



Business Meeting

Joint Council –

Due to the pastor's schedule, there will be **NO joint council meeting** in May. Our next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, June 2 @Sam. Bob Bastian will be present at the start of that evening to give us an update on the Gettysberg CrossRoads campaign.

Please watch bulletins for updates should anything important arise.

Messiah Council for May –

So that we may go over a few items of importance for the coming month, we will have a brief council meeting immediately after worship on Sunday, May 3rd. Please plan on coming to worship that day and staying after.



Your Pastor's Ponderings

May usually brings a smile to my face. This is because it is the time when April showers bring May flowers. Some of my best times of vacation have been May. The big crowds haven't started up yet. The hot weather hasn't started moved in yet. The weather is usually a little warmer (usually) enough to go outside more frequently and with lighter clothing on (whether at work or at play). May is also when we remember and honor our mother's on their special day. This year, I get to include Pastor Elisa in that remembrance (her first Mother's Day☺). Yes, May usually brings a smile to my face.

And so, as I continue my series on biblical characters of interest, I am reminded of one character who brought a big smile to his mother's face – Isaac. Isaac is the son of Abraham and Sarah. His name has several variations in meaning – “may God smile” or “he will laugh”. Either way we translate it, his name is all about smiling and laughing. A fitting character for the month of May.

Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah when they were 100 years old. His name comes from the time when Sarah overheard the Lord promise Abraham that he would have a son, and she burst out

laughing because she thought she was much too old. And truth be told, it would be hard for us to imagine anyone of nursing home or retirement age going to prenatal classes much less child birthing sessions. But the story isn't so much about the miracle of birth at an old age, the story is about God's faithfulness (God kept his promise to give them heirs) and about the revelation that with God anything is possible (even birth for a barren old woman).

Isaac is important in the biblical story because he is the promise bearer. He is the one through whom God's promise to give Abraham ancestors as numerous as the stars would continue. Isaac is the key to the future. Isaac is also one of the main characters in perhaps the most disturbing story of the Old Testament. Abraham's offering of his only child as a sacrifice.

In this story, Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice his only son whom he loved dearly. The reader sees him undergo the supreme trial of faith as he prepares to slay Isaac and thereby sacrifice the future of the people of God on the altar. But once again God intervenes and sends a ram caught in a thicket to be sacrificed instead. Once again the promise is renewed.

Now in such a short space, I don't have enough time to unpack such a complex and challenging story as this one that raises numerous questions about the nature of faith and God. Let me simply say, the focus of the story is more about obedience than faith and this is one of those passages in Scripture that will always remain difficult and unclear; I doubt that any interpretation will fully satisfy us.

Let me close on a happier note and with a story fitting for the month – about a wife and mother, specifically Rebekah the one who will become Isaac's wife and also the mother of two more important biblical characters (Jacob and Esau – the promise continues). Before we meet Rebekah, we learn that Isaac could not marry a local woman, for that would contaminate the line of Abraham and bring God's promise to naught. So Abraham's servant is sent to Mesopotamia to bring a wife back for Isaac. The servant asks God to guide him in this matter. His prayer is wonderfully answered. He meets the beautiful, youthful Rebekah at a well. And she is the one. Later, she and Isaac are happily married.

The whole servant sent to Mesopotamia situation carries some modern ethical questions with itself, but needless that's how they did things back then. The whole point of the story is not about mail order

brides but that nothing happens by chance. God is guiding the servant's journey, God is looking out from Isaac and Abraham, God is keeping the promise. God provided a mother for Israel. And one was given. Rebekah is considered the second matriarch of the four matriarchs of the Jewish faith.

As we recall the importance of Isaac and Rebekah, his wife and a mother, this month, let us not forget the importance of our mothers or anyone who has been like a mother to us – those special people who commit acts of sacrificial and unconditional love for us and for our well being. They are truly a gift of God and a flesh and blood example of the kind of love that God has for all his creation. Thanks Moms everywhere.

Of course, that's what I think.

Happy May/Happy Mother's Day
Pastor Will



Ascension Service with Rev. Roger Steiner

Rev. Roger Steiner former pastor of the New Centerville Lutheran Parish will be the guest minister at the historic Mt. Union Church as we celebrate "The Ascension of Our Lord" on Thursday May 21st, 2009 @ 7pm. The Messiah Lutheran Choir will be singing that evening. All are invited to attend.



Samuel's Shoe Drive (Shoes 4 Souls in Need)

During the month of May, Boxes will be placed in the narthex @ Samuel's for the donation of new or slightly worn men, women's, and children's shoes. These will be distributed to disaster areas in the United States as well as 60 countries around the world. The WELCA ladies will package them and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will provide the funds for shipping them.

Faces of Recovery, Journeys toward Mental Wellness

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The Recovery Coalition of Somerset County in partnership with Cornerstone Community Care of Somerset MH/MR and HealthChoices are sponsoring a community awareness event. This event called, "Faces of Recovery, Journeys toward Mental Wellness" will be held on May 13th from 5-8pm at the Quality Inn in Somerset. Individuals will share their recovery stories, tables will offer information on support and services available, and the evening will reflect an atmosphere of hope.

YOUTH GATHERING NEWS:

A) Commissioning of Youth at Synod Assembly –

The Bishop would like to have **all youth** from the Synod (that includes our New Orleans Youth) who are going to New Orleans be present at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona on Saturday, June 6th at 8:30am for a special commissioning service and blessing for travel.

B) The people of New Orleans are counting on ELCA youth to show up and get busy this summer!

We have hundreds of service experiences planned for over 36,000 people. It takes tools and supplies to accomplish the work we have planned for the young people attending the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering: [Jesus Justice Jazz](#). Please help to equip them to do their work as witnesses to Jesus, *the Son of Man [who] came not to be served, but to serve.* [Matthew 20:28](#)

The [on-line giving catalog](#) allows us to purchase the items youth will use during their service experiences in New Orleans. The best part is that the items will remain in New Orleans when ELCA youth leave. The 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering's focus on service and recovery in New Orleans makes it necessary to gather gifts earlier so that they can be in New Orleans BEFORE youth arrive.

Click on <http://www.elca.org/youthgiving> to "shop". Shop early and shop often. Forward the link to your friends, family, and congregation members. Apply for Thrivent matching funds and double your contribution. Challenge your congregation to support this massive servant event in New Orleans.

C) Also, a need for school kits

Please help us meet the goal of providing 15,000 school kits for all Orleans Parish public school students in grades Pre K-3rd grade. 57 schools will be served.

The need is great! On average, 90% of the students in these schools receive free and reduced cost lunches. These are some of the most at-risk children in the county because of the poverty and trauma from a natural disaster. Education is the key that unlocks the door to advantages many of us enjoy. Your donation will support a good start next fall when 15,000 children find a packet of supplies on their desk from ELCA youth from across the country.

Click on the same link above to start "shopping."

<http://www.elca.org/youthgiving>



On the Horizon: Worship Happenings in May

May 3 – Good Shepherd Sunday

The image of the Good Shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep that is key. Today, we celebrate that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, comes so that all may have life and have it abundantly.

May 10 – Sunday of the Vine/Mother's Day/ROGATION Sunday

This Sunday, we hear how the risen Christ shares his life with us in the image of the vine. Christ is the vine and we are the branches and we are alive in each other. The branches cannot survive without the vine. Today in worship, we remember how Jesus, the vine, gives life to all who are connected to him. And we will celebrate those who gave life to us, our mothers.

In addition, we celebrate God's gift of spring time and renewal through the remembrance of Rogation Day. We do this through prayers for the planting season and a blessing of the seeds, soil, and lands. *(If anyone has any seeds that they would like blessed as part of this rite, you are welcome to bring them to worship that day.)*

May 17th – Friendship Sunday

In today's Gospel, Jesus calls the disciples his friends. Friendship captures the love, the joy, the mutuality of the relationship into which Christ invites us as well. Jesus, our friend, gathers with us on this day, supports and encourages us, and rekindles the gifts of God within us.

In the spirit of that calling by Christ, invite a friend with you to church this week.

May 24th – One in Christ Sunday

On this final Sunday in Easter, Jesus prays that his followers will be one as he and the Father are one. In that prayer, we hear Jesus looking forward to the church's presence and activity in the world. Unified under Jesus' influence, we are protected by God and under the power of God's love.

May 31st – Sunday of Pentecost/Day of Confirmation

On the fiftieth day of Easter, we celebrate the Spirit, through whom and in whom the people of God are created and re-created. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Helper" and describes the difference that the Spirit makes in our lives. Today in worship, we also celebrate the difference that faith has in Jesus has made in the lives of three of our young people through the rite of confirmation.



Samuel's WELCA – Help Needed for Meals on Wheels

Samuel's WELCA has been asked to furnish desserts for Meals on Wheels for the week of June 1 through June 5. Instead of calling members for desserts, we are asking for monetary donations. A total of \$175 for the week is requested.

Donations for this ministry may be given to Fern Sanner, Betty Weigle, or Arlene Weimer by the last Sunday in May. Samuel's WELCA will make up the difference of the amount collected. Thank you.

---Samuel's WELCA

Sum...Sum...Summer Time

Here's a sneak peek at some things coming up this summer:

- 1) Synod Assembly – June 4-6
- 2) Parish Picnic – July 19th @ Sam Picnic Pavilion
- 3) National Youth Gathering Trip – July 21-27
- 4) Vacation Bible School – August 3-9 (@ various locations)



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 the Good News of Jesus -- a look at how the New Testament records the struggle of the church to answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" Our Bible study meets on **Tuesday, May 26th at 7pm** in the lounge at Messiah.

Please be advised that beginning this month, there will no longer be a Wednesday morning session.

Confirmation Class  **Confirmation**

Confirmation Calendar

Sunday, May 3 – 5pm: Final Class Session, Year End Wrap Up

Year End Reports Due

Sunday, May 10 – Visit your Confirmation Partner/Mentor (pick your own time)

Saturday, May 16th – Serving Event: Sequanota Clean Up Day

Sunday, May 31st – Day of Pentecost: Confirmation for 3rd Year Students in Worship

REMINDERS: 3RD Year Confirmands

-- Your Affirmation of Faith Report is **due by May 15th**.

-You should have completed six service projects by this time. If you still have not, please call Pastor Will as soon as possible.

-- Select your Bible Verse to be read in worship on May 31st.

-- Come to worship on Confirmation Day, May 31st.



Come Holy Spirit Come

Pentecost will soon arrive. We will celebrate this High Holy Day on Sunday, May 31st along with the Rite of Confirmation & Affirmation of Baptism. On this day, we celebrate the Holy Spirit, through whom and in whom we are created and re-created. This is the church's baptismal day (and birthday) when we remember the gift of the Spirit that came to the disciples in that room so long and comes to us in our own baptisms. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity throughout the world.

Today, we also rejoice in the confirmation of several of our young ones (Jacob, Gwen and Billy) as they affirm their faith in Jesus

Christ and take the next step in their life long journey of faith. During worship when the people of God are gathered together, we recognize the gifts given to these young people and ask them to publically declare their faith and confirm their decision to live a life of Christian love and service.



Community Choir for Rockwood High's Baccalaureate

Once again, RHS is organizing a community choir to sing at Baccalaureate. The rehearsals will be on Mondays and Tuesdays, May 4, 11, 18, 26, June 2 at 7:30 pm at the high school chorus room, Room 103. Mrs Schrock will be once again be directing.



Mark Your Calendars: Worship Planning

On the **Thursday, May 7th at 7pm @M**, the Worship Planning Team will meet to prepare worship and select hymns for the upcoming church season of Pentecost/Summer time. Please come with any ideas about that you might like to see happen in worship over the coming months. All are welcome.



VBS Planning Meeting

Pastors Will and Elisa would like to meet with all VBS helpers from the five congregations to further plan our unique Vacation Bible School this summer. The Meeting will be on **Thursday, May 14th at 7pm at Mt. Calvary** in Lavansville. We are asking for representatives from all the congregations to be there so that we can all be on the same page as we plan this exciting week of joint VBS.