

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Malone, Texas

February 2007



Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus, God Incarnate!

The visit to Michigan and Indiana was extremely important. Having the opportunity to meet once again with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Niles, Michigan, was a joy, and I hope it was a occasion for them to encouraged in their efforts. It was also a blessing to meet with the Rev. Mark Raitz, a new applicant for membership in the diocese, who serves as the Pastor of Christ our Redeemer Lutheran Church (Trenton, MI). (This congregation is now a year old.) During the Symposia, I also had the opportunity to meet with a vicar who is considering making application to the diocese, as well as pastors who want to know more about us.

What I have found is that the trend which we have seen thus far in the membership of the diocese appears to be continuing: most of those who express an interest in joining the ELDoNA anticipate serving in mission congregations, usually as a “worker priest” (that is, serving in a secular vocation and as a pastor). They want to serve *faithful* Lutheran congregations, with a commitment to stand steadfast in God’s Word and our Lutheran Confessions.

Salem now has the opportunity to aid such pastors and congregations. The Confessional Lutheran Mission Fund stands ready to assist them—what a blessing that the Lord provided us with such means!

We also have the opportunity to directly assist one of the pastors who desires to begin mission work. Pastor Ahonen (our guest here at Salem on numerous occasions, from his time of service at Peace Lutheran in Garland, and since his call to Wisconsin) desires to begin service within the ELDoNA as a mission pastor in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. If the Lord wills that we call him as deacon, this will not only assist Salem, but even more importantly, it will call him to service so that he may begin his mission efforts.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Heiser*

Schedule for February

4 th	9:30 a.m.	Sunday School/Adult Bible Class
	10:30 a.m.	Divine Service-Holy Communion
	after service	voters meeting—deacon call meeting
		Board of Elders
7 th	11 a.m.	Bible Study—Psalms
11 th	9:30 a.m.	Sunday School/Adult Bible Class
	10:30 a.m.	Divine Service-Holy Communion
14 th	11 a.m.	Bible Study—Psalms
17 th	8 a.m.	Men's Fellowship Breakfast
	9 a.m.	Board of Trustees
	9 a.m.	Women's Guild
18 st	9:30 a.m.	Sunday School/Adult Bible Class
	10:30 a.m.	Divine Service-Holy Communion
	11:45 a.m.	Board of Education
21 st	11 a.m.	Bible Study—Psalms
	7:30 p.m.	Divine Service-Holy Communion (ASH WEDNESDAY)
25 th	9:30 a.m.	Sunday School/Adult Bible Class
	10:30 a.m.	Divine Service
	11:45 a.m.	Altar Guild meeting
28 th	11 a.m.	Bible Study—Psalms
	7:30 p.m.	LENTEN MIDWEEK VESPERS

The Gesima Sundays

The first three Sundays of February, we observe the “Gesima” Sundays: Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima. (For the Propers for these Sundays, please see *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 60–62). Sometimes this time is referred to a “Pre-Lent” and is a time of transition between the glory of the Transfiguration and the penitential sorrows of Ash Wednesday. In fact, the names for the Sundays (the Latin words for “seventieth,” “sixtieth,” and “fiftieth”) are in relation to Easter, although the meaning here is not precisely literal, since the Gesima Sundays don’t fall precisely those number of days before Easter.

February Birthdays:

2nd: Shelly Collier
5th: Cheri Thomas, Hunter Garcia
7th: Annette Kelm
9th: Jamie Crumpton
11th: Cassie Sanchez
13th: Braden Sanchez
14th: Betty Howard
15th: Joyce Maddox
23rd: Beverly Johnson

February Anniversaries:

3rd: Greg and Karen Picha
9th: Edwin Joe and Margie Kucera (Happy 55th!)
11th: Gary and Terri Kelm
13th: Edmond and Dawn Flores (Happy 20th!)
24th: Larry and Barbara Markwardt

Ash Wednesday February 21st

Mark your calendars! Ash Wednesday is only a few weeks away. We will observe this solemn day with a divine service at 7:30 P.M. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the penitential season of Lent; it is among the most important events in our Christian Calendar, and all members are strongly encouraged to get Lent off “on the right foot.”



It is customary during Lent for us to observe the season with midweek services. Our **Wednesday** evening services will be the Order of **Vespers**, beginning at **7:30 p.m.** The sermon series this Lent will focus on the Evening Psalms appointed for the week:

February 28—Psalm 16
March 7—Psalm 25
March 14—Psalm 86
March 21—Psalm 139
March 28—Psalm 27

KHBR RADIO MINISTRY—If you wish to contribute to the support of the radio outreach, the cost per weekly broadcast is \$30. Such offerings may be placed in the regular Sunday offering—just mark the envelope “radio ministry” (checks should be made to Salem Lutheran Church).

Women’s Guild

The Women’s Guild would like to thank all those in the congregation who supported our fundraising and social events of the past year. We continue to pass along those funds for mission purposes within Salem and the diocese.

For those who have diligently saved Campbell’s Soup labels and Box Tops for Education, the ladies decided to continue this practice. We will send these items to Calvary Lutheran School in Dallas. This is the school that John and Ana attend. It is an outstanding school worthy of support.

For guild members, in January, work on our bylaws was to take place. Those present at the meeting decided to take another month to look over our current bylaws and amend them as necessary at our February meeting on the 17th.

Men’s Fellowship

After a hearty breakfast at 8 a.m., the men continued their bible study. The men are making plans for another supper (BBQ?), like the one they had in October. This one is scheduled for April 28th. In appreciation of the Men’s Fellowship, the Women’s Guild would like to provide breakfast for the June meeting.

Salem Choir

For those interested in singing Easter morning please join us after any Wednesday Lent service. At that time we will also make plans to go Easter caroling.

Deacon Proposed for Salem Lutheran Church

In our January voters meeting, there was discussion of calling Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen to the position of ordained Deacon, thus extending to him a valid call to the holy ministry so that he would begin his mission work in the Michigan, and also fill Salem's need for pastoral care during Pastor Heiser's vacations. The position description of Deacon of Salem Lutheran Church, as presented to the Voting Members, is as follows:



This position would be a very Part-Time position and *shall be paid on a per-service-rendered basis*. (This means that the remuneration is limited to those occasions when he is serving at Salem, and is not a salary.)

The Deacon will be expected to:

- a. Travel to Salem Lutheran Church to Preach the Word and Administer the Sacraments during the Pastor's vacation Sundays (3).
- b. Consult with the Pastor before scheduling preaching engagements at other congregations.
- c. Maintain a good standing with the Pastor and ELDoNA.

The Deacon will be asked to:

- a. Within the time frame of the Deacon's visit, lead other appropriate scheduled church studies, meetings and functions.
- b. Continue his pursuit of mission congregation(s).
- c. Enjoy the hospitality of members of Salem Lutheran Church including room, board, and transportation to the best of its members' abilities during those times when he is serving in Texas.

The Deacon will not be required to do any of the following:

- a. Pay for travel expenses.
- b. Attend the services of Salem Lutheran Church, other than those requiring his travel and services.
- c. Perform any service without adequate remuneration.



Speaking with the congregation before the divine service...

*The Visitation of St.
Boniface Lutheran Church*

Part of Pastor Heiser's responsibility as bishop of the diocese is to periodically visit the parishes affiliated with us, encouraging them to remain steadfast in our common confession and practice, and offering counsel to the pastors and congregational leadership. Pastor Heiser visited St. Boniface on the evening of January 15th, preaching on the texts for the Festival of the Confession of St. Peter (see facing page). It was very encouraging to gather with the saints in Niles. The life of a mission congregation is not an easy one, but they are bearing a faithful witness in their community!



*Pr. Rutowicz and Bp. Heiser following the
divine service.*

**Sermon for the Festival of the Confession of St. Peter
(transferred)
preached for the Visitation of
St. Boniface Lutheran Church (Niles, MI)
15 January A.D. 2007**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from
Jesus Christ, His Son, our Savior. Amen.

“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Mat. 16:15–16)
Men imagined a great many things about Jesus, and they imagine them still. But these words which St. Peter spoke were not made known unto him by flesh and blood, but were revealed to Him by the heavenly Father.

St. Peter declared in his Second Catholic Epistle (and they are called “catholic” because he addressed them to the whole church, and not a particular church such as could be found in Rome, Antioch, Galatia, etc.) that *“no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Pet. 1:20–21) That which St. Peter spoke on behalf of the Twelve was not his ‘best guess,’ or a ‘logical deduction’ or any such thing. St. Peter spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as the prophets had of old.

The reasoning of human minds had led some to speculate that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The reasoning of human minds leads to equally wrong speculations today, even to the blasphemous filth such as is found in *The DaVinci Code* or the great hubbub over the so-called gospel of Judas.

Since English doesn’t do a very good job anymore of distinguishing the singular versus the plural of the second person (that is, we don’t usually say “thee” and “thou” anymore) it is important that we understand that Jesus’ question is addressed in to all the disciples. He is not asking “But who do you [singular, that is, Peter] say that I am?” Instead, it is, “But who do you [plural, that is, you disciples] say that I am?” And St. Peter speaks as representative of them all. This is the

faith of all the disciples, and it is the faith which they, in turn, taught to others.

We read in Acts 8 of St. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch, as that man was returning to Ethiopia from Jerusalem, having traveled there to worship. The Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah, but when Philip asked him, "*Do you understand what you are reading?*," the man replied, "*How can I, unless someone guides me?*" (v. 30, 31) Beginning from the passage from Isaiah 53 which concerned the Ethiopian, we are told, "*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*" (v. 35–38)

It is no accident that the confession of that Ethiopian is an echo of the confession of St. Peter. In this confession is the seed, if you will, of the whole of the creeds. The creeds and confessions of the Church are simply an amplification of the confession of Peter, given in answer to the long line of false teachers who have sought to supplant the Gospel with false teachings of their own devising. The creeds are summations of the teaching of Holy Scripture, centered on the confession of the Christ as the Son of God. Before his baptism, the Ethiopian testifies to his faith through the words of the Creed of St. Peter. And thus to this day, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is joined to the recitation of the Apostles Creed, a confession of the faith into which the recipient is being baptized.

It is needful that we believe rightly concerning this holy faith; the faith is not for us to define, but it has been defined by the Lord—we simply confess that which He has made known to us. Baptized into Christ, we know it is as St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2: "*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom*

the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” (v. 19–22)

It is the nature of the flesh to get several key points backwards. St. Paul tells us that what is important is that we are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, and that we are being fitted together to be the temple. But men often put their confidence not in that holy temple, but in the temples built by the hands of men; their confidence rests not in confessing the apostolic faith, but in possessing the right building. St. Philip and the Ethiopian teach us that one can do just fine without a building, but you cannot do without the faith. And St. Paul speaks of us *being fitted together, not fitting ourselves together*. The Church is built by God, not by the hands of men.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’” (Mat. 16:17–19) As our Lutheran Confessions teach, “As to the declaration: ‘Upon this rock I will build My Church,’ certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a minister: ‘Upon this rock,’ i.e. upon this ministry. [Therefore he addresses him as a minister of such an office as is to be pervaded by this confession and doctrine, and says: ‘Upon this rock,’ i.e. this declaration and ministry.]” (Treatise §25)

It is Christ who builds His Church, and therefore hell cannot prevail against it. It is Christ who gives the keys that we have the forgiveness of sins. What Christ Jesus here imparts to St. Peter, He imparts to all His disciples in Matthew 18: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (v. 18) And thus He spoke to them again after His resurrection: “‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the

Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:21–23) This Office of the Keys continues in Christ’s Church. Christ calls men into the apostolic ministry that they would continue to teach the apostolic doctrine and administer the holy Sacraments according to the institution of Christ so that men would be saved. As the Ethiopian asked how he might understand God’s Word unless he was taught, so Christ continues to send teachers that men would be called into His Church. Thus St. Paul wrote to the Church in Rome: *“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?”* (10:14–15) Again, St. Paul wrote: *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (v. 17) And our Augsburg Confession echoes this teaching: *“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, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justified those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ’s sake.”* (AC V)

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter made bold to teach the elders of Israel concerning the Christ whom they had crucified, bearing witness to His resurrection and testifying unto them: *“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:11–12) We are then told, *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”* (v. 13) The Pharisees had the temple and its wealth, the history of their own teachers and pride in their own supposed piety and education. But the truth was that which the humble apostles proclaimed—apostles who are stones in the foundation of the Church, a foundation laid by the Lord of the Church.

St. Boniface also found comfort in the true nature of the Church.

In the midst of the Saxon wilderness, Boniface received no consolation from buildings, pension plans, and all the trappings of the world. Suffering trials and troubles, his comfort was in Christ, who called him to His service, so that he would proclaim the holy Gospel to the pagan Germans, and the Holy Spirit, working through the preaching of the Word, called them to faith in Christ.

Our comfort and consolation, do not come from that which we build, but from that which the Lord freely gives. By the work of the Holy Spirit, we confess the apostolic faith. The Lord of the Church has made us His own when He placed His name upon us in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. We can relate to that Ethiopian baptized by the side of the road. His Baptism did not occur in a glorious temple built by human hands, but the hand of the Lord placed him upon that foundation of the prophets and apostles, and, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that is where He has placed us, as well.

David wrote in the eighteenth Psalm, *"He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support."* (v. 17–18) Christ Jesus, victorious over sin, death and the devil, is our Savior, our deliverer. The salvation which He has won through His suffering and death endures forever, and the means of grace which He has established are sufficient for our salvation. This world is passing away, but that which Christ is building endures forever. He is building His Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Amen.

During pastor's trip "up North," he and Pastor Rutowicz met with Pastor Mark Raitz (Christ our Redeemer Lutheran, Trenton, MI). Christ our Redeemer is an independent Lutheran Church,



and Pastor Raitz is making application for membership in the diocese. (Pastor Raitz was a classmate of Pastor Heiser and Pastor Hudson at seminary.)

Salem Lutheran Church

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Malone, TX 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, 2nd and 3rd Sundays

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

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

