

# FAITH NEWSLETTER

April / May 2016

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Dear Friends in Christ,

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, our Friday morning group will be starting a new book, *Simply Christian*, by N.T. Wright. This book gives us a look at what it means to be Christians and to be the church in the modern world. If you're free on Friday mornings, I invite you to come along for an interesting read. Here's a snippet to whet your appetite:

“The river and the tree appear to be opposites.

The river begins, quite literally, all over the place. A tiny spring way up in the hills; a distant lake, itself fed by many streams; a melting glacier - all of them and a thousand more contribute to the babble and rush of water, the smooth flow here and the swirling rapids there. Gradually other streams, other whole rivers, make their contribution. Out of many there emerges the one. I lived for a time by the banks of the Ottawa River in Canada, just upstream from where it joins the St. Lawrence. It is, at that point, over a mile wide. Many streams have made it what it is.

The tree begins with a single seed. An acorn or its equivalent falls down into the earth: tiny, vulnerable, alone. It germinates and puts out roots down into the dark earth. Simultaneously it sends up a shoot into the light and air. The roots quickly diverge and probe all over the place, looking for nourishment and water. The shoot becomes a trunk, again a single upright stalk, but this, too, quickly diverges. An oak or a cedar will spread far and wide in all directions. Even the tall, narrow poplar is far more than just a single trunk. The river flows from many into one; the tree grows from one into many.

We need both images if we are to understand the church.

The church is like a river. In the last book of the Bible, John the visionary sees a huge throng of people from every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue coming together in a great chorus of praise. Like a river, they all started in different places, but they have now brought their different streams into a single flow. The image of the river reminds us forcibly that, though the church consists by definition of people from the widest possible variety of backgrounds, part of the point of it all is that they belong to one another, and are meant to be part of the same powerful flow, going now in the same single direction. Diversity gives way to unity.

But at the same time the church is like a tree. The single seed, Jesus himself, has been sown in the dark earth and has produced an amazing plant. Branches have set off in all directions, some pointing almost directly upward, some reaching down to the earth, some heading out over neighboring walls. Looking at the eager, outstretched branches, you'd hardly know they were all from the same stem. But they are. Unity generates diversity.

These images shouldn't be pressed too far. In the final chapter of the Bible, where river and trees come together as part of the extraordinary picture of the New Jerusalem, the river comes from a single source, and the trees all bear leaves with the same healing power. But this double image nonetheless helps us understand something of what Christians mean by the church - the people of God, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, God's household, the motley collection of people who gather periodically in the shabby building up the road. What is the church? Who belongs to it, and how? Equally to the point, what is the church for?"

N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*, 199-200

For the answers to these questions and more, join us on Friday mornings, starting April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Pastor Birkholz**

# In and Around Faith Church

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## Ladies Aid

Our next meeting will be on April 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM in the Church basement where we will have a sandwich supper while we set up for the Rummage Sale which will take place on Sat. April 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM.

We will also be setting up on Fri. April 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM and again at 6:30 PM. You can bring in all of your slightly used household items, clothes, toys and anything else you might have.

We will also have Bake Sale so plan on bringing in baked goods as well.

We will appreciate any help we can get for this event.

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## Pictorial Directories

A limited number of pictorial directories are still available for \$5 each. Be sure to pick one up to learn the names and faces of our congregation

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## Clean-Up Day

Our trustees are planning a church clean-up day on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, beginning at 9:00 AM. A variety of projects will be available for all those who want to help.

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## Dinner and a Movie

A spaghetti dinner followed by a movie is being planned by Lynne Trojanowski. The tentative date is set for April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Watch for more information in the coming weeks.

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## Ascension Day Service

Our Lord ascended to heaven forty days after Easter. This year Ascension Day falls on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. We will have a 7:00 PM Divine Service to celebrate this important festival.

## Field Trip

### Shrine of Christ's Passion

On Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> we are planning a trip to St. John, Indiana to see the Shrine of Christ's Passion. This outdoor display includes statues depicting all of the important events of Holy Week. We will meet at the church at 1:00 PM to carpool. There is no cost to attend.

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## Church Picnic

We have reserved the pavilion at the Wolfe Wildlife Refuge (109th and Laramie) for Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. We plan to eat around 12:30 PM. Drinks and meat will be provided. Please bring a side or dessert to share, and your own plates and utensils. If you would like to play Bingo, please bring a prize for the table. We will have a sign-up at church for those who plan to attend, as well as those who can help with the set-up. Please plan to join us for this time of food and fellowship.

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## VBS

VBS this year will be on June 13<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup>. We will be meeting from 9:30 AM until 12:00 PM each day. Please be sure to invite all kids ages 3 to 12 years old to join us.

Our focus this year will be on will be on plants, with our stories being:

**The Garden of Eden, Jesus as the Root of Jesse, The Parable of the Sower, The Parable of the Mustard Seed, and The New Heavens and the New Earth.**

This year the kids will again be in family groups. Last year we had 50 different kids attend, and we hope to keep that up. With that in mind, we are also going to need lots of volunteers. Our volunteer meeting will be May 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 AM in the Parish Hall. We can also use teen volunteers, so be sure to invite them to help out by attending our volunteer meeting. For more information, contact Amberleigh Birkholz.

# Schedule of April / May 2016 Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>April Event</u>
2	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
3	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
10	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
16	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
17	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
24	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class

## Weekly Meetings

Bible Study	Fri. - 11:00 AM
Confirmation Class	Fri. - 4:30 PM
AA Groups	Mon-Wed-Fri - 6:00 PM
	Sat. - 8:00 AM
Alanon	Tue. - 7:30 PM

## Hymn of the Month

### April: "This Joyful Eastertide" (# 482)

This hymn was written by George Woodward in 1894 and set to a popular Dutch tune from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The refrain highlights St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:14, 20, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain . . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>May Event</u>
1	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
5	7:00 PM	Ascension Day Worship / Communion
7	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
8	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
15	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
21	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
22	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
29	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class

## Hymn of the Month

### May: "Christ Is the World's Redeemer" (# 539)

Here we have an ancient hymn of the church attributed to St. Columba, an Irish missionary who lived from 521-597. He founded several monasteries in Ireland, before traveling to Scotland, where he spent most of his later life. This hymn focuses on the strength and encouragement we receive through Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. It is sung to a traditional Irish melody.

# April / May 2016 Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

## Apr. Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

**Apr. 3** Alden Ketchum  
Gene Osmanski  
Mary Slepki  
Gail Henson

**Apr. 10** Frank Oslakovic  
Ed Neaves  
Howard Johnson  
Mark Trojanowski

**Apr. 17** Alden Ketchum  
Richard Clark  
Marilyn Diehl  
Eleonore Lang

**Apr. 24** Frank Oslakovic  
Gene Osmanski  
Richard Clark  
Howard Johnson

## Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

**Apr. 3** Gene Osmanski

**Apr. 10** Mike Kampenga

**Apr. 17** Katie Kampenga

**Apr. 24** Ray Bennett

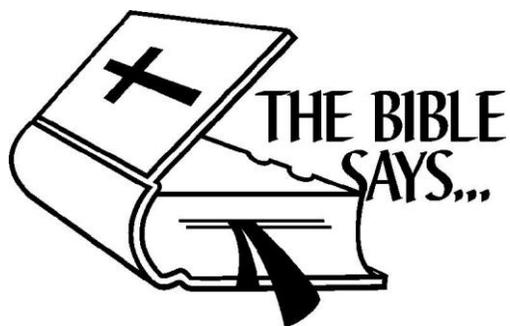
**May 1** Ed Neaves

**May 8** Debbie Hochgesang

**May 15** Mike Kampenga

**May 22** Mark Trojanowski

**May 29** Gene Osmanski



## May Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

**May 1** Richard Clark  
Ed Neaves  
Mike Kampenga  
Katie Kampenga

**May 8** Gene Osmanski  
Alden Ketchum  
Mark Trojanowski  
Dora Haynes

**May 15** Frank Oslakovic  
Ed Neaves  
Eric Rosenbrock  
Ray Bennett

**May 22** Richard Clark  
Howard Johnson  
Gail Henson  
Mary Slepki

**May 29** Gene Osmanski  
Richard Clark  
Mary Slepki  
Gail Henson

## May 5 Ascension Day 7:00 PM

Ed Neaves  
Richard Clark  
Frank Oslakovic  
Howard Johnson



# Ask the Pastor

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## Question:

In the Christmas hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” there is the line “Peace on earth, and mercy mild – God and sinners reconciled.” I’ve always wondered about the “reconciled” part, because weren’t we sinners first reconciled with God at Jesus’ death and resurrection? At the moment Jesus dies, the curtain in the temple is torn, meaning that our estrangement from God has been overcome through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. It would have been nice if Jesus’ birth alone could have overcome Original Sin and “reconciled” us with God, but we know that it was not enough. Jesus did not say “It is finished” until his death on Calvary. Doesn’t this line in the Christmas hymn reinforce the tendency in our society to celebrate Christmas much more lavishly than Easter, even though Easter is the most significant holy day that exists for Christians? Isn’t Jesus’ birth just a promise of reconciliation with God that still needs to be fulfilled in Jesus’ death and resurrection?

## Answer:

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing” was written by Charles Wesley in 1739 and originally had ten stanzas. Many changes have been made in the hymn over the years, but the line “God and sinners reconciled” is original to the text.

You are correct that we are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus. Paul writes in Romans 5:10, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” And he also writes in Colossians 1:22a, “he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death.”

At this point of the hymn, Wesley is paraphrasing the words of the angels in Luke 2:14, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” “God and sinners reconciled” is meant to correspond to “good will toward men.” Does Jesus bring peace on earth and good will to men only through His death, or through his incarnation as well? Part of the problem is that there is no verb in the angels’ words, and so no easy way to get a sense of time.

In a way, Jesus’ incarnation does bring peace and reconciliation, because in His body humanity and divinity are united. And yet Jesus’ work is not complete until His death on the cross. And, in a way, Jesus’ work of reconciliation is not done, because there are still people who have not been reconciled to the Father. That is where we fit in as agents of Jesus’ ongoing reconciliation. Here’s what St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

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## Question:

I was wondering what you know or have heard about merging the Lutheran Church with the Catholic Church?

## Answer:

Church mergers are rare, but more and more church bodies are working together more closely now than they have in many years. The second Vatican Council opened up the Catholic Church to work more closely with other Christians. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has had ongoing conversations with the Roman Catholic Church for many years and signed several statements of agreement (the LCMS is not a member of the LWF).

In 2017 we will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. A joint prayer service is being planned to be held in Lund, Sweden with representatives of the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church. Although they are praying together, I cannot foresee any Lutheran church merging with the Roman Catholic Church in the near future.

Although we have many things in common with our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church, we still have many serious disagreements about the gospel and how God saves us. The Roman Catholic Church still teaches that we have to do good works to cooperate in our salvation, while the Lutherans teach that God saves us through Jesus Christ, and we don’t need to do anything more. We hope and pray that we will be united again one day, but that will not happen until we can agree on the truth of the gospel.