

It's Lent. Historically the Lenten season has been one of thoughtful reflection on one's faith and the expression of it. This year, it has led me to ask, "What constitutes a good church?" Perhaps you've asked the same question. Perhaps if you haven't, you should.

In our Lutheran Confessions (The Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration, Art. XI), we are taught that the proper use and administration of the Word and sacraments is the metric by which we must judge a church. It says that God "has preordained His Word and sacraments as the regular means and instruments for drawing people to Himself," and that through the Word and sacraments alone, the "merit and the benefits of Christ are to be offered, given, and distributed to us." This means that if a church gets the Word and sacraments right, God's work is being done there. You're getting Jesus. You're getting the full meal.

As Luther would ask, what does this mean? It means we must always be thinking about the following questions as we evaluate the work being done in a church:

Is the church rightly handling God's Word?

Many churches use the Bible regularly. But that doesn't mean it's being used rightly. In Matthew 4, Satan himself used God's Word to suit his own purposes. Many "churches" today do the same thing. Similarly, many churches use God's Word to bring up the person of Jesus only to present Him as a good moral example or one of many paths to God. But again, even demons believe in Christ, yet they do not receive His benefits (James 2:19).

To rightly handle God's Word is to use it to show God's plan of salvation for His people. The Bible from start to finish tells this story. In the law it shows humanity how God's way is the best way to live. That law exposes how we've failed to live according to God's plan and have earned condemnation as a consequence. The Bible then speaks beautiful words of the Gospel, which tell us that through Christ's death and resurrection alone, there is no longer any condemnation for those who trust in Him (Romans 5:1). The Holy Spirit takes God's living and active Word and uses it to produce this faith in us.

If the Word is being rightly preached, then it will mean that the pastor's sermons are not a spiritual "how-to" manual of how to be a better <fill-in-the-blank> this week. If that is the sermon's main focus, you've only heard law—and a watered-down version at that, since it implies that you're able to achieve it. The law, preached rightly, will condemn us. It will show us how to live and guide us, but also how we've failed to do so. The Word preached rightly will magnify the Gospel—the obedience and forgiveness of Christ on our behalf. Good preaching will leave us feeling comforted, not in ourselves, but in the promises of God for us in Christ Jesus.

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Ruthfred Lutheran Church

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The submission deadline for the next Herald is **Saturday, April 13, 2019.**

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Is the Church rightly administering the sacraments?

If the Word is being rightly taught, it will also follow that the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)—instituted by God's command in His Word—are viewed as gospel gifts, rather than law commands. They are God's work and gifts for us, not our work and gifts for God. In the Lutheran understanding of the sacraments, God's Word attaches to the visible elements of water, bread, and wine to form a vehicle of God's grace to the recipient.

Some churches view baptism as a “work of obedience” whereby a believing Christian pledges his or her commitment to God. The Bible offers a different picture. It compares baptism to a “circumcision of the heart” not done by hands but by Christ as through baptism He buried our old nature and raised us to new life (Colossians 2:11-12). Elsewhere it says that “baptism . . . saves you, not by a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21). The work of burying one's sinful nature, resurrecting a new righteous nature, saving, and forgiving is the prerogative of God alone, and therefore baptism is a wonderful gift from Him from which a Christian can gain enormous comfort.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a gift of God. As God's Word combines with the gifts of bread and wine, it IS (as opposed to represents, looks like, or compares to) Christ's body and blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:26-28). In the gift Christ Himself is really present in, with, and under the bread and wine. This means it's not, as some churches teach, a mere symbolic remembrance of Him, but Christ's gift of Himself, His forgiveness, and His strength to the one who receives it in faith.

The bottom line: When the Word and sacraments are rightly taught and administered, we have Jesus. We have life, salvation, and forgiveness of sins. No matter how mundane or boring, seen for what it is, the little life raft becomes worth riding knowing the shore to which it sails.

Pastor Osier

Habitat for Humanity

For spring break, I decided to join my college's Habitat for Humanity chapter for a weeklong mission trip. We left Westminster College early on a Saturday morning and made the long drive down to Athens, Georgia. While there, we were able to clear land where habitat houses will be built, volunteer time working at the habitat, restore, and make significant progress on building a house. It was a great experience being able to make even a small difference in the town of Athens, but my favorite part of the trip was meeting one of the founders of Habitat for Humanity, Don Mosely. Don and his wife told us about their experiences with Habitat and the crazy adventures that God has led them on. They have been able to make a difference building affordable homes for families all over the world. Additionally, Don and his wife began an organization called Jubilee Partners, which is a camp that hosts refugees from countries around the world. Their goal is to live as an intentional Christian service community and to extend hospitality to newly arrived refugees. We were able to tour the camp and even meet some of the refugees and talk to them about how their lives have changed due to Jubilee and the love shown from Don. It was so inspiring to listen to Don and his wife talk about their experiences because of the way that they radiated Christ's love. They have a very firm grasp on what it means to love the way Jesus did, and it reminded me of how God calls us all to live. It was a great reminder to always come back to loving the way Jesus did. I am extremely appreciative of the church's financial support for this trip and for supporting such a wonderful organization.

Submitted by Jennifer Vogel

Official Acts

February 27–March 24, 2019

Funerals

*Karen Ann Thompson– March 8, 2019

*Robert Tarr– March 10, 2019

*Ed Fassel – March 23, 2019

*Indicates Members

Council Highlights

March 11, 2019

- Council approved the appointment of Kathy Siciliano to the Benevolence Committee.
- Pastor Carlson noted that twelve members had passed to their eternal home in the last nine weeks.
- Pastor Osier’s last day at Ruthfred will be June 16th. Pastor Carlson suggested that a farewell gathering be held on that Sunday.
- Pastor Carlson confirmed with attending trustees that they would take responsibility for refurbishing the vicarage in time for the arrival of the Westerburgs.
- The Eastern District churches have requested monetary assistance from Ruthfred for the annual conference. They would also appreciate help with serving during coffee breaks, etc., during the conference.
- Pete Huwe reported that trustees expect to finish collecting bids for the installation of surveillance cameras and have a recommendation for Council to approve soon.
- Don Roose moved to transfer \$6,000 from the Current Fund to the Benevolence Fund. John Welsh seconded; the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie D. Gill, Secretary

Song of the Month

By Tom Glasser

This Is Amazing Grace

Lyrics and Music: Phil Wickham

"Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"
Revelation 5:1-2

While I enjoy researching and writing about old traditional favorites, I also feel that it is sometimes good to remember that new songs of worship are still being written in our time. As I started researching for this article, I felt oddly vindicated when I noticed that, in a few verses beyond the ones quoted above, St. John records that the living creatures and twenty-four elders in heaven "sang a new song." If you are a contemporary-praise song fan, a K-Love listener, or an attender at Ruthfred's Prayer & Praise gatherings, you are probably familiar with "This Is Amazing Grace," released by Phil Wickham in 2013.

Phil hails from San Diego, California. He was born in 1984 and raised in a Christian home. In fact, Christian musicianship seems to run throughout his family. So it is perhaps not surprising that by age 13 Phil had already begun leading worship for his church youth group. As a young adult, he has gone on to release nine albums and travels the world playing his music for various churches. "This Is Amazing Grace" is the lead single from his album titled "The Ascension" and became RIAA certified Gold and topped the 2014 year-end Christian Airplay chart.

The song is performed with an exuberant, contagiously moderate rock beat. It celebrates the many attributes of God, such as His awe-inspiring power, mighty love, glorious kingship, and ability to bring order out of chaos. The refrain, however, emphasizes a different aspect of God's greatness:

*This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love,
That You would take my place, that You would bear my cross.
You laid down Your life that I would be set free.
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me.*



In the middle of the song there is a sudden dramatic change. The accompaniment drops out except for a soft repeating chord on a guitar or keyboard. And then in a subdued, more reverential tone, the following lyrics are sung, which answer the question posed in the Revelation passage quoted at the top of this article:

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave.*

This is repeated three times, each time progressively louder, and ending finally with "Worthy, worthy, worthy!" The song then closes out with a fully accompanied rendition of the refrain. We are so blessed to have a God worthy of worship, and One who makes sons and daughters out of us sin-estranged orphans!



" Tonight was just so fantastic. We laughed, we cried, and we laughed some more. Youth, music, and the voices of angels couldn't have been more. Hands are sore from clapping. " - Jenny M., Ontario, Canada

Experience it for yourself!

Sunday, April 28th, 2019 @ 7pm

Ruthfred Lutheran Church
3401 South Park Rd., Bethel Park, PA

Free admission - a love offering will be received. Everyone welcome!

★ www.hainingsband.com ★

Announcements

Exciting News: The Church Directory is in the process of being put together for publication. We should have the new directory by November 2019. Please sign up for your photo session on the sign-up sheets available on the table near the elevator in the upcoming weeks. We want this to be the best church directory ever! Thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation.

XYZ will conclude its season with a meeting on April 26. We want to thank all of you for your participation this year. We have more than doubled the number of people attending and had great programs and wonderful food and times of fellowship. Please sign up for this last event on the sign-up sheets outside of Pat's office. Hope to see you there.

Member Obituaries

KAREN THOMPSON, Age 75, of McMurray peacefully passed away on Sunday, March 3, 2019 at her home with her husband and family by her side. She was born on July 8, 1943 in Pittsburgh to the late Joseph and Marie Dengler. Beloved wife of Ralph S. Thompson for 43 years; loving mother of Sharon Hlawati, Leslie (Barry) Fleming, and the late Kimberly Bokenkamp; treasured grandmother of six; caring great-grandmother of seven. Karen was a lifetime member of Ruthfred Lutheran Church. She enjoyed her career for over 30 years as an English Teacher at Upper St. Clair High School and was the past president of the Giant Oaks Garden Club. Karen will be remembered for being a true educator and caring nurturer, and for her love for her family. A Funeral service was held on March 8, 2019 at Ruthfred Lutheran Church followed by interment at Forest Lawn Gardens.

ROBERT C. TARR, age 89, passed away with his family by his side on March 6, 2019. He is survived by his wife of 68 years Priscilla Sabo Tarr; four daughters, Kathleen (Rod) Gallagher, Karen (Bill) Livolsi, Debra (Joe) Cybulski, and Rebecca (Rich) Iannucci; seven grandchildren Rob Gallagher, David (Amy) Grochowski, Keith Grochowski, Liz (Bob) Daubert, Alex Gus, Dan (Allison) Cybulski, and Andrew (Terra) Gallagher; and 10 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by great-granddaughter Anna Grochowski. Bob was a proud U.S. Veteran who served in the Korean War. He was an industrial engineer for US Steel and a lifelong Steeler fan. Most of all he enjoyed spending time with his family. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. Bob's memorial service was officiated by his grandson, Pastor David Grochowski, on March 10, 2019 at Pittsburgh Cremation & Funeral Care.

EDWARD WILLIAM FASSEL, of Bethel Park, born on November 24, 1917, passed away peacefully on March 17, 2019 at age 101. He was the beloved husband of Elizabeth (Betty) Herzberg and loving father of Judy (Dick) Roessler, Janet (David) Krol, and the late Nancy Lee Fassel. Edward leaves behind his special grandchildren; Jennifer (Bill), Joanna (Joe), Michael (Erin), Leslie (Dominic), and Patty; as well as great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his wife of 64 years, Patricia Fassel. Funeral services were celebrated at Ruthfred Lutheran Church on March 23, 2019, followed by interment at the Queen of Heaven Cemetery.



APRIL 2019



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 JTTW Leader's Meeting 9:15 Craft & Sew 9:30 GriefShare 7:00 Elders' Meeting 7:00	2 HAPPY 93RD BIRTHDAY MIRIAM HURLEY	3 9:15 JTTW 2:00 Lenten Service 5:45 Children's Choir 6:00-7:00 Soup & Sandwich Supper 6:15 Jr. & Sr. Confirmation Classes 6:30 Bell Choir * Senior Choir 7:30 Lenten Service	4 Career & College Group 7:00	5 Men's Prayer Group 6:30 a.m. @ Panera's	6
7  Holy Communion Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 Holy Communion Service 11:00 Holy Communion Service 6:00	8 JTTW Leader's Meeting 9:15 Elders' Prayer Time 7:00 Council 7:30	9	10 9:15 JTTW 12:00 Esther 2:00 Lenten Service 5:45 Children's Choir 6:00-7:00 Soup & Sandwich Supper 6:15 Jr. & Sr. Confirmation Classes 6:30 Bell Choir * Senior Choir 7:30 Lenten Service	11 Knit Wits 10:00 Career & College Group 7:00 	12 Men's Prayer Group 6:30 a.m. @ Panera's	13 HERALD ARTICLE DEADLINE Mary 9:30
14 PALM SUNDAY Worship Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 New Members Received 11:00 Worship Service 11:00 Family Easter Festival 4:00-6:00	15 Craft & Sew 9:30	16 Ruth 2:00 Men's Night 7:00	17 5:45 Children's Choir 6:30 Bell Choir 7:30 Senior Choir	18 Maundy Thursday 2:00 Communion Service 7:30 Communion Service	19 Good Friday 12:30-3:00 Various Meditations 7:30 Tenebrae Service	20 Evening of Prayer Praise 6:00
21 EASTER SUNDAY (Holy Communion after 8:30 and 11:00 Service) Worship Service 7:00 Worship Service 8:30 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL Worship Service 11:00	22	23	24 HERALD DISTRIBUTION 9:15 JTTW Brunch 5:45 Children's Choir 6:30 Bell Choir 6:30 Jr. & Sr. Confirmation Classes 7:30 Senior Choir	25 Knit Wits 10:00 Career & College Group 7:00	26 Men's Prayer Group 6:30 a.m. @ Panera's XYZ noon	27
28 Church Anniversary Confirmation Students Honored @ both services Worship Service 8:30 Sunday School 9:45 Worship Service 11:00 GIFT Bible Study 6:30	29	30				

* Senior Choir will meet at 7:00 and then after the 7:30 service

April 2019

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 TNT 7-9pm @ Church	3	4	5	6
7 Sunday School 9:45am SWAP 6-7:30pm @ Church	8 FLY Info Meeting 7pm @ Church	9 TNT 7-9pm @ Church	10	11	12 Table Top Friday 6-10pm	13 MIGHT SWAG
14 Brunch Sunday School 9:45am SWAP 6-7:30pm @ Church	15	16 TNT 7-9pm @ Church	17	18	19	20 Good Friday
21 Easter Sunday No SWAP	22	23 TNT 7-9pm @ The Church	24	25	26	27 SWAP Late Night 5-10pm @ Church
28 Sunday School 9:45am SWAP 6-7:30pm @ Church	29	30 TNT 7-9pm @ The Church				

Ruthfred Youth Ministry Calendar