM	16 Mission House Team C 4-7 PM Young Adult Event Make Your Own Pizza 6:00 PM	17 Stained Glass Class 4 PM (Fellowship Hall)
18 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	19 	20 	21 Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	22 Chior Practice 6:15 PM	23	24
25 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	26 	27 6:30 PM Executive Council Meeting	28 Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	29 Chior Practice 6:15 PM	30 Trunk or Treat 6 -8 PM	31 Girl Scouts 10:30 AM

Anything you would like to add to the calendar at BLC, please email the church office at officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org