

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Malone, Texas

June 2007



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

On June 24th, Salem will observe two events, the Festival of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and also the installation of our deacon, Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen. Now, it is not hard for us to understand

the universal, or catholic, significance of the Festival which celebrates the birth of St. John: John was the divinely appointed forerunner. St. John's calling was to proclaim the coming of the Christ, calling the people to repent of their sins and be baptized. At the time appointed by the Holy Trinity, John began his ministry, and baptized the Christ to fulfill all righteousness. (Matt. 3:15)

St. John was sent to proclaim the Christ. In a sense, John shares this vocation with all who are called to the office of the holy ministry. Although the pastoral office descends from the calling of the holy apostles, the content of their preaching remains in most respects the same with the proclamation of John: to call men to repent and be baptized, believing in the Christ.

Deacon Ahonen's call brings him to occasionally serve here at Salem, but the intention is that his primary service is Christ's Church will be to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments in future mission locations. Toward this end, there are several exciting prospects, and I'm sure he will share more information with all of us during Bible Class on June 24th.

There is, of course, another festival associated with St. John: the celebration of his martyrdom, which is observed on August 29th. (We will observe that festival as part of our diocesan meeting here at Salem.) All of us who have had to suffer various assaults from the evil one on account of our confession of Christ understand the importance of that festival as well. For servants of the Word, our joy is that which the holy apostles knew: "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Acts 5:41)

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Heiser*

June Birthdays:

- 5th: Lori Youngblood, Tristan Reamy
- 8th: Cody Thomas
- 9th: Jonathan Henkel
- 12th: Karen Picha, Charles Howard
- 13th: Allison Radke
- 21st: Heather Wilcoxon
- 22nd: Del Schulz
- 24th: Frieda Neumann
- 26th: Dustin Boortz, Penny Payne
- 27th: Ella Mae Maynard, David Monthey
- 30th: Billy Joe Watson

June Anniversaries:

- 1st: Edward and Nancy Krueger, Charles and Donna Huse
- 7th: Brian and Danielle Reamy
- 14th: Mark and Shelly Collier
- 15th: Jimmie and Patsy Williams
- 17th: Doyle and Wyla Tanner
- 18th: Morris and Rosemary Kruger
- 22nd: Martin and Darlene Kelm
- 28th: Larry and Connie Hackett

Installation Date set for Deacon Ahonen

On March 17th, we received word from Rev. Ahonen accepting the divine call to serve as deacon. Now a date has been set for his installation as deacon. The installation is scheduled for the **regular Divine Service on Sunday, June 24th**. (This date is also the Festival of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.)

As a “worker priest,” Deacon Ahonen is returning to work as a paralegal, working for the same law office which employed him prior to his seminary training. Several mission opportunities are being explored, and hopefully he will have more to share with us on that topic during Bible Class on June 24th.

To celebrate this occasion, we will also have a potluck following the service.

Schedule for June

3 rd	9:30 A.M.	Adult Bible Class/Sunday School
	10:30 A.M.	Divine Service-Communion (Trinity Sunday)
4 th -8 th		Pastor at Theological Conference
10 th	9:30 A.M.	Adult Bible Class/Sunday School
	10:30 A.M.	Divine Service-Communion
16 th	8 A.M.	Men's Fellowship Breakfast
	9 A.M.	Women's Guild meeting
	9 A.M.	Board of Trustees
17 th	9:30 A.M.	Adult Bible Class/Sunday School
	10:30 A.M.	Divine Service-Communion
20 th	11 A.M.	Midweek Bible Class
24 th	9:30 A.M.	Sunday School-Deacon Ahonen
	10:30 A.M.	Divine Service-Communion/Ahonen Installation (Festival of the Nativity of St. John)
27 th	11 A.M.	Midweek Bible Class

Congratulations, Kenny!

In April, Kenny Kelm competed in District Competition with Bynum Golf Team. He placed in the top 5 out of 10 to go to the regional tournament in Nacogdoches.

At Bynum's Awards Ceremony, he received his letterman jacket for 2 years varsity golf competition.

FFA Activities

Kenny competed at District Level with his record books for the Capter Star Farmer Degree. He placed 2nd out of 4 in hay production. Only 1st place moved on to Area competition.

At the Area FFA Convention he represented the Bynum Chapter as the only voting delegate.

At the Bynum FFA banquet he was elected to serve as Reporter for the upcoming 2007-08 school year.

Also at the awards ceremony he received a Math Award, Citizenship and perfect attendance awards.

Sermon for the Festival of the Ascension

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. (From the Gospel)

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

Just as the Old Testament prophesied about the birth, teaching, miracles, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, so also glorious prophecies preceded His victorious Ascension into heaven and His being seated at the right hand of God.

Generally speaking, all the sayings of the Old Testament which describe Christ's kingdom speak about the fact that it shall be an everlasting Kingdom. For if Christ is to rule eternally, then He dare not remain in death and in the state of humiliation. Instead, He had to enter into His glory through His Ascension and by sitting at the right of the heavenly Father. If Christ was to stomp on and crush the hellish serpent's head, as was promised in Genesis 3, then He could not remain below, but He had to ascend up to heaven as a victorious Prince.

Hear the word of the Lord in the Old Testament. In Psalm 47, we read: "God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet." (v. 5) In Psalm 68, "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive..." (v. 18a) We also see events which foreshadow Christ's ascension into heaven. Consider Enoch, one of the great saints who lived before the flood. Genesis 5 tells us, "Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." (v. 21-24) With the other pre-flood saints, we are told that they died; with Enoch, we are told, "God took him." So we read in Hebrews 11: "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (v. 5)

After the flood, but within the Old Testament period, Elijah, too, was taken up alive into heaven. We read in 2 Kings 2: "Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!' So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces." (v. 11-12) But as great as these miracles were concerning Enoch and Elijah, how much greater the Ascension of Christ in the third part of the world, the New Testament. For God did not say to Enoch or Elijah, or to any angel, or

any else by Christ Jesus, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool..." (Heb. 1:13)

Not only His ascension, but also Jesus' reign is greater than any reign of man. After his imprisonment, Joseph was made lord over all of Egypt, from having been a slave, to under only Pharaoh himself. David, after years of exile, became king over Israel. Concerning our Savior, we read in Psalm 8: "You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet," (v. 6). Thus we read in Hebrews 2, "For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (v. 8-9)

The Lord had given many testimonies in Holy Scripture, and through Jesus' own words, that the Messiah would come, die, and rise again and ascend. How hard is the heart of man, that St. Mark tells us, "Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." (ch. 16) So we, too, hear the words, and yet our lives are often lived in a way which does not confess faith that Christ is coming again, soon. We may be going about the things of this world, as if they were the reason for life. Or we may be, after our own fashion, hiding for fear of the 'Jews'—hiding from persecution—in our own time. Thus St. Luke tells us in tonight's reading from Acts 1, "He"—Jesus—"also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Jesus did not ascend immediately after His resurrection, but stays for 40 days, giving infallible proofs of His resurrection. There is no room or reason for doubt, for all the proof that could be asked for is given in Holy Scripture. As St. John wrote, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31) God does not leave us in our sin and rebellion, but reveals salvation in Jesus Christ through the Word of the Holy Scriptures.

As Luther preached on the Ascension in 1534:

"Christ ascended on high and led captivity, or sin, captive. It as though he said, I ascend into heaven to the right hand of God, for it is my kingdom, office, and work to take captive the captivity which had lain hold on my Christians and believers. You, sin, are a part of this captivity; however, as you have done to my Christians, so shall I now do to you. They were held captive as your slaves, either sinning freely against God in false security or rooted firmly in hopeless despair. You, sin, have driven them to this. But now hold on; it's your turn to be taken captive and be made a slave yourself. You have taken others captive, forc-

ing slavery on them. Now I will take you captive, and you shall be my prisoner. Not only shall you be my slave as they were yours, but you shall also be like a thief whom people now want to string aloft. Christ's power over sin are now given to those who believe in him, who know that they, too, are masters over sin, while heretofore they were its slaves. Sin will not any longer compel them to transgress against God or to despair, because Christ, ascended on high, helps them resist sin when they believe in him and call upon him. . . . Rightly, he is called a King; he has ascended on high and seated himself above the clouds at the right hand of majesty in heaven and taken captivity captive." (HP 2:122–123)

At the right hand of the Father, Christ Jesus intercedes for us. As St. Paul wrote in Romans 8: "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (v. 34) And St. John tells us in his First Epistle: "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (2:1–2)

As our Savior has ascended on high to the right hand of the Father, we know that He is still with His Church. St. Mark's concluding words to the Gospel—"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs"—shows His continued work and blessing upon the Church, just as Jesus also told them, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20)

This presence is not only according to Christ's divine nature, but also His human nature. As we teach in the Formula of Concord:

We believe, teach, and confess that henceforth in this single undivided person there are two distinct natures: the divine, which is from all eternity, and the human, which was assumed in time into the unity of the person of the Son of God. These two natures in the person of Christ will henceforth never be separated, blended with each other, or the one changed into the other, but in the person of Christ each remains in its nature and essence through all eternity. (FC SD Article VIII.7)

When we read God's Word, we do not separate the two natures, but know that they will "henceforth never be separated..." When Jesus promises that He is with His Church, that He gives us His body and blood in the holy communion, we know it is so, because He has promised it. How, then, are we to understand His presence at the right hand of the Father? Again, we teach in the Formula of Concord:

The right hand of God is precisely the almighty power of God which fills heaven and earth, in which Christ has been installed according to His humanity in

deed and in truth without any blending or equalization of the two natures in their essence and essential properties. Because of this communicated power He can be and is truly present with His body and blood in the Holy Supper according to the words of His covenant, to which He has directed us through His Word. No other human being can do this since no human being is united in this manner with the divine nature... (FC SD Article VIII.28,29)

...as the two hundred fathers of the Council of Ephesus attested when they stated that Christ's flesh is a life-giving flesh, whence only this man and no other human being in heaven and on earth can say truthfully, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them," likewise, "I am with you always even to the close of the age." We do not understand these testimonies to mean that only the deity of Christ is present with us in the Christian church and community and that this presence of Christ in no way involves His humanity. (Article VIII.76,77)

Christ can be present with His body, which He has placed at the right hand of majesty and power of God, wherever He desires and especially where He has promised His presence in His Word, as in the Holy Communion. (Article VIII.92)

God's word and promise is sure. We know that Jesus will return visibly one day, for it is as the disciples were told at the Ascension, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

If the brothers of Joseph could rejoice so greatly that their brother had been established as lord over all of Egypt, and could scoop up the sure hope that he would receive them in brotherly love and feed them during the famine, how much more should we not rejoice in the hope that Christ has been established as Lord over everything and everything has been placed at His feet. From this we can draw a sure hope that He will receive us in brotherly love. He shall care for our body and soul and finally take us up into eternal glory. May God help us to that end through His beloved Son, Christ. Amen.

The Festival of the Visitation

St. Luke 1:39-56

If I were to summarize the Gospel for this day, I believe I might do so in one word: "Blesséd." Indeed, St. Elizabeth uses the word three times in speaking with St. Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." And to this, St. Mary must give agreement: "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." Indeed, both of them are only repeating what the Gabriel told St. Mary, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord

is with you; blessed are you among women!" (Lk. 1:28) We are all blessed in Jesus, the fruit of Mary's womb, for He is God, our Savior.

Now, we Lutherans, probably because we're surrounded by Protestants, seem to get nervous whenever we hear very much about St. Mary. Because the Roman Church, and its corrupt views regarding the saints—their belief that we should pray to the saints, seeking their intervention, and that the merits of the saints somehow help in our salvation—we are tempted, pardon the expression, to "throw the baby out with the bath water." When St. John received the revelation from God, he was tempted to worship before the feet of the angel who showed him those things. But we read, "Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'" (Rev. 22:9) We are not, therefore, to offer prayers to anyone other than God. However, if both an angel from God, and St. Elizabeth, followed with the Holy Spirit, declare Mary to be blessed among women, and St. Mary herself declares, "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed," we dare not deny that which is divinely revealed. Truly, St. Mary is "blessed among women" and shall be called blessed.

Preaching on the Visitation, Luther declared, "What God has given and bestowed, we should acknowledge and not disclaim. One ought to say, Praise be to God, who has given it! ... For whatever God has given, be it money or possessions, all is a gift from God. We ought not deny these things but acknowledge and thank God for them, and determine how best to make use of them. ... For that reason it is not humility when you deny what you possess and say you don't have it. For, if God has endowed you with something, admit it, and say that it is true, but that I do not have it of myself, for God has given it to me; and, therefore, I shall not look down upon or disdain others who do not have what I have." (HP III:348)

And so it is with St. Mary—here we see a manifestation of true Christian humility. God's word declares her to be blessed among women; indeed, St. Elizabeth recognizes her as "the mother of my Lord..." Again, Luther remarks, "It would have been fitting had someone provided her with a gold carriage to ride in, drawn by four thousand horses, with trumpets heralding the carriage's coming, proclaiming that the greatest of all women was approaching, the princess of the whole human race! But there was nothing like this, only silence. The poor maiden travels by foot a great distance, more than twenty miles, and she herself is with child, the mother of God." (HP III:344) As soon as she receives word that she is to give birth to the Son of God, she rushes to the side of Elizabeth, to help her in the final months of her pregnancy. Mary did not glory in herself, but her soul rejoiced in God her Savior. Think about the honored of our age—the politicians, great generals, athletes, entertainers, and so on. Many of us would be honored to meet them. And yet, here is St. Mary, with the Savior of the world within her womb—an honor beyond any-

thing we can imagine—and she thinks nothing of her own position, and instead performs the most menial service on behalf of Elizabeth. We are tempted to be puffed up and full of ourselves. Why, give us the most insignificant advantage over our neighbor, and we can't boast about it enough. Our car is newer, or our job is more glamorous, or pays better, or our children do something to make us proud, and we don't give thanks to God, but instead become puffed up. Few things fill our fallen heart with more joy than to be able to lord it over our neighbor—or our brother or sister.

Please indulge me a third citation from Doctor Luther. “You should know that it is a gift of God if your station is higher than that of others or if you excel others in some other respect. However, He has not endowed you with it to give you reason to put on airs because of it and act ‘uppish’ toward everybody as if you were better in the eyes of God than others because of your gift. On the contrary, God has commanded you humbly to serve your neighbor with your gift.” (What Luther Says #4292) But we are slow to help, and quick to brag. We misuse the gifts of God for our own advantage. If God gives us talent, or power, or wealth, we hold it over others, rather than thanking God that we can use it for our neighbor's advantage.

But hear St. Mary's words as she sings her Magnificat. “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” How horrible that Rome claims Mary was without sin; certainly she knew that Jesus, although her son, was her God and Savior. There is nothing in Mary or us deserving God's mercy; rather, “And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones. And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” God's mercy is free toward us; those who are proud, will not receive this gift of God. But, by the working of the Holy Spirit, we believe that this Babe, Son of God and son of Mary, we have been redeemed from our sins. His blood was shed for us, and by His stripes we are healed.

Hear again the words of Zephaniah 3: “The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more.” Again, “The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.” And still the Lord our God is with us, washing us clean of sin in Baptism, feeding us with His own Body and Blood to nourish our faith, speaking to us through His holy Word. We are all blessed in Jesus, the fruit of Mary's womb, for He is God, our Savior. He is our life, our hope, our salvation. Amen.

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).

SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE DIOCESE—It should be observed that all diocesan work (congregational visitations, diocesan representation at various conventions and conferences, etc.) is financially supported by the diocese. In other words, when Pastor Heiser carries out his responsibilities (such as the recent visit to congregations in Missouri and Kansas) it is the *diocese*, not Salem Lutheran Church, which covers all expenses.

The diocese is financially supported through special offerings by members of Salem and other congregations of the diocese, as well as through sale of the ELDoNA pins and gifts from other supportive clergy and laity.

If you wish to support the work of the diocese, you may use one of the envelopes located on the table in the narthex.

HILLSBORO’S ANNIVERSARY—In response to a question from a member, I must report that Salem was *not* invited—or even notified—of Christ-Hillsboro’s anniversary. Our office had *no* information from them regarding any celebration. Sadly, this is consistent with a pattern; Christ-Hillsboro ignored our anniversary last year, although we did have a nice exchange of letters of greetings between St. Peter’s and Salem regarding our mutual anniversaries last year. If you have any further questions regarding this matter, feel free to ask me.

Pastor Heiser



Men’s Fellowship Spaghetti Supper— The men’s group raised \$417 (\$208.50 for Radio Ministry, \$208.50 for the Mission Fund) and had a great time.

Women's Guild

Our Mother's Day bake offering brought over \$200. We would like to thank those who gave generously in appreciation of our baked goods. This money helps us continue our commitments to individuals and the radio ministry. Upcoming for the morning of June 16th, the ladies will provide breakfast for the men. We thank them for sharing Men's Breakfast with us and for being great fathers. As usual the breakfast will be served at 8 in the morning followed by meetings. All men, women and children are invited to the breakfast and are welcome to stay for the meetings.

Vacation Bible School

Planning for this year's VBS is gearing up. All children and adults shall be welcomed to join in the program and volunteers are greatly needed. This year's schedule will follow what we did last year. We will open VBS on Sunday, July 8th and end on Thursday, July 12th. Each evening will begin at 6:30 pm and finish up by 8:30 pm. Snacks will be offered each night with something special our last night.

LC-MS Convention

As you may know, the LC-MS Convention is in Houston this year. ELDoNA is making plans to attend this convention and give support to fellow conservative Lutherans still within the Missouri Synod. The convention is July 15th - 19th. If you want to be involved in this trip in any way please talk to Pastor or Pam Krumvieda.