

Salem Lutheran Church

From the Pastor...

Lent: A Season for Repentance

We are taught from childhood to remember that Lent is one of the Penitential seasons of the Church Year; that is to say, it is a season for repentance. However, too often we look at repentance as something the "other guy" needs to do, or as something perfunctory in the life and daily of the Christian. There is the danger of an attitude of being 'generally sinful' which creeps into some hearts in connection with the general confession.

But God does not share in such a light attitude regarding sin. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23)—not only physical death, but eternal condemnation.

Martin Luther observed in the very first of the *Ninety-Five Theses*: "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said, 'Repent', He called for the entire life of believers to be one of penitence." The repentant sinner desires to do better; he wants to amend his sinful life. For the repentant, the sin which still adheres in the old nature is a source of sorrow.

Christ sets at peace the hearts of believers because He sends His Gospel to comfort us. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) We receive the gift when we believe the Gospel—the good news which comes to us through the Word which is preached to us and the absolution which is proclaimed to us.

Luther summed it up so well: "The law says: 'Do this!,' and it never is done. Grace says: 'Believe in this one!,' and forthwith everything is done."

*Yours in Christ,
Pastor Heiser*

God's Gift to You in Confession and Absolution

"Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. Thus we also comprise absolution, when we speak of faith, because 'faith cometh by hearing.' (Rom. 10:17) For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution is heard, the conscience is encouraged, and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God, according to Luke 10:16: 'He that heareth you heareth Me.' Wherefore the voice of the one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven."

*-Apology Art.
XII:39-40*



FROM THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS...

From this condition of the churches, it can be judged that we diligently maintain Church discipline and godly ceremonies and good Church customs. And of the mortifications of the flesh, and discipline of the body, we thus teach, just as the Confession states, that a true and not a feigned mortification occurs through the cross, and afflictions by which God exercises us. In these we must obey God's will, as Paul says (Rom. 12:1):



"Present your bodies a living sacrifice." And these are the spiritual exercises of fear and faith. But in addition to this mortification which occurs through the cross there is also a voluntary kind of exercise necessary, of which Christ says (Luke 21:34): "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting." And Paul (1 Cor. 9:27): "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," etc. (Apology Art. XV:44-46)

LENTEN SERIES TO FOCUS ON THE PASSION HISTORY

Through out the midweek services this Lent, our focus will be on the some of the events of Passion, beginning with the Mount of Olives through Christ's trial in the house of Caiaphas.

Beginning Ash Wednesday, we will have services each Wednesday beginning at 7:30 p.m. Apart from Ash Wednesday (which will be a communion service), the midweek services will be Vespers.

Services in February:

February 9-Ash Wednesday: Christ announces to His disciples that they will forsake Him.

February 16-Christ's prayer in the garden.

February 23-Christ is betrayed by Judas.



NEWS FROM THE SALEM LUTHERAN WOMEN'S GUILD



Women of the Church The Women's Guild will have its first

meeting of this year on Sunday, February 6th. This month we will follow the scheduled we've used in the past with our meeting following a potluck. During our meeting, we will discuss the direction we would like to take this year, including projects, new and old,

that we want to involve ourselves in and make plans for future meetings. I hope to see all our members there and we welcome any lady of the congregation who is interested in the group.

In Christ,
Donna



Thanks for the prayers, cards and condolences at the loss of my mother, Daily Weiser.

Tina Schnell

EVANGELISM MEETING AFTER SERVICE, FEBRUARY 20TH

Those who are interested in helping with Salem's outreach into our community are encouraged to attend an evangelism meeting following the divine service on February 20th. We will meet in the fellowship hall. Several members of expressed some wonderful ideas for outreach into our community. Let's put those good ideas into practice!

Items Needed at Church:

- Paper towels
- 8.5" x 14" paper (many thanks to those who've brought 8 x 11... the church is well-set for a while!)
- Large trash bags



The building where St. Boniface meets.

**Sermon for the Installation
of Rev. John Rutowicz
as Pastor of
St. Boniface Lutheran
Church, Niles Michigan**

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:14-17)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, redeemed by the blood of God Incarnate, this is a day for solemnity and for joy. We rejoice this day both for you, and for Rev. Rutowicz, a beloved brother in the preaching office, whom the Holy Trinity has called to this place to serve in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. It behooves us to consider the teachings of Holy Scrip-

ture concerning the ministry which your pastor conducts in your midst, in order that all of us would be admonished concerning that which we receive from the Lord of the Church through His called servants.

St. James counsels in his Epistle: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment;" (3:1)

And St. Paul admonished St. Timothy: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12) Again, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership;" (v. 14) And finally, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (v. 16)

The holy office is fraught with perils: a stricter judgment, and the responsibility by word and deed to be an example to the flock, lest you imperil them through immoral life or false doctrine.

In Luke 14, we read a parable of our Lord admonishing us to consider the cost of discipleship: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" (Luke 14: 28-30)

How, then, is the house of the Lord built up? Our Lord taught in His Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore whoever hears

these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who build his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall!" (Mat. 7:24-27)

It is the way of the world to build a tower of Babel, imagining they can reach God through their own labors. And great is their fall.

It is incumbent on the servant of the Lord to faithfully teach the sayings of Christ to the baptized so that they will be built up upon the rock of salvation. The souls which are so established pray as David did in the eighteenth Psalm: "The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God who avenges me, and subdues the people under me; He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man;" (v. 46-48) Built upon the Rock of our salvation, we are delivered from destruction at the hands of the enemy. The Word is the means which the Lord uses to create and sustain faith.

"And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" Pastor Rutowicz, this is the labor to which the Lord has called you:

that you would preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. It is as we confess in the *Augustana*: "That we may obtain this faith, the Office of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel..." (AC V.1-2)



I know that the importance of these means of grace is not lost upon you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. You know the cost which can come from making a faithful confession. Perhaps you would say with St. Peter those words which he spoke to the Lord in Mark 10: "See, we have left all and followed You." (v. 28) It is a hard thing to separate from one's parish, even if it has become heterodox. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you have made a good confession against the error which reigns in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. For some of you, this confession has come at a cost—even alienation from friends or family. You have willingly left those ties behind, you have left behind buildings and

numbers. "See, we have left all and followed You." "So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and land, with persecutions—and in the the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" (v. 29-31)

It is easy to become obsessed or even proud of what one has given up. It is easy to pine for the material things left behind, like the people of Israel pined for the flesh pots of Egypt when they were in the wilderness. I've heard so many invoke material things as the reason for remaining in a heterodox church, saying, "But how could we do without the building, the seminary, pension plans," and on and on. And there is a temptation for the faithful to measure their 'progress' by the acquisition of such things. 'They have numbers? So do we! They have a seminary? So do we! They've got buildings and grounds? So do we! They have mission boards, and glossy publications, and little light up 'Ablaze' pens!' And the temptation is to 'prove' one's progress by having all these things. Or, conversely, to become proud of how much we've given up. Brothers and sisters in Christ, it should not be so.

"Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble." This is a time for repentance. Amidst the affluence of Western civilization, there is been temptation to turn away from that which

is needful, to center on that which is not central to the work of the Church. It is easy for us to condemn the crass materialism which so often seems evident in the 'Church Growth' movement, let alone the televangelist crowd. But the temptation resides in the sinful heart of man, and it preys upon us as well.

What is needful? The gifts of God. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." The Church will always have what she needs because the Lord of the Church provides for her. "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Mat. 6:31-34) The One who changed water into wine is still the Lord of the Church and still provides for our needs of body and soul.

When we examine our lives as Christians, we will always find grounds for repentance because our words and works fall short of the perfect will of the heavenly Father. There is only One who perfectly fulfilled the

divine will, Christ Jesus our Lord. Bearing the weight of our sins within His own body, He was the one sacrifice for sins upon the cross, the salvation of all who believe in Him. There is only one perfect Shepherd over the Lord's flock; the servants of the Lord, whom He calls to serve in the holy ministry, are your fellow redeemed, still struggling against sin within their own members. Their call is not on account of their greater sanctification, but because of the call of Christ.

This servant of Christ has been called to serve the Lord of the Church and thus to bring to you the grace of God through the Word and Sacraments. By the mercy of God, he will proclaim to you the Word of God in its truth and purity and will administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. Through these means the Lord of the Church gives you the forgiveness of sins won through His suffering and death for you upon the cross.

You and I are not worthy to receive such great gifts from the Holy Trinity; the Christ died for us because we were unworthy. It is as St. Paul wrote to the Romans: *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."* (Rom. 5:8-9) The One who provided for the wedding on the third day, rose again on the third day and feeds His Bride, the Church, with His own

body and blood.



This is why Christ Jesus has placed Pastor Rutowicz here as your pastor: he is here to preach Christ, and Him crucified. Through his preaching and teaching, the word of God's Law will confront you with your sins, calling you to repentance. Through his preaching and teaching, the word of Christ's Gospel will be proclaimed to you, that through that Word the Holy Spirit of God creates and sustains faith. *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Rom. 10:14-17) This is why the Lord has sent this pastor to you: so that you may believe, and believing, be partakers of the grace of God in Christ. He is the servant of Christ: it is Christ who absolves and who baptizes through His called servant. It is Christ who gives you His body and blood joined to bread and wine in the blessed Sacrament so

that you will have life and hope through the One who died and rose again to accomplish our salvation. By the mercy of God you have all that you need for your salvation, and all of it through the grace of God in Christ. Amen.



The chalice and paten of St. Boniface Lutheran Church.



Getting set up for service.

NEWS FROM 'UP NORTH'...

**another successful conference**

Cliff Krumvieda and I attended the fourth annual conference hosted by Bethany Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. This year's attendance was the highest yet! I believe that the pastors or assistant pastors 14 LC-MS and 4 independent congregations were present for at least part of the day.

Four papers were presented to the conference, including mine, which is entitled, "Pastoral Responsibility and the Office of the Keys in the Book of Concord."

The clear mood of those attending the conference was that a split was occurring in the LC-MS and most of those attending were prepared to leave sooner (usually in connection with the next synodical convention) rather than later.

Rutowicz installation

It was a joy to be able to install Rev. Rutowicz as Pastor of St. Boniface Lutheran in Niles, MI. The members were very warm and welcoming (like folks here at Salem!). It was truly a joy to be with them.

Fort Wayne Symposia

Cliff and I also attended several sessions of the Fort Wayne Symposia on the Lutheran Confessions. The lectures were quite erudite (as usual) but seemed off-key after last year's synodical convention. Nevertheless,

it was good to have the opportunity to benefit from the scholarship of others.

Hudson Installation

I will be traveling to Richmond, MO on February 6th for Pr. Hudson's installation as Pastor of Christ Lutheran. (Please note: this will *not* affect the worship schedule at Church; I'm flying to Missouri *after* Church.) As with Pr. Rutowicz's installation, this will provide an opportunity to express the unity which the Lord has established within our fellowship. Pr. Siems, Pr. Rutowicz, Pr. Hudson and I will all share in the service. (Watch the newsletter for pictures next month!)

KHBR RADIO MINISTRY

Our weekly broadcasts continue to air on KHBR on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 9:

30 a.m. If you are interested in helping to support the broadcasts, the cost is \$30 a week. This is an incredible bargain! Many of our shut-ins, as well as members of other Lutheran congregations in our area, listen every week. Please help support this important opportunity for the proclamation of God's Word. Please make sure to mark your offering for "Radio Ministry." Thank you!

MIDWEEK BIBLE CLASS

We are currently studying the book of Psalms on *Wednesdays* at *11 a.m.* Come and join us!

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

We will be studying the book of Zephaniah during the month of February. All adults are encouraged to attend and grow!

	ATTENDANCE	OFFERING	COMMUNED
December 31	13	\$ 192.00	
TOTAL	420	\$6,375.29	107
Budget for 2004: +\$1,544.90 for the year.			
January 2	49	\$1,053.00	39
January 6	11	\$ 114.00	n.a.
January 9	56	\$1,409.81*	38
January 16	45	\$ 749.25	n.a.
January 23	54	\$1,930.00	41
January 30	51	\$1,055.00†	
TOTAL	266	\$6,311.06	118

Budget for 2005: -\$1,390.84. A total of \$1,540.38 is needed each week for budgeted expenses.

* In addition to \$1,409.81 in general offerings, \$45 was given toward Tsunami relief and \$5 toward the cemetery fund.

† In addition to \$1,055 in general offerings, \$100 was given in memory of Louis Degner and \$50 was given toward the cemetery fund.

The Season of Lent

"Easter celebrates the chief event in the life of Christ and was the major celebration among early Christians. However, Easter required a period of preparation. The 40-day preparation prescribed for baptismal candidates became known as Lent (from the Latin word for "spring"). ... In A. D. 325, the Council of Nicea recorded the first reference to the specific number of days for Lent: 40. Later, these 40 days were associated with Jesus' 40 days in the desert prior to His temptation (Matthew 4) and to the 40 years the children of Israel spent in the wilderness (Numbers 14:34). A few years after the council, in A.D. 329, the father of orthodox Christianity, Bishop Athanasius (ca. A.D. 296–373), asked his

congregation in his paschal letter to keep a fast of 40 days. This seems to be one of the earliest statements about a Lenten season. ...

Ash Wednesday begins the observance of Lent. The placing of ashes on the foreheads of God's gathered guests was practiced in France in the sixth century and was universally adopted as a sign of penitence and as a reminder of human mortality by the tenth century. During Lent, alleluias are discontinued and the Gloria in Excelsis is not sung. Already in the fourth century these liturgical omissions had become common practice." [quoted from Maschke, *Gathered Guests* (CPH, 2003)]

Calendar Summary

February 9th

Ash Wednesday Service, 7:30 p.m.

February 13th

Board of Education, 11:45 a.m.

February 16th

Lenten Midweek Service, 7:30 p.m.

February 19th

Men's Breakfast, 8 a.m.

Board of Trustees, 9 a.m.

February 20th

Evangelism Meeting after Church

February 23rd

Lenten Midweek Service, 7:30 p.m.

February 27th

Birthday & Anniversary potluck

Salem Lutheran Church

718 HCR 3424 E

Malone, Texas 76660

(254) 533-2330

The Rev. James D. Heiser, Pastor

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Divine Service

Holy Communion—1st and 2nd Sundays

On the Radio: KHBR (1560 AM) Sunday at 9:15 a.m.

On the Web: <http://www.salemlutheranchurch.net>