



THE BRANCH

Christ Lutheran Church

August 2010

Pastor's Message

Dear Members and Friends of CLC,

Part of the process of becoming an ordained minister in most denominations involves the ministerial candidate being examined and tested theologically. A story is told of a veteran minister who, on the occasions for such pre-ordination examinations of pastoral candidates, always asked the same question of every potential minister for over 30 years.

He began by asking the candidate to look out of the window. The usually puzzled examinee would then peer out the window as requested. The old minister would then add, "Tell me when you see a person walking by outside."

"I see one," the candidate would timidly announce.

"Do you know that person personally?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"Good. Now my question for you is this: Please describe that person -- theologically."

In 30 years of experience asking that question the seasoned minister had found that the pastoral candidates appearing before him tended to give one of two different answers. Some responded by saying something like, "That person is a sinner in need of the redeeming power of Jesus Christ." Others, however, would answer, "Whether they know it or not, that person is a child of God, loved and upheld by the grace of God in Jesus Christ."

"I suppose," the veteran minister observed, "that, technically speaking, both of those answers are theologically correct. But it has been my experience that those who give the second answer make better pastors." I would also add that each of us who views our neighbor with a similar attitude will, in turn, be more effective witnesses and disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are loved by God. That is the Good News. We have been called by Christ to express that good news in word and deed. More often than not, such witnessing is a matter of *quiet* evangelism: reading a Psalm to a sick friend, telling the truth in love to someone who is in need of correction, ending a quarrel with words of forgiveness, writing a note of encouragement to a discouraged friend, listening to an elderly person's stories, laughing at a child's joke, welcoming a visitor in worship, inviting them to join you for coffee hour after service, introducing them to others. These actions are all proclamations of the good news.

The sentiments of the Bible verse found in 1 John 4:11 are a most fitting spiritual principle by which to live our lives: "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another." That is more than simply a nice but trite statement. It is the very core of what we are to be about each day as followers of our Master and Friend, Jesus Christ.

Peace and joy,
Pastor Mike

WORSHIP

at Christ Lutheran

-- Gary Sironen
Minister of Music

Invitation to Play, Sing and Ring

by Gary Sironen, Minister of Music

All of our musical ensembles will be starting back up soon, and Marilyn, Hazel and I invite you to join us and share the gifts God has given you. You can read the details of the Bell Choirs and Junior and Cherub Choirs elsewhere, but I hope you'll also consider joining the Worship Choir or Praise Choir.

The Worship Choir sings anthems and leads congregational singing at the 9:00 worship service the 1st & 3rd Sunday of each month, in addition to a few evening and festival services. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. beginning September 8. The Praise Choir leads congregational singing every week at the 11:15 worship service and rehearses at 10:15 each Sunday between services. We can always use more singers and instrumentalists for this group. Some in this group join us every week, while others find alternating weeks works better for them. The goal for both choirs is to use God's musical gifts to the best of our abilities as we serve him in worship.

New Song

I wrote a song a few months ago that I sang at 9:00 and the congregation sang at 11:15 for our last Healing Service. I had a number of requests to let the congregation sing at both services and to reprint the lyrics, so we will all sing it together on August 29 and here are the lyrics. May it bring you God's peace.

Healed In Your Time

by Gary Sironen

Verse 1

*You heal the blind, you heal the lame, and healing comes through your holy name.
Now on my knees I come to you for healing in your time.*

Refrain

*Lord, I know in your time, you will take away the pain.
There's no reason, no rhyme that I know, but just the same,
I believe in your love and I know I will be healed in your time.*

Verse 2

*You mend the heart, you ease the pain, you cleanse the soul, and remove the stain.
Now on my knees I come again for healing in your time.*

Refrain

Bridge

*I don't know how, I don't know when, but Lord, I pray, restore my soul again.
It may be now, it may be then, but I believe you'll make me whole again.*

Refrain

Join us at SonQuest Rainforest!

We're ready for a Vacation Bible School your children will never forget!



At SonQuest Rainforest your kids will follow Jesus on a life-changing journey!

Children will have a great time singing songs, watching skits, creating crafts and playing games. But most important, they'll learn about how much God loves them and that He gave us His Word to show us the best way to live. We're looking forward to sharing this exciting event with the children and parents and want YOU to be a part of it, too! Do you have a neighbor, a relative, or a friend that you would like to invite? Pick up a registration form at the VBS table in the narthex or check out our church website! All are welcome!!

Vacation Bible School is for ages **3 years old to those entering 6th grade** in the fall. It will be from **6:00 -8:30 pm on Sunday, August 8th** through Thursday, August 12th.

We can't wait to see you there!

KEEN-AGERS

Let's meet for breakfast!

Meet us at Russ's Restaurant,
2340 28th St SW, Wyoming

Wednesday, August 11

9:00 a.m.

for great Christian fellowship!

Please let Arlene Slagh, Pat Potter or Joy Johnson know of your intention to join us so we can let Russ's know the Tuesday, the 10th.

See You There!



Greetings Bell Ringers and Potential Ringers

It's time to think about joining one of our bell choirs this fall. We start practicing again after Labor Day, so I'm beginning to collect names and plan now. Please prayerfully consider being part of this musical ministry at our church.



If you can count to four and can reach the bells on the tables (perhaps with the aid of an aerobic step riser), then you're invited to ring bells. Our groups have a great time together. Did I mention we have candy at break? And we ring good music to the glory of God.

Practice times are Monday evenings at 6:30 and 8:00. Please give this some thought and let me know that you would like to ring. Schedules change, and we will have openings for new people as we do every year. We want and need you!

-Marilyn Burgard

Children's Choirs

at

Christ Lutheran Church

Bible messages put to music stay in a child's mind and heart for a lifetime!

Junior Choir

- ✧ Junior Choir will begin Wednesday, September 15 at 6:15 p.m.
- ✧ The Junior Choir welcomes all children second through sixth grades.
- ✧ Junior Choir meets for rehearsals every Wednesday from 6:15 – 7:00 p.m.
- ✧ Children are welcome to bring their friends.
- ✧ The choir will bless the worship service with an anthem once per month. Schedules will be sent home at the first rehearsal.
- ✧ The Choir will present a musical to the congregation in the spring of 2011.
- ✧ Treats every week!

We have fun
singing praises to God!

Call Ms. Hazel
at 538-2926
with any questions.

Cherub Choir

- ✧ Cherub Choir welcomes all children ages 4-7.
- ✧ Cherub Choir will begin in September.
- ✧ Details to follow in the September issue of The Branch.

What is the Transition Task Force Team Up To?

The CLC Transition Task Force will be meeting for the third time on August 2nd. The primary tasks we have addressed to date include:

1. Compiling a review of the history of CLC as a congregation.

We will soon be posting a *Wall of History* time-line in the church narthex. We will be asking our members to fill in memorable dates and events that have occurred in the life of our congregation since its founding. This *Wall of History* will help give us all a visual image of our history as a community of faith at CLC and serve as a tangible reminder of the multitude of ways in which we have been blessed and been able to bless others during the past 48 years of ministry.

2. Gathering demographic data for the community we serve as a congregation.

This information will become a valuable resource for helping our transition team develop a sense of future ministry and mission goals for CLC. This information will also be useful for the CLC Call Committee when they begin working on the completion the Ministry Profile for the synod office at a later date.

3. Developing a congregational survey questionnaire.

This questionnaire will provide every member of CLC with an opportunity to have a voice in shaping our future ministry goals and expressing an opinion regarding the type of pastoral leadership they feel will be needed to help us accomplish these future goals. We hope to have this questionnaire ready for distribution by the end September or the beginning of October at the latest.

I want to express a genuine and sincere “thank you” to the members of CLC who sent along a birthday greeting on the recent occasion of my 60th birthday. It was a pleasant surprise to return from vacation and find so many cards of best wishes (humorous and otherwise) waiting in my mailbox at home. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and the friendship expressed in your cards and notes.

-Pr. Mike



We had a WONDERFUL time at our Family of Christ Lutheran Church Fun Night on Wednesday, July 21st. Here are just a few of the things that we learned ...

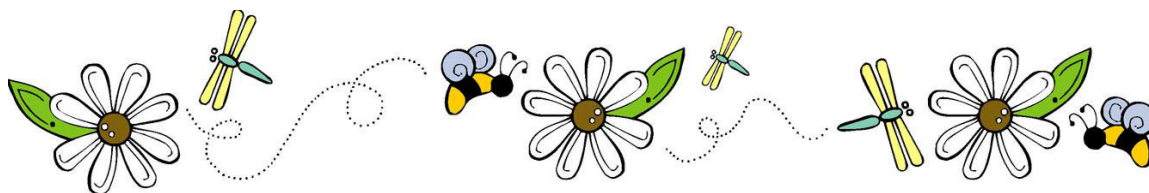
1. Dave Park is an incredible whiffle ball pitcher!
2. We have some very talented volleyball players (Karl Cuncannan and Julie Gillich, just to name a few ...)
3. The kids in our congregation can make beautiful God's Eyes even though the directions were a little sketchy.

And most importantly...

We sure have a lot of fun when we get together!

Thank you to all who helped get games set up, taken down, and just had a great time with each other.

Our next event will be on Thursday, August 12th which is the final night of our Vacation Bible School. We would like to invite EVERYONE from the congregation in for our program and ice cream social, which will start at 8:00 pm. Continue to watch the announcements for other events and we look forward to seeing you all there!



Ladies



Our first Ladies Night Out event in June was a stormy one (the rain sure was coming down!) but a fun one (those were some pretty good treats that we shared!) and now we are looking forward to our next one!

Please join us on Friday, August 20th at church for some fun and fellowship.

Bring your friends and a snack to share!

All women are welcome!



Save the Date
October 22 & 23

Pastor Judy Howard Peterson will be the guest speaker at a Women's Retreat at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Holland. Registration forms and information will be available in September.



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Sarah Laurent

Fellowship
Open

Mission
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Welfare & Social
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Council Meetings Highlights June and July 2010

Financials: Income and expenses have been fairly consistent, with expenses being less than revenue, allowing for a buildup of reserve funds.

Independent Contractor Position: The Stewardship/Education Consultant Contractor position was advertised and generated a good number of resumes in response. Interviews are being conducted by the Executive Committee and Kathy Reister, and a final decision should be made by the end of July so as to have the independent contractor on board by August 1 in time to prepare for the upcoming church school year.

Council Vacancies: Two vacancies presently exist on council: Stewardship and Fellowship. Nominations are requested to finish the terms for each of the openings.

Transition Task Force: The task force has met twice, and discussed the history/timeline of CLC. Walt Akhurst is chair of the committee; Sarah McKenney is recording secretary. The task force will be compiling a history/timeline of CLC, asking for input from the congregation, and will be gathering census and demographic information of the area. Next meeting: Monday, August 2.

DTE Energy Request: DTE Energy has requested an easement for a small piece of property at the corner of 44th & Byron Center to construct an underground vault. President Matt June will consult with a real estate attorney before responding to the request.

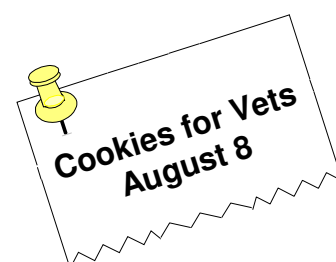
Property: The roof was examined and an area of dry rot was discovered, which will be repaired. The Property Committee is also determining the possibility of installing a light switch near the front doors.

Worship & Music: The organ was repaired and maintained. An audio visual tech from Calvin College will train all CLC sound techs.

Evangelism: The committee is sending letters to families who have not attended recently, showing concern about their absence, and inquiring about their continued interest in membership at CLC. The letters will be followed up with phone calls. This is being done so that our rolls will reflect a true picture of membership.

Pastor Mike: A transfer request was received from Providence Christian Reformed Church for the Berner family. Pastor responded with a letter of transfer on June 2. Pastor will be on vacation from July 9 thru 22; Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese will be available for any pastoral care needs in his absence.

Next meeting: Tuesday, August 3.



Stephen Ministry



-- Julie Menarch
Renee Green
Directors, Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers are available to care for YOU. What kind of person would benefit from the care a Stephen Minister provides?

What kind of man would receive the care of a Stephen Minister?

A man like **Elijah**: Who thought he was all alone and needed a still, small voice to encourage him.

A man like **Job**: Who lost everything and needed someone to silently endure his pain with him.

A man like **Peter**: Who found himself in over his head and needed the strong hand of a faithful friend.

A man like **Paul**: Who knew the unending distress of a thorn in the flesh and needed someone to rejoice when he rejoiced and to weep when he wept.

A man like **Jesus**: Who knew intense disappointment, sorrow, grief, rejection, and loneliness and needed an angel of God to minister to him.

A man like **You**.

What kind of woman would receive the care of a Stephen Minister?

A woman like **Esther**: Who was faced with a major decision and needed someone who could listen to her concerns and offer encouragement.

A woman like **Martha**: Who was burdened by the demands of daily life and needed to help her regain sight of what was most important.

A woman like **Mary Magdalene**: Who received healing from inner turmoil and needed someone to walk with her as she built a new life.

A woman like **Mary of Nazareth**: Who lived with both the joys and struggles of having an exceptional child and needed someone to help her sort out the ponderings of her heart.

A woman like **You**.

If YOU are a man or woman who would like to have the Christian caregiving of a Stephen Minister, you may contact Pastor Mike, Renee Green or Julie Menacher.

Caring for others in the name of Christ,
Julie Menacher, Stephen Ministry Coordinator

Mission Supply Committee

Each month the Mission Committee will be highlighting a ministry of CLC. In July, the highlight was the Earthkeeping Committee and the way our mission dollars support earthkeeping ministries in our congregation, the synod and churchwide. This article was in the July e-news page. Coming up for the rest of the year are these highlights:

September: Music Ministry

November: Older Adult Ministries

October: Synod "Conference Mission Support"

December: Giving the Gift of Ourselves

(Stephen Ministry, prayer shawl ministry and others)

August highlights Educational Ministries.

To be involved in mission, we need to know what we believe. We cannot effectively share the Gospel if we do not believe and understand it. This is the importance of educational ministries at CLC. At every age we need to learn about our faith and how to be involved in Christ's mission. We are both students and teachers. We cannot learn without teachers. Vacation Bible School is being held in August. This is one way that you can give of your time to enhance the Christian Education of our children. Sunday School and confirmation begin again in the fall. There is always a need for teachers.

Our mission dollars support many educational ministries at CLC:

New part-time consultant for youth and education, youth ministry for all ages, confirmation, Sunday School for all ages, adult Bible Studies, Family ministries, Little Lambs, Children's church

Beyond CLC, our mission dollars support the Christian Education committee of the synod. This committee is always available to assist with resources for individual congregations. Our mission dollars also go to the Churchwide which supports many levels of education: Sunday School, VBS, confirmation, youth and adult education resources, Outdoor Ministries, Lutheran colleges and Lutheran Campus Ministries. In our synod, we have campus ministries at WMU, UofM, Wayne State University, MSV, KVCC, Northern MI University, and MSU. Each school has a campus pastor supported by the synod and local congregations. Unfortunately, the ELCA has had to cut financial support for campus ministries due to shortfalls in benevolence dollars. Our individual mission dollars can make a difference. The NW Lower Michigan Synod support is now even more important. Let's support mission through education at all places the church serves, at CLC, the N/W Lower Michigan Synod and the ELCA. Every mission dollar and volunteer hour counts!



Vehicle donation program provides the road to self-reliance

by Doug Lachniet, Director of Major/Planned Gifts, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

Do you have a vehicle that you might donate rather than trade in or sell? Maybe it belongs to an older family member like a parent who no longer can or needs to drive. Perhaps it is an extra vehicle that you would rather not keep. Consider making it a gift to Lutheran Social Services of Michigan's vehicle donation program, "Motorvation Drive."

When you donate a running vehicle to Lutheran Social Services, one of two good things will happen. Once checked over and serviced for safety, it could be sold at a deep discount to one of our clients in need of transportation, like a teen leaving foster care, a refugee family, or a parent trying to get and hold a job to keep his or her family together.

Or it could be sold publicly, with the proceeds going to support programs that will benefit other clients of Lutheran Social Services. Either way, you will be helping needy people to get on the road to self-reliance, and you can also claim a generous tax deduction if you itemize.

Motorvation Drive accepts donations of used cars, trucks, boats, motorcycles and RVs. We will arrange to have qualified vehicles picked up from anywhere in West Michigan.

We don't care how old your vehicle is or what kind of mileage it gets. If the value of the vehicle exceeds the cost of moving and processing it, we will be happy to accept it.

Please promote this worthwhile program to your friends and family, too. Anyone interested in making a donation may call Sonia Bankston toll-free at (877) 259-6369 to see if your vehicle qualifies and to arrange for vehicle pickup. For Lutheran Social Services' free monthly e-newsletter, Epistle, register at www.lssm.org.

Earthkeeping Committee

10 Environmental Disasters Worse Than BP Oil Gusher

The following list is self-explanatory - that is the decimation of God's earth and all living creatures. The world community should take note - we didn't inherit the earth from our parents we are borrowing from our children.

10. Chevron Oil Refinery, El Segundo, Calif.

Decades of leaking pipes and tanks dumped some 252 million gallons of oil and chemicals into aquifers beneath the refinery. To supply Los Angeles with clean water, fossil fuels were burned to generate vast amounts of electricity to pump water hundreds of miles across the state, adding to air pollution, asthma, global warming and the state debt.

9. Pacific Salmon

Before WWII, the salmon industry along the west coast of the US employed tens of thousands and provided sustainable protein for millions at ten cents a pound, the "poor man's steak". Because of water diversions and habitat destruction, the catch is less than 5% of those historic numbers today, decimating species of all kinds that depend on salmon runs and destroying livelihoods of fishers and Native American tribes that had lived on the fishery for centuries.

8. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

Plastic debris, mostly from US shores, floats in a great circle of currents north of Hawaii that is larger than the state of Texas. Ten years ago, samples showed that bits of plastic outnumbered plankton by six to one. Today it is over ten to one. Fish, birds, and marine mammals mistake plastic for food and die in the thousands every month. Disposable lighters and plastic bottle caps are among the most ubiquitous culprits.

7. The Oil Pipes of Esmeraldas, Ecuador

A dozen years ago, two major pipelines broke, sending oil and gas cascading down streets and into rivers. A spark set off an inferno, which devoured cars and homes. People were burned alive; frantic parents put their children in wooden canoes and pushed them into the Esmeraldas River and then watched in horror as fire engulfed the river and the children. Locals now say petroleum is the "excrement of the devil." The majority of the oil produced in Ecuador is exported to refineries in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

6. The Destruction of the Mississippi and Colorado Rivers

Western states suck up so much water from the Colorado that the 22,000 cubic feet per second that once flowed to the towns and farmers in the southwestern US and Mexico, not to mention the fisheries in the Gulf of Baja, is now almost zero. As for the Mississippi, it still flows, but is so fouled with runoff from pesticides, fertilizer, sewage, and oil from our streets that it has created a 7,000 square mile dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico - overlapping much of BP's new pollution - where waste uses up the oxygen in the sea and almost nothing recognizable survives.

5. Decimation of the American Bison

Once numbering tens of millions, the bison were slaughtered in the 1800s & the wild herd today numbers barely 15,000.

4. The Great Dustbowl

Caused by drought and years of extensive farming without soil conservation to prevent erosion, the wind-driven clouds of dust in the 1930s caused death and dislocation of many humans and animals across the center of America for decades.

3. Ocean Acidification

Although not solely an American phenomenon, the US depends heavily on its ocean resources and, with 5% of the global population but 25% of its greenhouse gas production, is the prime cause of the changing chemistry of the oceans. These changes are dissolving the shells of clams, shrimp, lobster and causing other impacts to fisheries globally that dwarf the problems caused by BP's oil.

2. Emptying the Groundwater

So much more water has been taken from underground aquifers in California that the ground has subsided as much as seventy feet. Similar basins in the middle of the country have been so over-drafted that Hopi Indians, who rely on springs fed by these aquifers, report that their water has dried up for the first time in their 10,000 years of recorded history.

1. Air Pollution

One hundred percent of the air we breathe in the US contains human-made toxins, such as BTEX compounds, fine particles, and other carcinogens, causing 100,000 premature deaths every year and over six million hospital visits for asthma and other respiratory diseases.