



REFLECTIONS ON EASTER

Basking in the afterglow of our celebration of the Resurrection, I wonder what the world outside Christianity thinks of our faith. I've heard more times than I can count how exclusivistic the Christian faith is—that God unlovingly excludes people in other religious traditions simply because, for reasons of birth, heritage, or tradition, they don't believe in Jesus. Philip Graham Ryken, writing in *Christianity Today*, notes the following:

On the one hand, Christianity is the most exclusive religion imaginable. It insists that belief in Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary for salvation. Jesus is the only way. You must go to Him to get eternal life.

On the other hand, Christianity is the most inclusive religion possible because it makes salvation accessible to everyone. Salvation is offered for all people through one Person. Whoever believes in Him will not perish. Anyone who receives or believes in Jesus will live forever with God. There are no racial, social, intellectual, or economic criteria that prevent anyone from joining God's family.

One of the problems with the other religions of the world is that they all smack of elitism. Hinduism has its caste system. Judaism requires keeping the Torah. Islam requires following the Five Pillars of Obedience. Buddhism requires reaching a level of enlightenment. But what if you don't qualify? What if you are poor, immoral, disobedient, or unenlightened? What then? Only Christianity offers salvation to everyone as a free gift.

*There is nothing elitist about Christianity. It is inclusive and exclusive at the same time. The particularity of Christ should not hide His universality. Although He is the only way to God, He offers the Gospel to everyone. **There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a Ransom for all men** (1 Timothy 2:5-6). *Whoever you are, you may and you must come close to God through Jesus Christ.**

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To use an analogy, Jesus is like God's telephone number. The God of the universe can only be contacted through Jesus Christ. Philosophical pluralists insist on getting through to God no matter what number they dial. But that is not how the telephone system operates, and it is not how God operates either. Jesus is the only direct line to God.

All of a sudden, God doesn't sound exclusivistic at all. After all, He has opened His kingdom to all people and established His will in writing: **God would have all persons to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.** God wants all people with Him in heaven for all eternity.



Let's add to that these comments that illustrate the topic nicely. This is from Lee Strobel's book *God's Outrageous Claims*, pp. 192-193:

Imagine two country clubs. The first has a strict set of rules and only allows in people who have earned their membership. They have to accomplish something, obtain superior wisdom, or fulfill a long list of demands and requirements to qualify for entry. Despite their best efforts, lots of people just won't make the grade and will be excluded. In effect, this is what other religious systems are like.

But the second country club throws its doors wide open and says, "Anybody who wants membership is invited inside. Rich or poor, black or white, regardless of your ethnic heritage or where you live, we would love to include you. Entry is based not on your qualification but only on accepting this invitation. So we'll leave the matter up to you. You decide. But remember, we will never turn you away if you seek admittance." That's what Christianity is like.

Which country club is being snobbish?

In Christianity, the road to God, Jesus said, is narrow; but it is open to all. In all man-made religions, the road to God is broad, but only a select few who have "what it takes" can use it. That's why in the Christian faith, the main word is grace: God's love directed toward sinners who don't and can't ever deserve it. Amazing grace!

Pastor Kerigan

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a central part of the Christian faith.

During his ministry in Galilee, Jesus said: *To you who hear me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you. When someone slaps you on one cheek, turn and give him the other; when someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to all who beg from you. When a man takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Do to others what you would have them do to you.* (Luke 6:27-37).

Later, during his journey through Perea on the east side of the Jordan River, He taught the Lord's Prayer that includes the words, *Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.* (Matthew 6:12). During that same ministry, He told the story of the prodigal son about a father who forgives a son who has sinned against him (Luke 15:11-32).

As Jesus hung dying on the cross after he had been subject to torture and humiliation, He asked forgiveness for those who had persecuted Him, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34).

Forgiveness in the modern world often seems out of place, a quaint idea from the past or an ideal state that is impossible to achieve. Forgiveness is relatively easy to extend to the person in the car ahead of you who forgets to turn on their signal while turning. Forgiveness is harder when a co-worker takes credit for what you have done and have worked hard to accomplish. Forgiveness may seem impossible when a person assaults and robs you. Christ asks us to forgive all these people but how can we do it?

Truly forgiving a person is not easy. There are many books and websites that discuss the forgiveness process. A summary of thoughts from a few is as follows:

What Forgiveness Is Not

- Forgiveness is not forgetting.
- Forgiveness is not masking hurt.
- Forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation.
- Forgiveness is not revictimization. Being a victim and forgiving are two totally different things.

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What Forgiveness Is

- Forgiveness is a process. You can begin the process of forgiveness today, but that doesn't mean you will instantly feel the freedom of complete forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is a decision.
- Forgiveness is desiring reconciliation.
- Forgiveness is good for the soul and good for general health.

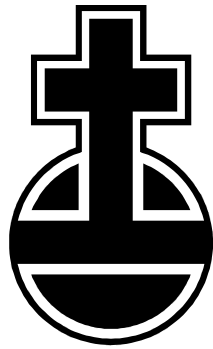
Steps to Forgiveness

- Decide to forgive.
- Think through what has been done to you so you clearly identify and forgive all that has happened.
- Confess your own sins.
- Pray for the strength to forgive because the ability to forgive is a gift from God.
- Pray for the person who hurt you.
- Refuse to hurt the person who has hurt you.
- Seek reconciliation with the person who hurt you.



Remember, we are called as Christians to forgive.
This process helps us in spiritual growth and gives us peace.

Peter Krause, for the Board of Lay Ministry



Cross of Triumph

Also known as the Cross of Victory, this cross symbolizes Christ's final triumph and His reign throughout the earth. The Cross of Triumph is often depicted atop Jesus' scepter when He's shown in His kingly office.

**NOTES FROM KATIE BENASHKI,
PARISH PRESIDENT**

Bethany recently received a gift from the estate of Lucy Powers. This is a restricted gift in the amount \$25,000 which has been set up as the Powers Family Memorial Fund. The gift will be held in perpetuity as an endowment and allows Bethany to use the annual investment earnings for its charitable purposes.

Bethany has two other endowment funds.

The original one was established 15 years ago and currently has a balance of about \$57,000. This is the fund from which the interest earnings are discussed and voted on each November to be used for whatever the congregation desires, including leaving them in the fund. For the past several years, the interest has been used for a charitable purpose.



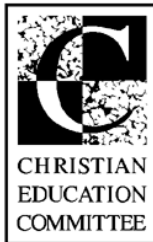
**Endowment
Funds**

The Perpetual Endowment fund was established in 2004 (approved by the Voters May 16, 2004) as a result of two major gifts and a significant contribution from Thrivent. The current balance is around \$118,000. The Voters can authorize up to 15% of the principal to be withdrawn during a year.

Members of Bethany can contribute to these Endowment Funds at any time, but particularly may consider bequests to these funds in their estate planning.

Bethany formed a Gift Acceptance and Planning Committee based on a directive from the Board of Stewardship, approved by the Voters 5/15/05. This committee reports to Parish Planning. The committee considers unrestricted gifts given to Bethany and their appropriateness. Any unrestricted gift is divided into five funds with 10% being designated for In-reach programs, 10% to Out-reach programs, 10% to Education programs, 10% to the Original Endowment, and 60% to Worship and Church Properties.

ATTENTION: MOVIE LOVERS!



Have you ever watched a compelling movie, and afterward just felt like you needed to talk about it with someone? Most of us have likely had this experience with at least one movie in our lives, and being able to share our thoughts and feelings with someone else is simply part of the pleasure associated with the whole experience.

With that in mind, Bethany's Board of Christian Education will be sponsoring a new fellowship/educational opportunity this year - Faith and Film Nights. The evening will start at 5:00 pm with a light dinner that can be enjoyed as the film is being shown. Following the movie, there will be a time of discussion and appreciation that will allow participants to offer their views and opinions on various elements of the film.

On Saturday, May 10th, Bethany's first Faith and Film Night will take place, beginning with dinner at 5:00 PM. The feature to be shown will be *Hotel Rwanda*, a 2005 film based on the true story of a hotel manager (Don Cheadle) desperately trying to save more than one thousand Tutsi refugees from slaughter during the Rwandan genocide of 1994, as the world community stood by and did nothing. This very powerful film has much to offer, and should be a memorable experience.



Bulletin announcements and other forms of advertisement will be visible as the event approaches. There will be a sign-up, and more details will be forthcoming. Please consider participating in what should be an enlightening evening.

In the meantime, if you have questions or comments, please call Mark Litke at 313-0472, or email him at mlitke@netzero.net. We look forward to seeing you May 10th!

NEW HYMNAL UNDER CONSIDERATION

At the semi-annual Voters' meeting in May, Bethany members will be asked to vote on a recommendation that we adopt the newest hymnal that was released in late 2006 by the Missouri Synod. Many of the churches in our local circuit have made the change and are reporting great excitement and satisfaction with it.



Pastor Louis Nuechterlein introduced the *Lutheran Service Book* (or *LSB*) to us during the Education Hour on Feb. 17, beginning with the fact that the average life of a hymnal in a church body is 25-30 years, and citing that living languages and the world scene are continually changing. Change inspires hymns with new themes and language, and every generation needs to add its own witness to that of its ancestors. The LSB draws both from the old and the new, so that we are able to look to the future, while remaining grounded in our history.

It is evident that much thought and prayerful work went into the development of the LSB. Psalms appear in the very front of the book, eliminating the confusion of identifying the correct page number for a psalm of a different number. Special prayers are printed inside the front cover for quick reference, as are the Creeds and the Lord's Prayer printed on the inside back cover for quick reference during special services. The scriptural basis of each hymn is referenced below the last line of music, and Martin Luther's Small Catechism is reproduced within the pages of the LSB.

You are asked to give some prayerful thought to this important issue in the life of our congregation. Some written, CD, and DVD materials are available for loan from the church office to anyone who would like to get a better sense of the flavor of the hymnal. Contact Bunny (521-5076/bunny@blcwh.org) if you would like to borrow any of these materials. And then join us for the Voters' meeting in May!

Blessings to all!

EVANGELISM INITIATIVES



Welcome Center/Welcome Bag: A small Welcome Center has been established in the narthex of the church with information for members and visitors. A Welcome Bag is also available there. When you meet someone new to Bethany, please have them sign the Guest Book and offer them one of the Welcome Bags.

Banner: The Evangelism Committee recently purchased a banner for the Easter season which is on display in the narthex.

New Members: The Board of Evangelism encourages and welcomes suggestions from the Bethany family on ways to attract and retain new members. If you have any suggestions, please contact Pastor Bob or Lori Verreault at 666-9233.



Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.
Romans 15:7

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Easter can be different if you want it to be. A greater you can be born—if you will deepen your consecration to Christ. And from your life a new radiance of happiness will shine into the lives of others.

Elizabeth Lee, Adult Class

KEEPING UP WITH OUR YOUTH!

Thank you for your continued support as we raised over \$600 during our annual Dinner and a Game night. Special thanks to all who helped by donating baskets, and to those who set up or put back up the walls for Sunday School. Also, if you wondered where the good sandwiches came from, they were from our local BJ's store. Yum! We will be donating half of our proceeds to a local charity and the other we will save to put toward the cost of attending the 2010 National Youth Gathering. A fun time was had by all. *Thanks for taking part!*

Upcoming events:

April 26th - Support our church endorsement of *A Hand Up* by providing whatever is needed to make a delivery to a local family in need of furniture.

May 11th - May Flower sale, we will have an assortment of hanging baskets, wall pouches, 10" patio planters, 4.5" flowering annuals and assorted flats. Please watch for the details in the bulletin and plan on purchasing your spring flowers from the youth. These funds will help defray our expenses at the 2010 National Youth Gathering.

June 15th - Last day of Bible Class for the year, and the senior class send off.

July - Possible Whitewater rafting with other youth groups from the area. Please contact Scott Baumer if you are interested.

Because some of you have asked: we will be having the annual tag sale in the fall, so please keep us in mind when cleaning out your closet or garage. As space is limited, please try to hold onto your items until the summer, but if you need a holding place and can't wait until the summer, please let Scott Baumer know and we can make some sort of arrangements. Also, we can come and pick-up items from you.

It was good to see you all at the Easter Brunch! Thanks to all who dyed eggs, helped set-up and served on Easter Morning.



Gayle Levine	04/01
Edison Roux	04/02
Jeffrey Castiglione	04/03
Kelly Farina	04/03
Grace Fiacre	04/04
Elizabeth Sadler	04/04
Hannah Granger	04/04
Melissa Lyhne	04/05
Seth Howard	04/07
Adam Litke	04/07
Kyle Mahder	04/08
Rylee Fountain	04/08
Esta Manke	04/10
Kenny Smith	04/10
Katlin Di Pietro	04/11
Hiltrud Muller	04/12
Pr Bob Mikulastik	04/12
Grace Baumer	04/15
Edwin Rinehimer	04/16

Jake Yearsley	04/16
Richard Brancifort	04/18
Susan Johnson	04/18
Jessica Colwick	04/19
Alexa Colwick	04/20
Warren Heinze	04/21
Caitlin Becker	04/21
Patrick Liddell	04/21
Alison Howard	04/22
Robert Goldsnider	04/22
Greta Ilgaudas	04/23
Dannie Kennedy	04/23
Sean Davis	04/24
Marjorie Brause	04/25
Meghan Tiernan	04/25
Evelyn Kirschner	04/26
Sally Harvey	04/26
Jessica Hein	04/26
Eliza Peters	04/26
Julie Lacava	04/27
Joseph Watkin	04/27
Mark Litke	04/28
Coreen Ryskamp	04/29
Peter Foxen, Jr.	04/29
Ernest Johnson	04/30



Transferred:

Susan Walker,
Kenneth &
Hannah
 to Shepherd of
 the Hills Lu-
 theran Church,
 San Antonio
 TX

I cannot alleviate poverty, but I can feed one hungry person. I cannot end war, but I can extend a branch of peace to my neighbor. I cannot prevent death, but I can hold the hand of a dying man. That may not seem like much, but it is far harder than to devise schemes for social betterment, and it is everything. Christ said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40, NIV)

ATTENDANCE & COMMUNION FIGURES

Date	Communed		Communed		Total Attend.	Total Communed
	8:15 AM		11:00 AM			
2/3	125	108	81	71	206	179
2/10	64	52	82	75	146	127
2/17	95	85	55	50	150	135
2/24	83	71	116	91	199	162
3/2	100	86	77	63	177	149
3/9	55	55	112	85	167	140
3/16	121	104	160	67	281	171
	Noon		7:00 PM			
Ash Wed. 2/6	48	40	69	67	117	107
2/13	36		19		55	
2/20	45		25		70	
2/27	39		50		89	
3/5	31		35		66	
3/12	26		29		55	

The Church Calendar

Recurring Events



Worship services: Sundays at 8:15 & 11:00 AM

Dorcas Society meetings: Tuesdays at 9:30 AM

Bible Classes: Wednesdays at 9:45 AM

Staff meetings: Wednesdays at 2 PM

Confirmation Classes: Wednesdays at 4 PM

Chime Choir Rehearsals: Wednesdays at 6 PM

Choir Rehearsals: Wednesdays at 7 PM

Prayer Shawl Ministry: 3rd Thursday of each month, 6 PM

April

Here's what's happening:

- Tues.—8 Board of Christian Education meeting—7 PM
- Thurs.—10 Nursery School Open House—6:30 PM
- Mon.—14 Pastor Mikulastik on vacation through 4/20
- Thurs.—17 Prayer Shawl Ministry meeting—6 PM
- Thurs.—24 Parish Planning Council meeting - 7 PM

WELCOME, SPRING!



Blessings from Nursery School:

We completed a successful National Lutheran Schools Week with over 30 visitors. We had fun showing of our school and showing off our wonderful students. Our program is only as good as the teachers who have dedicated their talents here at Bethany. I thank each of you: Dianne Hoelzer, Marie Baker, and Karen Lavoie, and praise God each day that you are part of our Christian Education program here at Bethany.

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.*

This will be the theme of our annual Open House on April 10. The four/five year-old class will showcase this wonderful old hymn by putting on a small play and learning the song through actions. Both classes will sing songs and then take their visitors on a tour of the classrooms where many of their art projects will be on display. The rest of the month will focus on Spring with colors, flowers, and watching our caterpillars grow into beautiful butterflies.

*God gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.**

With Blessings to all,
Mari Mikulastik, Director



*by Cecil F. Alexander, *Hymns for Little Children* 1848

Lord,

Thank you for spending 33 years with us:

for announcing Love

from the high heavens;

for introducing Love in an

obscure manger setting;

for living Love in a family

framework;

for sharing Love with the poor

and deprived and diseased;

for showing Love to the

unlovable and unloving;

for letting little children

feel Love in Your arms;

for suffering on a cross

because of Love;

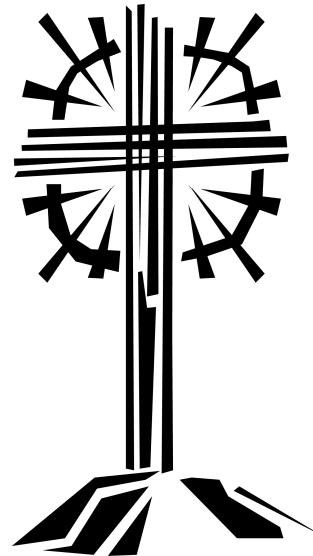
for loosing Love upon the

world to take up

residence in us;

for Your Love that will

not let us go. Amen



- Forrest Nees