

The Witness

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. *Acts 1:8*

Ascension Lutheran Church

LCMS

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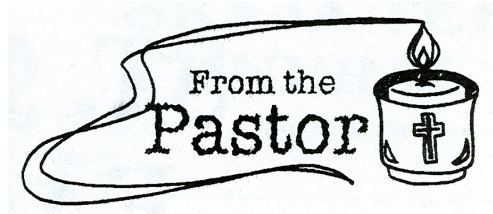
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March 2020

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Volume 6 No. 3

This year, Pastor Gunia will be writing on piety and spirituality. The intention is to help you live your life with increasing joy, closeness to God, and love for others. Don't take these as the Law, but rather think of them as suggestions from someone whose been working on his personal piety for quite some time now and who would love to see your faith grow stronger.

How to go to confession.

First, before you go any further, change your thinking on the subject. It's not a "Roman Catholic practice," it's a gift to the entire Christian Church on Earth. It is our common heritage, just like prayer, worship, Baptism, and heaven are our common heritage.

It's not a Law—something you have to do or God will be angry with you; it's the Gospel—a gift God gives you in his love.

It's not presumptuous. It's not me granting forgiveness by my own authority (as if I got some super powers when I was ordained), but rather it's Jesus speaking through my mouth to grant you everything he won for you on the cross.

It's not optional. The Small Catechism begins the Chief Part "Confession and Absolution" with the words, "How Christians should be taught to confess." It never entered Martin Luther's mind that faithful Christians would avoid confession as if it's optional. If Confession is optional—a gift of Jesus you don't have to take if you don't want to—then I suppose Holy Communion, Baptism, the Word of God, worship, prayer, and forgiveness are just as optional.

It's not redundant. Yes, you can pray directly to God asking for forgiveness. "...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But does God ever answer you back with the assurance that you are forgiven? You get that assurance, comfort, and encouragement as God grants you these things through a pastor's mouth.

It's not me being nosy. I can assure you, I would go through life perfectly fine and happy without knowing about the sins you've committed and the things you struggle with. I get no kicks learning about Hollywood scandals or what became of my old friends from high school. I will get no cheap thrills learning about your sin.

It's not bad for you. It is my duty to listen to your troubles so that I might apply God's grace to you exactly where it hurts. And, remember, I have sworn by a sacred oath never to reveal the sins confessed to me. I tell my Confirmation classes that I would go to jail rather than reveal these sins (and I would). If I were to talk about sins confessed to me, I would be defrocked (and I should be). God has not instituted Confession and Absolution to hurt us, but rather to help us today and to assure us of eternity.

Rather than me give you tips, let me walk you through how Confession might go.

1. Contact me or the church office to arrange a time. Block off a half-hour. It will probably take less time than that.
2. Review the Ten Commandments from the Small Catechism. Think about the sins you've committed and the ways you've fallen short. It's uncomfortable. Think about it anyway and feel the emotions associated with it.
3. Meet me when and where we've agreed to meet. Your palms will be sweaty and you'll be nervous, especially the first few times, but don't let your sinful flesh keep you away from God's grace.
4. Pray.
5. When you see me, let's do a quick, friendly greeting, and then get down to business. Think of it as a doctor's appointment. You're both there for a purpose—so that you might be healed. Your doctor greets you, examines you, and applies the medicine. Let's do the same. Quick greeting, diagnosis, and I will apply the Gospel for your healing. (But I won't take your insurance card and send you a bill).

6. We will use the rite on page 292-293 of the Lutheran Service Book (our hymnal). It's reads like a script where you say your part and I say my part. This serves to get make a stressful time more objective, it gives you the words to say so that you don't have to search and struggle for you own words, and it gives you the opportunity (at an appropriate place) to say out loud things that are eating at you.
7. Immediately upon your confession, I will pronounce forgiveness. I will not condemn you. I will not gasp in shock. I will not look at you sideways. I will not investigate or cross-examine you. The only reasons I've ever gone off script is either because I don't understand and need clarification, because I'm not sure that the thing confessed is actually a sin, or because you've begun talking about something else and I need to get us back on track.
8. After I pronounce forgiveness, I may take the opportunity to give you some brief comfort. I may speak some Scripture verses that come to mind. I may pray with you. I may offer you my own words of encouragement or assurance. I try to let this time be very brief or non-existent; you don't need to hear from me, but rather from God.
9. Leave in joy, knowing that the forgiveness you just heard came directly from God.
10. Say a prayer of thanksgiving and go about your day.

I place this article at the beginning of Lent because I will remain in the sanctuary on Wednesdays until 8:15 PM to hear confession. You are invited and encouraged to take the opportunity to receive the healing balm of absolution.

Pastor Gunia

News and Views from Ascension

What a glorious funeral on January 28 for Kathy Gunia's dad. There was no doubt that Michael Hagen knew his Savior and was received into His arms after a hard fought fight. How moving it was to see our church full of his family, friends and our church people. The organist knew how to pull out all the stops. And a trumpet soloist did as well. The wonderful and comforting hymns from "Lord, Thee I Love With All My Heart" to "For All the Saints" made this life-long Christian burn inwardly in love to the Lord. The familiar Scripture readings and the heartfelt message of the Rev. Paul Strand, the Hagen's beloved pastor, made the service special for all. My eyes were on the cross, my thoughts on seeing Jesus face to face—maybe soon—and my heart soared with the music. Beautiful floral arrangements added a touch of cheer to the service. These are not easy days for Kathy, and her family, but the Lord is surely with them. We remember them in our prayers.

The mail brought the February issue of the Lutheran Witness to my door. I find I have to peruse this publication the moment it hits my house! This month "On Listening to Sermons" caught my eye right away. Three easily read and useful pages focused on the Sunday sermon. The author encourages us to start before Sunday. Use daily devotional time (we all have that, don't we?) to concentrate on the theme for the coming Sunday. Our bulletin now has the Family Altar insert which leads us to and through the worship on Sunday. The author suggests we look for the theme reflected in the hymns, the Collect (prayer) and the readings. Then on Sunday, there are no surprises. Sometimes it helps to grab the pew Bible to read along with the pastor as he reads the lessons. (I know, it's printed in the bulletin, but I like holding God's Word in my hands.) Our hymnal has prayers to say before church, communion and before the sermon. Can't find one? A few words from your heart to the Lord will do. Some listeners make notes during the sermon and maybe even mark the passages from the readings that strike them. Making notes keeps one alert and you can also jot down questions that come to mind as you listen. I'm sure Pr. Gunia would be thrilled if people asked him questions about his sermon and/or the readings. No time to ask on Sunday? I imagine he would be ready and pleased to answer at any time. Finally, the Witness says "Repent and return" as the final step in faithful Sunday worship. What do you think that means for you?

There is a brief article about "saints singing their faith." One of the most useful and exciting things about being a Lutheran Christian is the wealth of hymns we have at our disposal. Those of us raised and educated in a Christian home and day school have many hymns in our heads. The amount of theology (a big word) in our hymns is such a blessing to us. Yes, "Jesus Loves Me" is a simple song that just about everyone who has ever been to Sunday School or VBS or even a camp, has heard and learned. It's packed with theology! Do you know what it is? Sometimes an older person in nursing home or assisted living facility recalls that song from long ago. Their eyes light up in joy. I can imagine our Lord's eyes also lighting up when He hears those words spoken or sung by one of His children, old or young.

By the time you read this, the season of Lent will be just before us. Ash Wednesday kicks off the season with a moving confessional service and imposition of ashes. Will you be there?

Rosalie Streng



**Lutheran Women's
Missionary League**
Lutheran Women
In Mission

Lenten Inspiration

Attention Ladies! You are all invited to attend the annual Lenten Inspiration held by the LWML NID Saturday, March 7, 2020. This event takes place at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 1910 Black Road, Joliet. Registration and Fellowship begin at 8:15 am with Opening Worship at 9:15 am. The Featured Speaker is Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, President Northern Illinois District LCMS. The Mission Speaker is Bill Indelli, Executive Director Walcamp. Registration Fee of \$15.00 includes lunch. You can still register online by February 29 at WWW.LWMLNID.org (Go to "Register for an Event").

There will be an Ingathering for Walcamp consisting of quart and gallon size Ziploc (or similar brands) freezer bags, dinner size paper plates, and/or Menards' gift cards. A box marked "Gifts from the Heart" is in the narthex for these items. If you are not attending the event but want to help with the Ingathering, have the items in the box by March 1st.

Where Mites Go
God's Grace for This Generation:
LAMP Ministry, Inc.

Grant: \$100,000

LAMP Ministry, Inc. has been serving the nearly one million indigenous people that live in remote and unreachable villages in northern Canada. Approximately one half of this population is under the age of 14, and 15 percent of this population will take their own lives, out of despair and hopelessness.

Through this mission grant, LAMP will fulfill their mission of sharing the Gospel by expanding their staff of full time missionary pilots. They will recruit and train 100 to 200 additional volunteer missionaries committed to serve at least five years and help LAMP reach their goals.

Love Packages Testimony from Zimbabwe

Ruth the evangelist and myself went out to a place where the youth hang out. Amongst them were youth leaders, pastors, and lost souls. There were 250 of them - we ministered on the prodigal son and they all gave their lives to the Lord or rededicated their lives to Him. The amazing thing is that there were two pastors who were backslidden - they gave their lives back to the Lord. The message was appropriate the Lord knew he had two lost sons there. They were so happy, we gave them books. They took quite a bit to go back to their church to bless the general overseer and to share the good news.

There were Sunday school teachers who were in awe with the books too. School children were like "Now we can enjoy our religious studies." Very fruitful outreach winning souls. We thank you for making it easier to evangelize with these materials.

Arletta A. Stuebe, President

Money principle #12:

Give Wealth Its Proper Place

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.— Ecclesiastes 5:10

Most of the problems the Bible attributes to money have to do with this point. Money is an incredible tool which allows you to do some pretty amazing things. The minute you fall in love with the tool, it has the potential to uproot your entire life.

The things you love consume you. Because, as Jesus puts it, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:21) When you love riches for their own sake, you'll never have enough.

* * *

Time & Talent

Deacons

March 1	Jonathan Schultz
March 8	Tom Friedewald
March 15	Jim Jenne
March 22	John Stuebe
March 29	Jonathan Schultz

Ushers

March 1	Ron Albrecht Nick Giannopoulos Bonnie Schultz John Stuebe
March 3	Jim Jenne John Stuebe
March 8	Tom Friedewald Steve Galka Sarah Lindahl John Stuebe
March 10	Jim Jenne John Stuebe
March 15	Lance Ahlgrim Tom Ahlgrim Bonnie Schultz John Stuebe
March 17	Jim Jenne John Stuebe
March 22	Ron Albrecht Nick Giannopoulos Jim Jenne Jonathan Schultz
March 24	Jim Jenne John Stuebe
March 29	Lance Ahlgrim Tom Ahlgrim Tom Friedewald John Stuebe
March 31	Jim Jenne John Stuebe

Altar Guild

March	Linda Bauschke Lilian Konozi
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Greeters

March 1	Judy Darville Rosalie Streng
March 8	Pam Hrajnoha Lois Marten
March 15	Judy Darville Gail Bujnowski
March 22	Lois Martin Rosalie Streng
March 29	Judy Darville Pam Hrajnoha

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Ash Wednesday/HC
February 26 @ 7:00 p.m.

Mid-Week Worship/HC
Tuesday, March 3, 10, 17, 24, & 31
10:30 a.m.



Palm Sunday/HC
April 5 @ 9:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday/HC
April 9 @ 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday
April 10 @ 7:00 p.m.

Easter Vigil
April 11 @ 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday/HC
April 12 @ 9:30 a.m.



We congratulate the following members of Ascension as they celebrate their **birthdays** in March.

March 7	Pam Hrajnoha
March 8	Judy Darville
March 14	Nancy Joseph
March 20	Michael Fleck
March 21	Linda Bauschke
March 22	Kathy Gunia
March 27	Kayla Gregorio Sarah Lindahl
March 28	Janice Fleck
March 29	Pat Zyskowski



And we congratulate the following couples as they celebrate their **wedding anniversaries** in March.

March 8 Charles & Hedy Schwenn

These are the **birthdays** and **wedding anniversaries** recorded in our church records for the coming month. If any birthday or anniversary was omitted, please notify the church office.

How to be Loyal to Your Church

Our church has no greater need today than loyal members—loyalty that will express itself in;

1. Consistent living that honors Christ and His teachings.
2. Regular attendance at worship services.
3. Kind remarks of praise and appreciation about your church and its workers.
4. Faithfulness to any task to which you are assigned.
5. Glad and generous stewardship "as God has prospered."
6. Willingness to support the programs adopted by your church.
7. Faithfulness and support to the elected officers who are responsible for these programs.
8. A tolerance and respect toward all members, especially those with whom you disagree.
9. A Christlike humility in serving gladly without seeking position or prestige for the sake of self.
10. Constant prayer in support of your church, its ministries, and all members.



LENT

ASCENSION 2020 BOARD MEMBERS

President:	Tom Friedewald
Vice President:	Jim Jenne
Treasurer:	Coby Mueller
Secretary:	Audrey Schultz
Financial Secretary:	Sandy Friedewald
Board of Deacons:	Jim Jenne (Chair) Hal Downs Tom Friedewald Jim Jenne Jonathan Schultz John Stuebe
Board of Mercy, Missions, Spiritual Growth	Lois Marten (Chair)
Board of Trustees:	Jason Romano (Chair)
Board of Youth:	Sarah Lindahl (Chair)

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OFFICIAL ACTS

Funerals

Michael L. Hagen
January 28, 2020

Liu Sim Chin Moy
February 10, 2020

Do you have an announcement to share about your family such as a birth, death, engagement, graduation, etc., **let us know! We'd love to hear from you!**

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