



Your Pastor's Ponderings

Welcome to the dog days of summer. These are the days that are supposed to be the hottest and most sultry times of summer and leave us feeling like a lazy dog – although we haven't exactly had too much hot weather this summer. Originally, the dog days of summer had nothing to do with our furry pets but rather a star. The Dog Days were named after Sirius, the Dog Star (the brightest star in the heavens except for the sun) and occurred when the star rose just before or at the same time as sunrise. The ancients believed that the Dog Days were an evil time when the seas boiled, wine turned sour, dogs grew mad, and all creatures became languid, causing in people burning fevers, hysterics, and frenzies. Thankfully, that is no longer the case.

Still even if the weather isn't cooperating, August can seem like a time of year that is stagnant and dull, a time of slowness and poor performance when one doesn't feel like doing much of anything except lying around like a dog. Which brings me back to Joseph and the God days he has ahead.

When last we left him, Joseph was lying around like a dog, languishing in jail waiting for God to help him. As God was with Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery, God is still with Joseph as he lingers in imprisonment.

In prison, the Lord's favor works wonder. Joseph because of his charm and attitude starts to run the place for the warden as well as interpret dreams for his fellow prisoners (and he's quite good at it). (Remember it was Joseph's dreams that got him in trouble with his brothers in the first place). Now it is his gift of dreams that will bring him up out of his dog days of prison and into the God days of glory.

This is because Joseph begins to earn a reputation as a dream interpreter. One day the Pharaoh has a troubling dream about fat cows and lean cows, of full corn and lean corn. And no one in Pharaoh's court can make sense of it until finally, the cupbearer (one of those in prison who had his own dream explained by Joseph) remembers Joseph and recommends him to Pharaoh.

Joseph is brought before Pharaoh and told the dreams. Joseph explains that the dreams carry the same message and that God is

showing Pharaoh the future – seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph then suggests how Pharaoh might meet the crisis – by having a person appointed to ensure that surplus food is stored during the good years so that there will be enough for the bad years. And wonder of wonders, Joseph gets the job. He is released from prison and becomes Pharaoh's chief minister. Blessings upon blessings are heaped upon Joseph. After several years of slavery, imprisonment, and hardship, God has turned Joseph's dog days into glory days.

But it doesn't stop with the blessings of God and Pharaoh's favor, Joseph is eventually reunited with his family. Because of the famine, Joseph's brothers come to Egypt seeking food and aid and run into Joseph. Joseph recognizes them but they don't know who he is. At first, he seeks to have a little vengeance upon them (for all they did to him) by playing some tricks on them. But in reality, Joseph is no longer the spoiled brat of years ago – his own suffering has changed him and so he is deeply moved to see brothers and hear of their suffering in his absence. He even has to turn away to weep while he questions them.

Eventually, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. He forgives them and tells them that God has been at work throughout his long adventure.

Joseph's story is one of persistence and trust in God, one of forgiveness and mercy for others. When we find ourselves facing difficult situations, find ourselves in the midst of suffering, we can take hope from Joseph's story that God can one day turn our dog days into something better. That when we experience the worst of circumstances that life or sin causes to happen to us, we can trust that God is with us in the midst of us and working within it to bring something good out of it. As professor Portier-Young suggests in her comments about Joseph, "God's plans for good and for life trump the plots of fearful and wounded hearts".

Even if you have some lazy days this summer, may this time be for you a time of God days and not dog days, a time of grace, of healing, of hope, of forgiveness, and of wholeness.

That's what I think.

Pastor Will



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Once again, our parish will be preparing and sending shoe boxes filled with gifts for Operation Christmas Child. This year, we will be using a similar approach to previous years by asking for a certain item each week. The following is the schedule for donations.

AUGUST 16 – Soap & Washcloths

AUGUST 23 – 1 subject notebooks, pencils, rulers & erasers

AUGUST 30 – pens, pencils markers & crayons

SEPTEMBER 6 – Small Toys (Stuffed animal, toy car, ball, yoyo, etc)

SEPTEMBER 13 – Play Dough & Sunglasses

SEPTEMBER 20 – Ball Caps, T-Shirts, & Socks

SEPTEMBER 27 -- Solar Powered Calculators, Flashlights, Batteries, and Watches

OCTOBER 5- Coloring books, Crayons & Notepads

OCTOBER 11- Toothbrushes, combs & hair clips



Lutheran Day @ LakeMont Park and the ALTOONACURVE – August 14th

Deadline for registration is Thursday, August 6, 2009 so please send your information immediately! A registration form is included elsewhere in the newsletter. The menu will include: All day unlimited soda which is included in the park admission fee, ¼ BBQ Chicken, Baked Mac & Cheese, Tossed Salad, and Fresh Fruit Salad.

*Due to increased costs of the event, you will notice a minimal mailing fee has been added to mail tickets to you.

* NO tickets will be available after Thursday, August 6, 2009 or the day of the event so please register as soon as possible so we can have another fun day at the Park and Curve!



We are starting to assemble things for Heath Kits.

All items must be in original wrapper. Items we are collecting:

Regular Bath Towels (prefer dark)/ Regular Washcloths

Soap (bath size bars) any brand

Toothbrushes, Toothpaste / Combs (wide tooth preferred)

Metal Nail Clippers w/file / Band-Aids (1/2" x 3/4")

We will be collecting these items for the next 6 weeks. School kits will be prepared later. Thanks to anyone who can help to supply any of these items.



COLLECTION We are starting to assemble things for School Kits.

All items must be in original wrapper. Items we are collecting:

8 ½" by 11" Pads and Note Books / Blunt Scissors (steel)

30 Centimeter Ruler or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other / Pencil Sharpeners / Pencils with Erasers

2 ½ inch Erasers / Packets of Construction paper

8, 16, or 24 Crayons

Yes it is that time of the year for School Kits and Health Kits. There will be a box in the Narthex like last year.



Thank You –

The Open House was a wonderful success. We had a beautiful day, plenty of good food, and a wonderful turn out from all our congregations.

Pastor Will, Pastor Elisa, and Lydia would like to thank everyone for coming and taking part in the celebration of our ministry together and of Lydia's first birthday. We would also like to extend a special thank you to everyone who brought food to share – it was delicious. We were also touched by all your kind thoughts, prayers, and cards for Lydia's first birthday. She is a joy to us and we are so thankful that you can share in that joy.



Sunday August 2nd) – Joint Parish Worship @the Bakersville Grove

As a Kickoff to Vacation Bible School (rather than a wrap-up), we will be having a Joint Parish Worship Service between the New Centerville Parish and the Lavansville-Bakersville Parish. This time we will gather at the Bakersville Grove in Bakersville for worship and potluck picnic. **Worship begins at 10:30am** with the picnic immediately afterward.

This will be the only service that day so please plan accordingly.

Two Items of Note:

- 1) To the Picnic -- the New Centerville Parish is being asked to bring Side Dishes and Salads. (Lavansville-Bakersville will take care of Entrees and Desserts).
- 2) Also, please bring some extra lawn chairs. We think there will be adequate seating with the picnic tables in the grove. But just in case or if you want to ensure more comfortable seating, please bring your own lawn chairs for our worship portion of the morning.



Worship Planning Team Meeting

As “summer” marches on, it's time to plan worship for Fall and the rest of Pentecost. The Worship Planning Team will meet on Monday, August 18th at 7pm @Messiah.

Anyone who would like to pick hymns or has some ideas about worship that they would like to share is invited to join us.



The Return of -- Confirmation

A) For those Starting Confirmation:

If you have a pre-teen entering 7th grade, then it is time for them to begin Confirmation class. Confirmation is a continuing part of the promise we make at baptism to bring our children up in the faith:

For its part, the church offers confirmation as a chance for youth to grow and profess one's faith. For their part, parents enroll them and bring them to the class so that together we may live out our baptismal promises.

Please let Pastor Will know if you have a child who is eligible and that you would like to begin taking confirmation. 926-2215.

B) Informational Meeting – Monday, August 31st at 7pm @Messiah

As fall approaches and many activities resume, amazingly it's almost time for Confirmation to start up again. As such, **parents of 1st and 2nd year confirmation students** (grades 7 and 8) and their teens should be advised that on Monday, **August 31th**, there will be an informational meeting at **7pm @Messiah Lutheran Church.** .

Once again, we will be having a joint confirmation between the NCLP and the Lavansville-Bakersville Lutheran Parish where Pastor Will and Pastor Elisa will be team teaching. We are having this first meeting in order to pass out our yearly schedule and to go over guidelines and expectations for the year. [PS – In the coming weeks, parents should also receive a separate letter regarding this information.]

Please continue to watch your mailings and future bulletins for schedule changes.

3rd Year Confirmation Students: In the next couple of weeks, Pastor Will is sending out informational letters about your third year independent Service Project year of confirmation. Please look for those and let him know if you have any questions.



On the Horizon: Worship Happenings in August

August 2nd – Joint Worship @Bakersville Grove

We will kickoff Vacation Bible School with a Joint Parish Worship Service between New Centerville Parish and the Lavansville-Bakersville Parish. During worship, we will hear a preview of the week to come as the Apostle Paul makes a guest appearance.

August 9th – Bread of Life Sunday

On this day, Jesus says that he is the bread of life and the bread he gives is his flesh so that whoever eats of his body and blood has eternal life. As partakers of that special bread, we live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. The whole purpose of the Christian life is to give oneself up for others.

August 16th – Bread for the World Sunday

In the Gospel today, Jesus invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood for the sake of the world. When we break bread and lift the cup, we invoke his life so that it might always shape our lives.

Today, we are encouraged to give an extra offering either towards hunger on our envelopes or in loose change towards Bread for the World. By offering a piece of ourselves, we can imitate Christ and help feed the hungry of the World.

August 23rd – Bread of Promise Sunday/Health Care Sunday

In today's Gospel, Christ draws the comparison between manna, which temporarily sustains us, and the bread from heaven, Jesus' body, which brings us life for eternity. It is because of that promise that we are drawn to the table of communion to receive forgiveness, be blessed as his community and to be made whole.

In the assurance of that promise, there will a Rite of Healing during today's worship as well as a health-themed prayer, litany, and petitions.

August 30th – Create In Me A Clean Heart Sunday

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about purity versus impurity and protests against human customs being given the weight of divine law. For Jesus, the observance of religious practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a faithful heart.



Assembly in July's Lutheran Letter):

- Bishop Greg Pile was re-elected to a fourth term as our bishop.
- Delegates to the assembly participated in worship, biblical theological presentations from the Rev. Dr. Marty Stevens of Gettysburg Seminary.
- Adopted a Synod budget and compensation guidelines from 2010-2011.
- Heard reports from various committees.
- Bishop Hanson (head bishop of the ELCA) presided over opening worship and held a question and answer session for the assembly, dealing with topics ranging from seminary debt, global missions, and the economy.
- Four seminary graduates (including Nila Cogan) were ordained into the ministry of the Allegheny Synod.

Resolutions of Note:

- A resolution was adopted to memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to reject the proposed statement on human sexuality, as there are still some concerns over its content and the wording of certain parts.
- A resolution was adopted asking the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to ensure it require a two-thirds vote before adopting any motion requiring changes in the church's current policy and practice for the rostering of ordained ministers and leaders. There was concern that a current resolution on the agenda at Churchwide could presently be passed with only a majority vote.
- A resolution was adopted encouraging Lutheran Disaster Response to craft a clear vision on how to coordinate ecumenical service relationships in disaster response.

PS – Please note that the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will be held August 17-21 in Minneapolis. You may follow updates on the happenings of the Assembly at www.elca.org



We'all Back from the Big Easy

The Senior High Youth Group has returned from National Youth Gathering in New Orleans. We had a wonderful, informative, and Christ-filled time. We met many other Lutherans from around the country. We served in Christ's name helping many New Orleanians get back on their feet through various service projects. We praised God in the Superdome, heard informative speakers, took part in learning activities and were amazed at the power of the church. We ate delicious food and walked many miles around the city. Thank you to everyone who helped us to get there and back.

Our Youth Group will tell you all about their trip in a special worship service in the coming month or so. (Time and date to be announced).

Some items to note. The people of New Orleans were incredibly welcoming and very appreciative of our being there. I spoke to some of those people before we left and they said that our youth (all 37,000) were some of the best behaved teenagers that they have ever seen. It was truly an inspiring experience.



Worship Note for September: Here comes the Jubilee!

Jubilee Sunday is **September 13th**. This means a change in regular worship schedule. All are invited to the Jubilee grounds at 9am for a community worship service OR you are invited to attend a parish worship service of Holy Communion at Samuel's at 10:30am. There will be no regular worship at Messiah or St. Paul's that day.



Where Did You See God this week!

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Please share your stories with Pastor Will about where you saw God this week by email, bulletin insert, writing a letter, leaving a message on the voice mail, or in person. I got a number of stories at first but now they have started to slow down to a trickle. Please continue share with me where you saw God.

Example: I saw God in the 37,000 youth in orange T-shirts who came to New Orleans to work for Jesus.

I saw God



There's Wisdom in the Word – Summer Break

There's Wisdom in the Word – Parish Bible Study

All are invited to come, pray, and study scripture as we continue to explore the Book of Faith. This month we continue our session on – Rediscovering the Book of Faith. This study explores how the Bible came to be our Book of Faith and what it means for our lives today. We will learn, how, why, when, and where the Testaments were created, explore how the Bible was put together and examine the impact of the Reformation on our encounter with scripture.

Our topic for May is Rediscovering God's Gift of Grace -- a look at how Martin Luther, the Bible, the printing press, and the Reformation helped people in a new age rediscover who God is. Our Bible study meets on **Tuesday, August 25th at 7pm** in the lounge at Messiah.

PS – following this session, Pastor Will is looking for suggestions for our next Bible study topic. He will have a list of items to consider but you may also suggest your own.

