



The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, IL 60546, (708) 442-5250

"Together in Worship and Serving in Faith"

Dennis J. Lauritsen, pastor

www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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Issue 12

"We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world."

Holiday Schedule

Advent Vespers, December 12th

3:00 p.m. Young Musicians of Riverside
Pre-Service Recital
4:00 p.m., Vespers with Advent Devotions
followed by a festive reception.

Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 19th

9:00 a.m., Sunday School Pageant Rehearsal
10:15 a.m., Liturgy of Holy Communion
with Sunday School Christmas Pageant
No 8:15 a.m. service

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24th

7:00 p.m., Festival Liturgy of Holy Communion
with Candlelight and Ceremony of Lessons and
Carols

Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25th

No liturgies

First Sunday after Christmas Day, December 26th

8:15 a.m., Service of the Word with Holy Baptism

The prophetic readings from Isaiah during Advent speak strongly about peace to our world. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but the intentional act of beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. God does not want us to learn the trade of war any more. Advent tunes our ears to God's dangerous call to serve as peacemakers. The psalmist's centuries-old prayer is still relevant today: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6). We enlarge the psalmist's vision and pray for the peace of the whole world.

In the second readings proclaimed this season, God's alarm clock wakes us to the urgency of repentance. God's promised coming offers hope amidst all the alarming news of the world. Romans 15:13 serves as a type of benediction for the Sundays in Advent as we celebrate the hopes and fears of all the ages in the coming of Jesus Christ. Sometimes it seems as though God's coming is delayed or ineffective, but we are counseled to be patient and wait on God's promises in hopeful expectation. In this season we do not pretend that Jesus has not yet come. We already claim the promises that are ours in the power of Christ's death and resurrection. We watch in confidence for the one who came, who comes among us each time we gather around word and sacrament, and who draws us into God's final coming to make all things new.

In the gospel readings, hopeful people are urged to be ready for God's unexpected appearances according to God's own time. A surprising voice in the wilderness again calls all people to a new appraisal of their lives and openness to the Holy One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and a cleansing fire. John, the whistle-blower on unholy lives, is jailed for pointing to Jesus as the one who brings good news to all people. It is good news that will become the song of the angels and that will be on the lips and in the hearts of those forgiven and healed by this Savior.

-continued on the next page. . .

IMAGES OF THE SEASON—ADVENT

A vision from the prophet Isaiah places natural enemies of the animal world next to each other in a peaceable kingdom. This vision has been rendered by artists and proclaimed by preachers. Hurting and destroying others is forbidden. The weak and powerless, the poor and sorrowful will have God as their advocate and deliverer. For at least the four weeks of Advent, the church sets this hopeful vision and divine promise next to stories of war and conflict, demands for privilege, and muffled cries of the poor and powerless.

Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15 a.m. - Service of the Word (in Slovak)
9:00 a.m. - Sunday School and Children's Choir
9:45 a.m. - Adult Choir Rehearsal
10:15 a.m. - Liturgy of Holy Communion (in English)

Choir Rehearsals

Tuesday, December 14th,
Wednesdays, December 1st, 8th, and 22nd at 7:30 p.m.

All of this points to the Christ who is Emmanuel, God with us. We know him as the promised one who came among us, who continues to be with us, and who opens up all of God's future as a promise in which we can hope.

It is an eye-opening experience to be in Israel during Advent. There are no Christmas decorations or the pressure to buy presents. One has only the great promises of Advent. Perhaps this suggests that we should avoid muting the strong, sober messages of Advent with cultural Christmas decorations. The Advent readings talk about peace challenging our war-making. The biblical message points us to the great needs of the poor, disadvantaged, and powerless who need more than once-a-year Christmas caroling or a few coins in the Salvation Army kettles. Advent points us to radical repentance and realistic hope that transforms our expectations and the way we live in the world. Starting with the Advent readings, how might we express this season artistically? Advent might look very different from many of the commercial decorations that are commonplace during December. How might our visual images speak as surprising and challenging voices in the wilderness? How might we picture hope opening up a promising future?

All these readings stir up a new vision of a world in which God comes among us. Will we allow our imaginations to lead us toward a vision for what all this means for our congregation and our life in the community and world? During these December days, the world tries to define Christmas in a way that mutes the Advent message. The church has both the opportunity and the responsibility to proclaim that Advent is not a wet blanket on festivity, but rather a house-cleaning that prepares us to celebrate what God has given the world in Jesus Christ. That is what gives hope and joy to the world.

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*You are invited to
join us for the*

Ladies' Altar Guild

***Annual Stedraky
Slovak Christmas Luncheon***

*Thursday, December 9th, 2010
12 noon.*

*Please make your reservations
on or before Sunday, December 5th.*

*Tickets are \$12.00 and matching funds
will be provided by the National Slovak Society.*

*Tickets can be purchased from
any member of the Ladies Altar Guild.*

*For more information, contact
Vera Borysek .*

STS. PETER AND PAUL CHOIR TO PRESENT CANDLES AND CAROLS

You may know that the choir at Sts. Peter and Paul is preparing to present a special musical setting of Advent and Christmas readings and carols on Christmas Eve this year entitled *Candles and Carols: A Service of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*, music and orchestration by Mark Hayes and narration and lyrics by Pamela Martin. I hope you have heard about this and will plan to add your voice to the choir for this offering of praise to God whose love excelling is revealed in the mystery of the Word made flesh.

Midweek rehearsals for *Candles and Carols* along with preparation of anthems for Sundays in Advent, are scheduled as follows: Wednesday, December 1; Wednesday, December 8; Tuesday, December 14; and a tentatively scheduled "dress rehearsal" on Wednesday, December 22, depending upon the schedules of singers and instrumentalists. These rehearsals begin at 7:30 p.m. in the choir room. Sunday morning rehearsals will meet weekly as usual at 9:30 a.m. The music is familiar, but needs to be well-rehearsed, so please mark these dates on your calendars and plan to attend the rehearsals as you are able. And please invite other singers from your family and congregation to join us!

If you have any questions or need additional information or a copy of the score or rehearsal CD please contact Parish Musician David Richards or a member of the choir or Worship and Music Committee.

Peace and joy to you in the upcoming season of Advent hope.



If you would like to order a poinsettia to help decorate the chancel of the sanctuary for our Christmas liturgies, a sign up sheet will be available in the dining hall beginning Sunday, November 21st. You may also contact the church office to place your order. The cost per plant is \$15.00. The deadline for payment and sign-up is Thursday, December 16th.



Official Pastoral Rites. . .

Wedding:

Raeann Bagato and Daniel Dlhy were united in marriage on October 30th by Pastor Lauritsen. Their witnesses were Shannon Bagato and Tom Pantoni.



December Happenings

Ladies Altar Guild Stedraký
Thursday, December 9th, 12 noon

Church Council Meeting
Thursday, December 9th, 7:30 p.m.

Advent Vespers Service with Pre-Service Recital
Sunday, December 12th, 3 p.m.

Preschool Christmas Party
Thursday, December 16th, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday School Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 19th, 10:15 a.m. service

Church Office Closed
December 24th and 31st

Finance Committee Meeting
Monday, December 27th, 7:15 p.m.

CODA meets weekly on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the Friendship Room.
AA Group meets weekly on Saturday evenings at 7 p.m. in the Friendship Room.

DECEMBER

- | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Dec. 1 | Ludmilla Kovalsky | Dec. 16 | Michael Kowalewicz |
| Dec. 4 | Eric Kostelny | | Steven Melka |
| Dec. 5 | Carrie Boike | | Nickolas Ritacco |
| | Walter Cudecki | Dec. 17 | Ann Kmet |
| Dec. 6 | Fred Kuzel | | Mary Jo Meyers |
| Dec. 7 | Lawrence Bakalich | | Nicholas Sasuta |
| Dec. 8 | Miloslava Blahut | Dec. 19 | Martin Tornil |
| Dec. 10 | Edward Sefara | Dec. 21 | Aaron Mitchell |
| Dec. 11 | Betty Kany | Dec. 24 | Jan Hapgood |
| | Kristian Kubo | Dec. 26 | Shirley Kostelny |
| | Claire Watkiss | | Mary Sasuta |
| Dec. 12 | Betty Force | Dec. 27 | Steven Mendel |
| Dec. 13 | Vera Borysek | Dec. 28 | Raymond Bittner |
| Dec. 14 | Ruth Bakalich | | Walter Kessler |
| | Audrey Bucz | | Megan Keyes |
| | Ann Pennino | Dec. 29 | Darina Miko |
| Dec. 15 | Steven Waldman | | |



December 5, 2004: Lee and Emily Drahos
December 28, 1967: Rose and Fred Tornil



For over ten years the congregation of Sts. Peter and Paul has been generously purchasing gifts and donating funds for gift certificates in order to make Christmas a happier occasion for many needy local children. Again this year, the congregation will “adopt” approximately twenty-five children through Lutheran Child and Family Services. A tree with ornaments containing a child’s gender, age and suggested gift is available downstairs in the dining hall. Gifts should be unwrapped, labeled with the information provided on the ornament, and placed in a box near the tree. Gift cards, certificates, and cash donations are also welcome. Wrapping paper donations will also be appreciated by LCFS. The deadline for gift drop-off is Sunday, December 5th for delivery to LCFS on December 11th.
—Lavinia Myers, Coordinator

As we celebrate our Lord's birth during the upcoming joyous Christmas season, the Community Life Committee asks that you please remember all of God's creatures in your Christmas giving plans. Please open your hearts (and your wallets) and help the Hinsdale Humane Society to care for the homeless dogs and cats who need food and medical help not only during the Christmas season but year round. Look for the CLC/HHS tree in the dining hall. There are envelopes on the tree in which you can place your check payable to the Hinsdale Humane Society (or cash) and drop the envelope in the box next to the tree. We will be accepting donations from November 14th - December 19th. If you have any questions, please contact CLC co-chairs, Ann or Marty Pennino. For more information on the fine work of the HHS, please visit www.hinsdalehumanesociety.org.
—Ann Pennino, CLC-Co-chair

From the Worship and Music Committee. . .

As part of our celebration of the birth of Christ, the Adult Choir of Sts. Peter and Paul will present a special musical setting of Advent and Christmas readings and carols on Christmas Eve this year entitled *Candles and Carols; A Service of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*. The Worship and Music Committee is asking the congregation for donations to help offset the cost of the music materials and special instrumentation necessary for this program. Special envelopes will be provided in the weekly worship bulletins for this purpose. Your generous contributions are appreciated.

December announcements. . .

- ★ *Oplatky* (traditional Slovak wafers used at Christmastime) will be available beginning the First Sunday in Advent, November 28th. A donation of \$1.50 per package (½ dozen) is requested. The *oplatky* will be available through the ushers on Sundays or the church office during the week.
- ★ The 2011 offering envelopes will be available for pick up in the downstairs hallway off the dining hall beginning December 5th. Please pick up envelopes for friends or relatives. If you would like to have your envelopes mailed to you, please contact Karen in the church office.
- ★ Financial donations made to the church must be received in the church office no later than December 30th in order to be included in your end of the year financial statement.



**ADVENT VESPERS
on the Third Sunday in
Advent
Gaudete Sunday**
December 12th in the
sanctuary.

3:00 p.m., Young Musicians of
Riverside Pre-Service Recital

4:00 p.m., Vespers with Advent Devotions
followed by a festive reception.

Listen to the seasonal music performed by the
Young Musicians of Riverside
then sing the beautiful
Holden Setting of Evening Prayer
with Lessons and Carols for the Season of Advent
followed by a festive reception.

You are invited to bring holiday food
to share at the reception.

A sign-up sheet will be posted in the dining hall.

Dorcas Society News...

Dear Friends,

This year we can again say we had another successful Craft Fair because of the people who came out and supported us. Our heartfelt thanks. Also, our thanks to all the workers who helped at the Fair in various capacities. We asked for help and once again you responded. Our thanks to everyone.

This year, Dorcas will not be having a Christmas Mini Fair or a regular meeting in December. Our next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 25th at 12 noon.

Please watch upcoming issues of the Sunday bulletin or monthly newsletter for details on our holiday gathering.

A blessed Thanksgiving to everyone.

Emily Kostelancik



The congregational staff: Pastor Lauritsen, Karen, Donna, Daid, Patty, Brian, and the Members of the Church Council of Sts. Peter and Paul would like to wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and a joyous and healthy New Year.

Preschool News...

Dear Friends,

Merry Christmas from the preschool. We have been extremely busy the last couple of months preparing for the holidays. On Thursday, December 16th at 7 p.m., we will have our Preschool Christmas Party along with an appetizer reception. I even think we will have a visit from a famous jolly ol' elf!

During the holiday season please continue to save your Campbell soup labels. We appreciate your help.

Patty and I wish everyone a blessed holiday season. Make sure you enjoy one of God's greatest treasures this holiday—your children.

-Donna Tuider, Preschool Director



IMITATE CHRIST IN GIVING

As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, the Church points us both backward to his coming in humility as Messiah and forward to his coming in glory to judge. When he came as Messiah, he inaugurated the Kingdom of God among us. As judge, he will ask us to account for the life he gave us, how freely we shared this life with those around us. Look He will also ask us how we treated the ones he calls "the least of these my brethren" [Matthew 25:40], those people around the world whose suffering and needs are greater than ours. Did we afford them the same dignity and respect we would give our friends or family? Did we look upon their hurts with compassion and try to alleviate their suffering? Did we recognize them as our brothers and sisters, equal heirs with us of the kingdom heaven?

Throughout the world, organizations are committed to helping the victims of economic, natural or political disasters. As we ponder Jesus' concern for the least of his brethren, we may consider whether we wish to help people in emergency conditions like these. Of course, the Church needs our money if it is to do God's holy work of ministering His love to His people. But as great as this need is, we have a prior and greater need, and that is to use rightly all that God has entrusted to us. We have a great need to give



OUR LEGACY: SEASON OF FAITH

Carols and candles, drifts of snow;
Tinsel and holly; Yule logs aglow.
Legends of shepherds wakened at night,
Awed by splendorous radiant starlight.

Gifts of the Magi of long ago;
Precious above all, they could bestow:
Gold and incense and coveted myrrh,
Measuring meaning, in the night's stir.

Balthasar, Casper, Melchoir, three;
Kings of the Orient beyond the sea.
Oh Holy Infant of "Silent Night!"
May God ever bless Thy Gleaming Light:

Bring all mankind to know Thy Peace,
Where joy shall conquer; strife shall cease.
This is the legacy for which we yearn.
This is the legacy we all must earn.

Lead on, great light of that distant star!
Make bright the way, wherever we are.
O Season of Faith: Greatest gift of all!
Let no ill fate, thy blessing forestall.

....Gilbert H. Hill

1. Matthew 24:23-25 - What does it all mean?
2. Isaiah 11:1-10 - Go back to your roots
3. Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 - To be righteous and just
4. Romans 15:4-13 - Pleasing others
- 5. Matthew 3:1-12 - Second Sunday of Advent**
6. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 - Learning to love
7. Romans 15:14-21 - What Christ has accomplished
8. Matthew 12:33-37 - Known by its fruit
9. Isaiah 35:1-10 - Who are the weak ones?
10. Luke 1:47-55 - To be bold
11. James 5:7-10 - Stop chewing the rag
- 12. Matthew 11:2-11 - Third Sunday of Advent**
13. Isaiah 29:17-24 - Christians, God's fruitful field
14. Ezekiel 47:1-12 - Measuring the water
15. Jude 17-25 - Build yourselves up
16. Isaiah 7:10-16 - What's in a name?
17. Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 - Let your face shine
18. Romans 1:1-7 - Incarnate
- 19. Matthew 1:18-25 - Fourth Sunday of Advent**
20. 1 Samuel 2:1-10 - The house of heaven
21. Matthew 1:1-17 - The family tree
22. Isaiah 9:2-7 - Hope springs eternal
23. Titus 2:11-14 - Get ready
24. Luke 2:1-20 - Christmas Even
25. Hebrews 1:1-12 - Christmas Day
- 26. Matthew 2:13-23 - First Sunday of Christmas**
27. John 21:20-25 - John, Apostle and Evangelist
28. Psalm 124 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
29. Matthew 23:34-39 - Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
30. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - Rest in Peace



October 2010



Attendance and Offering Report

Weekly Offering Needed for Budget: \$5,961.54

Date	Weekly Attendance	Plate Offering	Other Receipts*
10/3	107	\$4,505.00	\$ 6,297.79
10/10	93	\$2,262.00	\$ 1,653.70
10/17	93	\$3,301.00	\$ 73.49
10/24	95	\$3,047.00	\$ 0.00
10/31	76	\$1,696.30	\$ 178.00

*Includes memorials, tuition, flowers, etc.

October, 2010 average attendance: 93
October, 2009 average attendance: 89



**Be sure to visit the
Sts. Peter & Paul
Community Life Committee tree at
Brookfield Zoo during their 29th Annual
Holiday Magic event.**

**Saturdays and Sundays
in December beginning Dec. 4th
(closed on Christmas Day)
& all week December 26th – January 1st
4:00 – 9:00 pm**

Look for Tree #35 in the South Mall

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 5th:

Greeters: William Boor and Irene Boor
Acolyte: Abby Collins and Jake Collins
Assisting Minister: Lois Mika
Comm. Minister: Charles Matthies
Lectors: John and Shirley Kostelny
Nursery Attendant: Lavinia Myers
Ushers: Wally Kessler and John Broussard

December 12th:

Greeters: Ann Kmet and Fred Kuzel
Acolyte: Isabelle Boike and Carrie Boike
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Comm. Minister: Jan Hapgood
Lectors: Martin and Ann Pennino
Nursery Attendant: Olivia Lauritsen
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

December 19th:

Greeters: Ramona Suffern and Susan Martinek
Acolyte: Jessica Byrne and Donavan Byrne
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Comm. Ministers: John Triska, Brandon Michaels and Carrie Watkiss
Lectors: Katie Melnyk and Olivia Lauritsen
Nursery Attendant: Kristen Kovack
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

Christmas Eve, December 24th:

Greeters: Phil and Linda Painter
Acolytes: Sarah Michaels and Rachel Michaels
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Comm. Ministers: Anne Otjepka, Tom Michaels and Tom Myers
Lectors: Shirley Wood and John Broussard
Nursery Attendant: *No Nursery Coverage*
Ushers: Wally Kessler, Ann Pennino and Joan Triska

December 26th:

Greeters: Milan and Anita Horak
Acolyte: Sarah Watkiss and Katie Melnyk
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Comm. Minister: Anne Otjepka
Lectors: Keith Altavilla and Anne Otjepka
Nursery Attendant: Carol Melnyk
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Paul Watkiss

Sacristan and Altar Care:
Anne Otjepka

JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

January 2nd:

Greeters: Mildred Melka and Lois Mika
Acolyte: Jonathan Meyers and Jonathan Haase
Assisting Minister: Tom Michaels
Comm. Minister: Charles Matthies
Lectors: Sheryl Hallmann and Kristine Boike
Nursery Attendant: Carrie Boike
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 9th:

Greeters: John and Janet Broussard
Acolyte: Abby Collins and Jake Collins
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Comm. Minister: Joan Triska
Lectors: Brandon Michaels and Sarah Michaels
Nursery Attendant: Vicki Michaels
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 16th:

Greeters: Ann Vana and Mildred Melka
Acolyte: Hannah Boike and Katie Melnyk
Assisting Minister: Brandon Michaels
Comm. Minister: Vicki Michaels
Lectors: Joanne Sefara and Robert Melnyk
Nursery Attendant: Lavinia Myers
Ushers: Wally Kessler and John Broussard

January 23rd:

Greeters: Lawrence and Ruth Bakalich
Acolyte: Isabelle Boike and Carrie Boike
Assisting Minister: Jan Hapgood
Comm. Minister: Anne Otjepka
Lectors: Tom and Lavinia Myers
Nursery Attendant: Kristine Boike
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 30th:

Greeters: Paul Watkiss and Lavinia Myers
Acolyte: Jessica Byrne and Donovan Byrne
Assisting Minister: Lois Mika
Comm. Minister: John Broussard
Lectors: Tom and Vicki Michaels
Nursery Attendant: Olivia Lauritsen
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Paul Watkiss

Sacristan and Altar Care:
Anne Otjepka

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION MINISTERS

If you may be interested in serving as a communion distribution minister for our many brothers and sisters who reside in nursing homes, are recovering in rehabilitation centers, are hospitalized or homebound, please speak with Pastor Lauritsen who will be offering instruction and training in this important sacramental and visitation ministry to those who are unable to receive Communion with the congregation on Sunday mornings.

Remember

If you are unable to keep your scheduled date, please arrange for a replacement and call the church office with the change. Thank you.

Altar Flowers

Oct. 31st: In loving memory of parents and grandparents +Betty+ and +Joe Zittman+ on the anniversaries of their deaths by remembering children Ray, Tina and Rocky, and grandchildren.

In loving memory of father and grandfather +John Hurbanis+ on the anniversary of his passing on October 29th by remembering son and daughter-in-law Richard and Ruth Hurbanis and family.

Nov. 7th: With gratitude for the Confirmation of Kristian and Karin Kubo by parents Adriana and Branislav Kubo.

In loving memory of beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather +Michael Riban+ on the 15th anniversary of his death on November 6th, 1995 by remembering children Mildred Riban and Michael Riban, Jr and family.

Nov. 14th: In celebration of Milan and Olga Zavodny's 63rd Wedding Anniversary on November 15th.

In memory of dear sister +Bessie Vachout+ and loving parents +Stephen+ and +Elizabeth Michalicka+ by remembering sister and daughter Betty Bosh.

MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

FOR THE CHURCH

Edward and Ann Borsuk and Family, in memory of dearest parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents +Andrew+ and +Sophie Borsuk+.

Wayne Rauschenberg, in memory of +Allen Rauschenberg+.

Milan and Olga Zavodny, in celebration of their 63rd Wedding Anniversary and Milan's 85th birthday.

Lorraine E. Body, in memory of dear husband +Fred Paul Body+.

Lottie Licko, in memory of +Betty Mikulina+.

Ruth Shintay, in memory of father +Rev. Jan Body+.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Jenkala, in memory of +Susan Filipek+.

In loving memory of beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great grandmother +Mary Riban+ on the 9th anniversary of her death on December 19th, 2001 by remembering children Mildred Riban and Mike Riban, Jr. and Family.

The Birthmark

**A Sermon for All Saints Sunday with the Rite of Confirmation
Sunday, November 7th, 2010
Ephesians 1:11-23 and Luke 6:20-31**

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Staci and Karin and Jake and Nina and Kristian and Katie and Carrie, with Paul's words to the Ephesians, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to

which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power."

Some know that I've long been a big fan of Gary Larson's *Farside* cartoons since my seminary days when some of us would gather at breakfast every morning to browse the Minneapolis Star Tribune for the latest of Larson's lampoons. In one of my favorites, there are two deer standing in a forest apparently having a conversation during hunting season. We notice that one of the deer has a big red and white target grown into the white patch of fur just beneath its nose. The other deer takes a long look at the target and finally shakes his head and says, "Bummer of a birthmark, Hal . . . Bummer of a birthmark."

Do you suppose the same could be said about the birthmark of our baptism, the brand of Jesus' cross upon our hearts, the imprint of his death and resurrection upon our lives? "Blessed are you who are poor. . . ." Jesus says today. "Blessed are you who are hungry now. . . ." he told his followers. "Blessed are you who weep now. . . ." he dared to say. "[And] blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man." This is what Jesus tells his followers. Now, are you still ready to have your faith confirmed? Are you still prepared to affirm the promises of your baptism? "[And] blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man?" You see, the cross can be a bummer of a birthmark. When these young persons, seated before us today, were baptized, they, like the rest of us, were branded—branded with the cross of Jesus Christ, marked upon their foreheads with the water of the basin and emblazoned upon their hearts by the fire of the Holy Spirit. And each of them was Christened, Staci and Karin and Jake and Nina and Kristian and Katie and Carrie were given the new name of Christ. They were "Christed," Christened. God branded you, making you his own in Holy Baptism, sealing you with the Holy Spirit, and marking you with the cross of Christ forever.

Now what do you do when you're branded? The rap artist, Busta Rhymes, as some of you know, I'm sure, asks the question in some of his lyrics, "What do you do when you're branded, marked with a coward's shame. . . ." Alan Alch, who, by the way, originally composed those lyrics, asked that question in the opening theme song for the 60s television western series called *Branded* in which Chuck Connors plays the role of a court marshaled cavalry officer.

Cattle ranchers know that once the brand is seared into the hide, there's no getting rid of it, no hiding it, no denying it; and all a cattle rustler can do is try to change the shape of the brand. The brand marks who we belong to and whose we shall always be. Jesus, who bore the very imprint of God, Jesus was seared with the brand of humanity when he suffered and died *for you . . . for you and your salvation*, whether you like it or not, whether you want it or not, whether you show it or are ashamed of it. You're branded, and there's nothing you can do to change that. You are his beloved child forever, even though you may say one day, "No, I'm not, and I want nothing to do with the church," you still belong to him. "So that wherever you go for the rest of your life,"

When these young persons, seated before us today, were baptized, they, like the rest of us, were branded—branded with the cross of Jesus Christ, marked upon their foreheads with the water of the basin and emblazoned upon their hearts by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

"So that wherever you go for the rest of your life . . .," as the lyrics say, "you will not need to prove to them all . . . that you're a man or a woman because you are already a child of God." You don't need to prove anything.

as the lyrics say, “you will not need to prove to them all . . .” that you’re a man or a woman because you are already a child of God. You don’t need to prove anything.

The world has a way of telling you that you’re nobody, that you need to prove that you’re somebody by being more famous, or richer, or smarter, or more popular, or bigger or stronger than any one else. Don’t let anybody tell you that. Don’t let anybody tell you that you’re nobody. Don’t let anybody tell you that you have to prove yourself. You don’t because you are loved and you are already somebody in the eyes of the only One who matters. You have been engraved, branded, tattooed, as the prophet Isaiah says, upon the palm of God’s hand.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts,” says the LORD in Jeremiah, “and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

For Martin Luther there was nothing that mattered more in life than his baptism into Christ. He recounts that whenever the devil assailed him, whenever he was beaten down, whenever he felt lost in the abyss of life, he would answer, “But I am baptized! . . . And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body . . . No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism,” he said, “for through it we obtain perfect holiness and salvation, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire.”

So, what do you do when you’re baptized?

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.” Like I said, baptism can be a bummer of a birthmark.

Some thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years ago, your parents and Godparents, together with a congregation somewhere in the church, were asked the question echoing Paul to the younger, perhaps somewhat fearful, Timothy, on your behalf, “Will you fight the good fight of the faith . . . ?” They answered, “Yes.” Without asking you whether or not you wanted the name of Christ, they placed you kicking and screaming on the path of following Jesus to the cross and resurrection. And throughout these years, they, along with your Mother the Church, through this congregation, your brothers and sisters, Grace Ateca, and Sheryl Hallmann, and Jane Lauritsen, and so many, many others have been fighting for the name of Christ in your life and his cross upon your heart. Even when there have been many, many claims already vying for possession of your young lives, we have been here, and will go on being here, fighting for the name of Christ upon your lives.

“You are not your own,” says the Apostle Paul, “You were bought with a price. . . You’re body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” And the symbol you choose to wear on that body says something about you. A tattoo or a brand or a ring or a pin or even a White Sox T-shirt is a mark of your identity. The same could be said of the kind of car you drive, or the neighborhood you live in, or the clothes you wear, or the organizations you’re involved in. When you “wear” those things, you’re saying, “This is who I am.

For Martin Luther there was nothing that mattered more in life than his baptism into Christ.

But Christians bear the imprint of the cross, not just on a necklace or pin, but upon our hearts and lives, and flesh and blood. And, along with our Jewish cousins, we’ve ever been especially fond of any other mark upon our bodies but the image of God and, for Christians, the cross of Jesus Christ.

This is what I believe in. This is where I place my loyalties.” An Olympian may sport a set of Olympic rings. Lovers exchange a piece of jewelry to wear on their bodies when they are “going steady,” as we used to say. The Latin Kings in Humboldt Park used to brand themselves, burning the flesh with a crown, claiming that the gang was their ultimate allegiance, staking their lives on it. But Christians bear the imprint of the cross, not just on a necklace or pin, but upon our hearts and lives, and flesh and blood. And, along with our Jewish cousins, we’ve ever been especially fond of any other mark upon our bodies but the image of God and, for Christians, the cross of Jesus Christ. You are made in the image—the likeness of God—let it shine in your lives. Like I said, your body doesn’t belong to you, and we are not free to do with these bodies as we please. They belong to the Lord, purchased with his blood. “Therefore, glorify God in your body,” says Paul in First Corinthians.

Today, we ask you, “Will you fight the good fight of the faith . . . empowered by the Holy Spirit? Will you fight for your name? Will you fight for the name of Jesus? Will you say “yes” to God’s “yes” to you, spoken long ago at your baptism and every Sunday since then at the Lord’s Table?

Yes, we will “fight the good fight of the faith, taking hold of the eternal life, to which we were called and for which we made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Take hold of the eternal life with which God has taken hold of you in Jesus, lest anything else take hold of your tender young lives.

Many of us have answered “yes” to the questions you are about to be asked, and then, we have walked away from church, regarding our confirmation as nothing more than graduation from church. No, that’s not it. Confirmation is graduation *into* the church, *into* your baptism in Christ.

It is difficult, oftentimes painful, to be branded with the cross of Jesus Christ and left to wander the wild, wild West of the world in which we live. People see this brand as cause for ridicule, taunt, reviling, something to make fun of, maybe even to be ashamed of, maybe even a coward’s shame, as some would see the cross and those who follow it. “. . . But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise,” Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. . . .”

In the years ahead, you will need to know that you walk with Jesus on this path with all the saints who have gone before us, especially when your peers will prey upon your every weakness. The promise in Jesus is that there is a power made perfect in weakness, a power which is revealed in the lives of the saints who surround us today cheering us on in the race of faith.

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of saints, let us also run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. . . .” They are those who have shed their blood for Jesus’ sake, defending the gospel, renewing society, tending the poor, caring for the church; loving their enemies, doing good to those who hated them, blessing those who cursed them, praying for those who abused them; doing to others as they would have done to them; living the kinds of lives that you, too, are willing to live and shall live always in Jesus our Lord. -DJL

Mercy for the Merciful; Forgiveness for the Forgiven
A Sermon for the Twenty-second Sunday
after Pentecost, October 24th, 2010
Luke 18:9-14

Almighty God, in your great mercy you have received each of us as we are rather than as we judge ourselves to be. Give us now the grace to receive others in the way that you have received us and to look upon our neighbors as you look upon them as your beloved children who stand with us in need of your mercy and grace. Amen.

From *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* comes a parable on prayer: Once there was a beloved rabbi who was approaching the point of death, so the congregation proclaimed a day of prayer and fasting for the village in order to beseech the Heavenly Judge to intervene on behalf of the beloved rabbi. But on the very day when the entire congregation was gathered in the synagogue for penance and prayer, the man who was considered the "village drunk" went to the tavern for schnapps. When a Jewish brother saw him do this he scolded the man, "Don't you know this is a day of fasting and prayer? You're not allowed to drink. Why, everybody is at the synagogue praying for our rabbi!" So the man went to the synagogue and prayed, "Dear God!" he said, "Please restore our rabbi to good health so that I can have my schnapps!" Well, the rabbi recovered, and it was considered a miracle. Rabbi explained it the next day like this, "May God preserve our 'village drunk' until he is a hundred and twenty years old! Know that his prayer was heard by God when yours were not. He put his whole heart and soul into his prayer!"

Jesus says, "Two men went up to the temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. The other was a tax collector." As usual, Jesus has us set-up. He has sent into the temple the Pharisee who was one of the most respectable people in Judaism. He has also sent into the temple this tax collector who is a crook who works for the Roman oppressors, getting rich from his own people.

The Pharisee stands *by himself* and he prays and says, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people. I am not a thief. I am not a rogue. I am not an adulterer. And I am certainly not like this tax collector over here. I fast twice a week. I give away a tenth of my income." "I . . . I . . . I . . ." You can tell a lot about a person by how often they say "I . ." That is the Pharisee's prayer.

Then the tax collector gives his prayer without so much as lifting his eyes from his feet, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." "God ." Not "I" but "God." Then Jesus says, "I tell you this man went to his house justified rather than the other, for all who put themselves up will be put down and all who are put down will be put up." "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Like all Jesus' parables, this story ought to have a warning label: "This parable will be hazardous to all your previous

Like all Jesus' parables, this story ought to have a warning label: "This parable will be hazardous to all your previous opinions about how religion works and how God works." The Pharisee's problem is not that he is showing off. He simply believes that his stack of good deeds is enough to save the world, and he believes that everyone else ought to live their lives the way he does. His prayer was not unusual.

A prayer of thanksgiving from the Talmud was prayed by the rabbis when leaving the house of study: "I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou has set my portion with those who sit in the *Beth ha-Midrash* [the house of study] and Thou has not set my portion with those who sit in [street] corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction." Sounds like the Pharisee's prayer.

The Pharisee's prayer of gratitude may be spoken to the Lord but it is really about himself. He locates his righteousness entirely in his own actions and being. He has trusted in himself rather than in the power of God. The tax collector, on the other hand, knows that he has no means by which to claim righteousness. So, he stands at the back and throws himself entirely on the mercy of God. Of course, the trapdoor here is that we may well end up praying, "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other people: do-gooders, self righteous, or even

like that sanctimonious Pharisee. I come to church each week; I listen attentively to the sermons; I give generously in every way; and I have learned that I should always be humble. . . How proud I am to be so humble!"

Anytime you draw a line between who's "in" and who's "out" you will probably find God on the other side of you. Anytime you say "us" and "them," God likely will be with "them." Jesus knows that contempt for others lurks in the human heart. We imagine that by putting others down, we lift ourselves up; that we look, oh, so much better than anybody else.

We imagine that by putting others down, we lift

"You see, the world would be such a better place if only other people were as kind and considerate as I am, as selfless and wonderful as I am, as devout and moral as I am, as socially concerned and compassion as I am." And God says, according to Father Robert Capon, "No. That'll never work. It can't be done by people who think they are winners. It can only be done by people who are ready to admit that they are losers, and then who are willing to trust God to do it for them."

"We all stumble in many ways," the Letter of James reminds us, and for many reasons. What we all need when we flounder and fail is not moral condescension but human compassion, not humiliation but empathy, not shame but hope. I love the wisdom of St. Maximos the Confessor of the seventh century: "The person who has come to know the weakness of human nature has gained experience of divine power. Such a person never belittles anyone . . . He knows that God is like a good and loving physician who heals with individual treatment each of those who are trying to make progress."

To get to that place, Jesus says that we need only seven words: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." - *DJL*

The deadline for articles for the January, 2011 issue of the congregational newsletter is Sunday, December 5th. Thank you for being prompt!

Bibles and Spevniky Available

Over the years the congregation at Sts. Peter and Paul has received many Bibles and Spevniky (hymnals) in the Czech and Slovak languages from families of former and deceased members. Most of these sacred books are very old with ornately engraved covers but the pages are extremely fragile, faded and fragmented. Because of the condition of these texts and the fact that they are printed in the Gothic script, they generally cannot be used by the congregation except to be stored here under less than ideal conditions. (Books need to be kept in climate controlled storage away from sunlight and humidity). If you are interested in having a copy or copies of these texts, or if you know of a museum or library that would receive them, speak with Pastor Lauritsen or Karen Rouleau.

There are also many photographs of the congregation throughout the decades which include portraits and group photos of confirmation classes, church picnics, Sunday school classes, etc.; but most of these need to be framed or laminated and made ready to be displayed in the hallway off the dining hall. If you would be interested in sorting through these photos and preparing them for display, please speak with Pastor Lauritsen. This could make a good wintertime project for the coming season

FALL YOUTH GROUP SERVICE PROJECT



AWESOME!





Confirmation



Rejoice in that day
and leap for *joy*,
for surely your
reward is
set in heaven

- Carrie Elizabeth Boike
- Jake Michael Collins
- Staci Marina Dabrowski
- Katherine Nicole Melnyk
- Kristian Kubo
- Karin Kubova
- Nina Christine Ritacco



ALL SAINTS SUNDAY
November 7th, 2010 ✠ 10:15 a.m.

In holy baptism God makes saints out of sinners. In holy communion God forgives the sins of all the saints. In the assembly today we give thanks for all the saints "who from their labors rest," who have fought the good fight, who have gained the crown. In the same breath we petition our God for the strength to hear and to heed the admonitions of the Lord Jesus in today's gospel. Recalling that we have been sealed by the Spirit and sustained by the Savior's body and blood, we keep on keeping on as God gives us breath, to the praise of God's glory.





Santa Claus

Santa Claus had an ancestor. Of this we can be sure, for the Dutch immigrants brought St. Nicholas with them when they came from the old world to Pennsylvania.

Nicholas lived at the beginning of the fourth century. He was Bishop of Myra, a coast town of Lycia, a country which now forms a part of Turkey. He was known throughout the ancient world as a most generous man, which easily accounts for the modern custom of Santa's gifts.

In the old world, St. Nicholas wore flowing robes, for after all, he was a Bishop. But soon after he made the voyage across the water he was transformed. Instead of being tall and stately, he became fat and jolly. A new red suit matched ruddy cheeks, contrasting directly with the plain, loosely hung vestments he used to wear. And trading his white horse for "eight tiny reindeer," he now visited the homes of children on Christmas Eve, instead of December 6th. In large measure, credit for this transformation goes to Washington Irving, whose imaginative pen described the new, jolly Santa we know so well today.

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Fred Kuzel	

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