

Savior's Call

an interim newsletter

Lutheran Church of the Savior, Paramus, New Jersey

June, 2017

Is it still the same Church? No...and Yes!

About 14 pastors and a half-dozen of their wives met at the Lutheran Seminary in Chicago last month and looked back 50 years to the days we graduated from that seminary, were ordained and sent into parishes. We faced a world with many problems, including war and social unrest.

The members of that class (there were about 70 of us) have served nearly 200 congregations in more than 30 states in the U.S. and Canada, Indonesia, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Brazil, Papua New Guinea and Malaysia. We were military chaplains, and chaplains in hospitals and prisons. We worked for synods, camps, social service agencies, and national and international church headquarters.

Among those graduates were two therapists, a journalist (me), two lawyers, a corporate communications executive and a farmer. We had specialists in aging, mental health, addiction, and finance.

About 15 of us left the ordained ministry. One became a Quaker, another a Buddhist, and one became a Roman Catholic layman. Some of our classmates died before reaching this 50th anniversary.

In Chicago last month, we marveled at the changes we have seen. We agreed that the "church" today is not the "church" that it was when we were ordained.

On the other hand, it is the same "church," that is, it is still the Church that confesses the ancient creeds, honors the Bible as the Word of God, is guided by Lutheran teachings, gathers around Word and Sacraments and serves the world in the name of Jesus. How we do that has changed dramatically, but that is still what we do.

At Church of the Savior, you have also seen dramatic changes. You have been led by several pastors; you left the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for the American Lutheran Church, which then merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The worries of the world and the Church still weigh heavily upon us, as they did decades ago. We know that more changes lie ahead. But we are still the Church, God is still with us. We are still called to be faithful.

See you in Church,
Pastor Austin

Do you still hear it?

God's 'Call' continues

The "call" from God continues. Our life circumstances change, but God's call remains.

The "call" is to believe God, trust in God, gather around God's word and the Sacraments, pray, and serve the world in the name of Jesus.

The "call" is to care for our neighbor and the world, protecting both as gifts of God.

How are we doing?



Pastor Olsen to Franklin Graham: What are you thinking?

Pastor Olsen's open letter to Franklin Graham has gone viral, with a million readers. See the link and a summary on page 2.

Synod Assembly resolutions

The Synod assembly, a time of prayer and reports and inspiration, also approved two resolutions.

A resolution to study clergy compensation

Recognizing the financial strains on congregations in various parts of the synod and the impact of finances on compensation for pastors, the synod resolved to:

Work for ways to find a clergy compensation system that is fair and just and provides adequately for all active clergy.

To study different models for clergy compensation, including the current Excellence in Ministry Unleashed (EMU) study and to present a progress report to the 2018 Synod Assembly and findings to the 2019 Assembly.

A resolution on Difficult Conversations

Recognizing the divisiveness of recent political discussions, a divisiveness that sometimes slips into congregational life and recognizing that Christians are to love one another and live “in Christ where there is no east nor west, north nor south,” the Synod resolved to:

Be a “community for moral deliberation, navigating the present political realities as faithfully as possible,” and to urge congregations to be “places where partisans may remain one in Christ.”

The synod also encouraged members to foster “difficult conversations” with people of varying views.

Concerts in June!

Two special concerts will be held in June at Church of the Savior.



Students of Claudette Peterson Vocal Studios, including our own Abby Opthof, will present a concert on Saturday, June 17 at 1 p.m. The students range from 4th to 12th grade. There is no charge for the concert, but an offering will benefit Church of the Savior. Claudette Peterson Kline says the caliber of talent this year is quite high.

Eight of Claudette’s adult students will present a concert at Church of the Savior on Friday, June 24, at 7:30 p.m., with songs from Broadway, the classics and opera. Again a freewill offering will benefit Church of the Savior.

Please invite friends and family to these concerts.

The ELCA has about 3.7 million members and 9,300 congregations in the U.S. and Caribbean.

Pastor Olsen’s letter to Franklin Graham goes viral online!

Pastor Peter Olsen’s open letter to Franklin Graham has gone “viral” on the internet, with a million “hits.” The letter responds to Graham’s “Decision America” tour of rallies and Graham’s plea to “small community churches” to oppose attacks on “religious liberty.” Pastor Olsen says small churches are ready, but he doesn’t understand Graham’s concern. “Of all the things that worry me, loss of religious freedoms for Christians in America isn’t one of them,” Olsen says. “I figured you were referring to the slaughter of Coptic Christians in Egypt,” he said. “But having to pay a judgment for refusing to bake a cake for a same sex couple in violation of the law against discrimination? This you call persecution?”

“I am struggling too,” Pastor Olsen says, “with your claim that Donald Trump is a champion (albeit an unlikely one) for religious freedom.”

“If Donald Trump is the champion of American Christianity, God save it from its enemies!” Olsen chides Graham for contending that he knows God put the current president in office. “I have to hand it to you, Frank, you sure do have the connections.”

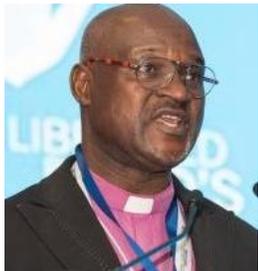
“I would like to think we are brothers,” Olsen says, “But quite honestly, I don’t recognize the Jesus I learned from my parents, my Sunday School teachers, my pastors or my years of study and reflection on the Bible in your angry, fearful rhetoric.” A member of Church of the Savior, Olsen is Pastor at Trinity Lutheran, Bogota.

You can read the full text of Pastor Olsen’s strongly-worded and stirring letter at <https://revolsen.com/2017/05/17/an-open-letter-to-rev-franklin-graham-from-a-small-church-pastor/>

Nigerian Archbishop Heads LWF

The Rev. Dr Musa Panti Filibus, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria was elected President of The Lutheran World Federation. The LWF held its 12th Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, May 10-16.

Archbishop Filibus is the second church leader from Africa to hold the office since the LWF was founded in 1947. He replaces Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, elected at the LWF Assembly in 2010.



Filibus was elected on the first ballot. He received a total of 274 votes out of 303. Addressing the LWF Assembly delegates

upon his nomination, Filibus said nurturing communion relationships, mission, gender justice, service and addressing human tragedy, youth in the church, and inter-religious relationships for peace and justice are key priorities for him.

The archbishop comes from the northeastern region of Nigeria where many congregations suspended activities to avoid attacks by the Boko Haram militant group. "I see the great need to pay attention to questions of religiously motivated violence in the world today," he said.

Archbishop Filibus, 57, was formerly secretary for Africa in the LWF Department for Mission and Development, until being called as bishop in Nigeria in 2013. He was elected archbishop of the Nigerian Lutheran Church in 2016.

Filibus has studied theology in Nigeria and the United States. He and his wife have three adult children.

The first LWF President from Africa was Bishop Josiah Kibira from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, who served from 1977 until 1984.



Worship notes: The Sermon

It is easy to joke about sermons. Too long, too boring, too pompous, sleep-inducing. "Sermon" can be seen as a "bad word."

Yet the sermon is the place where a pastor tries to present the Word of God in ways that inspire and connect it to the lives of the people in the pews.

It's what pastors are trained to do. They study the Bible, learn ancient languages like Greek and Hebrew, immerse themselves in the theology of the Church. And they try to connect all this to the problems, joys and sorrows of the "modern" world.

It isn't easy.

Listening to sermons isn't easy either. Rarely in our day do we just sit and listen to someone "give a speech."

Sermons can be "better" if the listeners make a special effort to prepare and tune in.

Listen carefully to the readings for the day. They are usually the basis for the sermon.

Expect to hear something that will help you. Listen for it.

Don't "argue," at least while you are listening, and think "that's not right!" If you disagree, that may be OK, or maybe you need to talk to the preacher about your disagreement.

The sermon on a particular Sunday may not be "for you," that is, it may not directly connect with your life on that day. But it may be just what someone else in the congregation needs to hear.

Expect to be bothered at times. The Word of God is challenging and difficult. The Bible teaches things that go against many cherished ideas.

Trust that the Word of God does "get through," even through bad sermons and lazy listeners. Pray that it may get through to you.

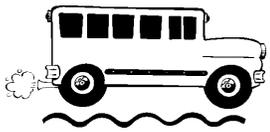
The Sundays ahead

We now enter the Pentecost season, which comes after Pentecost Sunday (June 4) and Holy Trinity Sunday (June 11). It is the "season of the Church," since the "Season of the Lord" included Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter. The color is of the Pentecost season is green, symbolizing growth.



From our School:

Our school year has sadly come to a close. Now we look



forward to Summer Camp which will start on June 26th and run to July 28th.

Children who have had a year of nursery school are welcome to attend from 9-12.

Each week has a different theme such as Dr. Seuss, Beach, Lego, Barnyard Roundup (Bible based) and Patriotic. The camp will be supervised by nursery school staff.

We still have openings in some sessions, so please spread the word and ask interested parties to leave a message on the school phones.

Gail Hayman

Hymn Sing at Carnegie Hall

The 250-voice choir of Concordia College, Bronxville, will host a Reformation hymn sing at Carnegie hall Sunday, June 25 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$7.50 to \$50 and are available at carnegiehall.org or by calling 212.247.7800.

The hymns will be both a capella and accompanied by an orchestra and the audience will be invited to join in singing some of the Reformation hymns.

New Jersey Synod, ELCA Online

The New Jersey Synod website has messages from our bishop, news of the synod (the whole state of New Jersey) and other information.

It is at NJSynod.org

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has an extensive website at elca.org.

MEN'S RETREAT AT KOINONIA,

OCT 20-OCT 22

By Rick Henley

Now is the time to sign up for this year's retreat. The weekend begins at 2:30 p.m. Friday in the church parking lot. We'll take a few cars and leave the others at the church until Sunday. We stop for dinner just before we arrive at Koinonia. Our meetings are in the beautiful Agape Room, and our discussions are led by Pastor Paul Nordeen.

There is free time Saturday afternoon for hiking, rest and outdoor activities.

We worship on Sunday morning, then head home.

The cost is \$160 per person. Checks, payable anytime from now on, should be made out to "Church of the Savior" with "Men's Retreat" on the memo line.

Contact me as soon as you can to confirm your participation. Koinonia requests a final count this month. If you don't yet have the book we're using, tell me and I'll see that you get one.

It's a great weekend. Just ask anyone who's been there! I look forward to hearing from all of you!

Rick Henly rickhenly@aol.com (201)967-1751



The happy guys at last year's retreat!

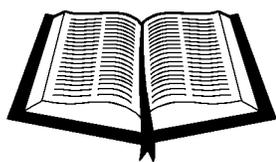
Pastor Austin says...

Thank you to all who, with cards and other greetings, marked the 50th anniversary of my ordination. Even though I have not always been a parish pastor, my call to the ordained ministry has always felt strong. Thank you for helping me remember that it has been strong for 50 years.

A Message from the President

*"I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me"*
Philippians 4:13

This is my favorite bible verse. I don't know when I started to live by it, but it's been long enough that it feels like the foundation of my faith. Whenever I get discouraged, whenever I



need encouragement, whenever I want an affirmation, I repeat Philippians 4:13 to myself. Why am I telling you this? I think it's important for us to remember that Christ is always on our side. I used to only latch onto this bible verse in times of trouble. I'd think "Jesus, I can't do this alone. Help me get through this." Now, though, I look at this verse as an affirmation of assumed success. "I know I can accomplish this. I know I'll reach the goal. I know there will be a positive outcome – because I can do ALL things with Christ behind me." By looking at this verse differently, I approach difficult situations with a sense of hope and confidence rather than despair.

Why am I telling you this? To let you know that now, more than ever, we need to look at things differently. As a congregation, we don't want to stay still; we need to adapt and adjust to the changes we're experiencing. God has a plan for this church. We don't know what it is, we don't know when or how it will play out. Be we do know that Christ will give us strength...to hope...to move forward...and to remain committed to Church of the Savior.

As Pastor Austin says, see you in church!

Peace,
Laurie

Katharina von Bora—Luther's surprising wife

Katharina Von Bora was born in 1499, and as a young child sent to a convent for education, where she became a nun. But she got interested in the reform movement and, dissatisfied with life in her convent, wrote Luther for help. In 1523, Luther sent a merchant friend to the convent who smuggled Katharina and several others out in a wagon of fish barrels, bringing them to Luther's Wittenberg.



The Reformer arranged marriages for the refugee nuns but Katharina turned down several suitors. She seemed set on getting Luther as a husband.

Luther wasn't sure he should get married, although Katharina interested him, but eventually he decided for marriage to "please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep." She was 26, he was 41.

Katharina became manager of Luther's life and household. She brewed beer, raised cattle, and managed the students and others living in their home. Luther had high regard for Katharine and frequently discussed church matters with her. He jokingly referred to what a disordered life he lived before marriage and – playing on the name "Katie" – referred to her as "mein Kette," which means "my chain" in German.

They had six children, one of whom died at eight months, another at 13 years. The couple also took in four orphans and Katherina's nephew.

Although Luther left her his property when he died in 1546, the will was not proper in Saxon law and Katie was left in poverty. She fled the wars of the region but was able to return to Wittenberg where the Elector supported her. When plague broke out in 1552, she fled to Torgau. An accident threw her from her cart and she was severely injured, drifting in and out of consciousness for three months.

She died in December, 1553, saying "I will stick to Christ as a burr to cloth." She was 53 years old.

Memoirs of the time describe her as intellectual, energetic, totally devoted to Luther and her family and to the cause of the Reformation.

A contemporary statue of her in Wittenberg shows her as "woman in motion," which she surely was.

(A longer version of this, with more pictures, is available on the table in the narthex.)



Remember our mission statement

The Lutheran Church of the Savior is a caring community of God's people, called in Jesus Christ, to live by the power of the Holy Spirit, thereby glorifying God the Father in our every day lives.

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God's Work, Our Hands

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Inside....

Katherine Luther, wife of the Reformer
African bishop now heads Lutheran World
Federation

Men's retreat is coming. Sign up soon!

School year ending, summer camp coming

Pastor Olsen takes on Franklin Graham

From your interim pastor.....

..... and more.



Romans 3:28

For we hold that a
person is justified by
faith, apart from works
prescribed by the law.

