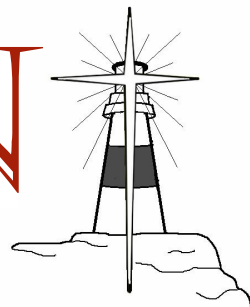


BEACON



The LORD is my light and my salvation. Psalm 27

Volume 2, Number 1 — February 19, 2012

Lighthouse Lutheran Church
501 Third Avenue, Freedom, PA 15042
www.lighthouselutheran.org

The Reverend Dennis R. Whalen, Pastor
Morning Worship 9:00 A.M.
Sunday School 10:30 A.M.

Friday, January 20 was Family Game Night at Lighthouse Lutheran. Snacks and a variety of interesting games for young and not so young made for a very enjoyable evening—so much so that the fellowship committee feels that we really must have a repeat performance. Who, having seen them, can forget Rich Insull's imitation of a periscope or Duane Morris's interpretation of a rocker?

The year-end congregational meeting was held on January 29 following the worship service. Pastor Whalen guided the congregation through the 2011 Annual Report, beautifully prepared by Carol Nicoletti. The congregation approved the minutes of the October 30 and December 18 congregational meetings submitted by Carol Nicoletti, the reports of Pastor Whalen (president), Lorrie Kuny (fellowship committee), Carol DeHaven (evangelism committee), Kurt DeHaven and Bert Amsler (parish nurses), Dee Eppihimer (treasurer), and the parochial and benevolence reports. A luncheon prepared by the always faithful fellowship committee followed the meeting.

On Super Bowl Sunday our youth, led by Donna Pfeifer, sponsored a soup and bread luncheon, Souper Bowl Sunday, asking for donations of money and other assistance to aid the Women's Shelter of Beaver County. A complete list of needed items sought by the shelter can be found at its website, www.womenscenterbc.org. During the event, a video of December's Christmas shopping trip for the benefit of area young people was shown.

Boy Scout Sunday was celebrated at Lighthouse Lutheran on February 12. Cub Scout D'Artagnan, a member of Tiger Scout Troop, assisted at the worship service as acolyte and usher.

On February 19, Sheri Battaglia is to affirm her faith in Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and join the congregation of Lighthouse Lutheran. A reception following worship will afford the opportunity to welcome her into our church family.

The LCMC regional gathering will be held March 17 from 10:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. at the First English Lutheran Church, 53 Park Avenue West, Mansfield, Ohio. Those wishing to attend should contact Pastor Whalen by March 12.

Pastor Whalen will be leading a Confirmation field trip to St. Anthony's Chapel in the Troy Hill section of Pittsburgh, where the largest collection of religious relics outside the Vatican are on display, as well as a replica of the Holy Stairs, the twenty-eight steps that led to the praetorium of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem. Want to tag along? See Pastor Whalen.

If you are interested in choir singing at Lighthouse Lutheran's Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday services, see Dee Eppihimer or Julie Whalen.

Each Wednesday evening preceding Holy Week there will be a Lenten meager meal at 6:00 P.M. followed by the 7:00 P.M. worship service. Lent begins February 22, Ash Wednesday.

Holy Week midweek services will be held on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

During Lent, Holy Communion will be celebrated on Ash Wednesday, February 22; Sunday, March 4; Palm Sunday, April 1; Maundy Thursday, April 5. Holy Communion will also be celebrated on Easter Sunday, the Resurrection of our Lord, April 8.

The collection of (new) socks and underwear for the Unionville Clothes Closet takes place the last Sunday of each month. A basket is provided in the narthex for this purpose.

You can listen online to most of Pastor Whalen's Sunday morning sermons at our website.

Wednesday evening Bible studies led by Janet McClintick will resume on April 18, following a hiatus during Lent.

Pastor Whalen's Message

In the book, *God Can Make It Happen*, the author paints a vivid portrait concerning perspective. When Goliath came and challenged the Israelites, the soldiers thought, "He's so big we can never kill him." David, on the other hand, looked at the same giant and thought, "He's so big I cannot miss." Although everyone was looking at the same man, David had a different perspective from the Israelites. Another example of perspective comes from the business world. An old story goes like this: A shoe manufacturer decided to open a market in the Congo and sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. After a couple of weeks, one salesman cabled back, "Prospect here nil. No one wears shoes." However, the other salesman cabled back, "Market potential huge! Everyone is barefoot!" These two men were in the same location and tasked with the same job. Nonetheless, they each had a different perspective on the situation. For one, the proverbial glass was half empty while for the other, it was half full. One's perspective on a situation can certainly dictate their emotions.

I find that perspective can have a similar effect on people during the season of Lent. While perusing the hundreds of Facebook posts that come across my screen daily, I read a response from a member of a congregation to his pastor that went something like this: "I might see you Ash Wednesday, but I will not be attending weekly Wednesday evening services. They are just too sad and it really gets old week after week." As-

suming that the person who authored this post was indeed a Christian, and aside from the brash and presumptuous attitude displayed in this posting, this person has the wrong perspective on Lent. As such, his viewpoint and perception suffer tremendously.

Lent is a forty-day season with a focus on the preparation of the believer for the coming Easter celebration. During Lent, the readings and prayers of the Church during Wednesday services will focus on Christ's walk towards, and ultimate death upon, the cross. As such, the Christian will spend this season pondering and asking, "Why did Christ have to die?" Sorrowfully, the answer will become clear. Christ had to die because we continue to sin. From Adam to each and every one of us, we cannot keep the Law, and so stand condemned in the eyes of God. As such, we do spend time during Lent in prayer to God, repent from and confess our sins, perform good works, and fast from certain foods. These are all signs that we are truly sorry and humbly regret all that we have done that has displeased our Father in heaven. If our Lenten journey stopped here, our perspective might be like that of the author of the Facebook post I mention above. Yet, although we are deeply saddened by what we have done, we are also joyful and thankful for the love in what Christ has done. Christ said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Paul writes, "For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man . . . but God demonstrated His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). This changes the perspective of Lent completely. Yes, Christ had to die because of our sin, but He did so willingly, perfectly, and in complete cooperation with the Father because He loves you.

During Lent, our liturgy is somber, our hymns are subdued, and our prayers are penitential. It is a time for reflection on how far we have strayed from the path of righteousness and have caused the death of a righteous man. However, this is all in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the proper perspective of the season, when we fully comprehend ". . . how great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

*Not because of who I am, but because of what You've done.
Not because of what I've done, but because of who You are.*

"Who Am I"— Casting Crowns

Getting Acquainted

This is the fifth in a series of articles about our members, offered to help us learn more about our fellow Christians at Lighthouse Lutheran Church.

ALEX AND LORETTA FRANTZ

We were married in St. John's Lutheran Church of Old Economy, June 4, 1955. Loretta had gone there from the age of three. Alex took instructions, joined, and became active with many duties of the church. We both sang in the choir.

We left St. John's and joined Rehoboth Lutheran Church after we moved and wanted our children involved in a church located closer to us.

We are the parents of five children, three sons and two daughters, all of which are married, thus producing fourteen grandchildren, ten girls and four boys.



Alex worked in engineering until retirement twelve years ago. He has been active in the Beaver Valley Barbershop Chorus for over thirty years and has held every office at one time or another. He is also a member of the Odd Fellows.

Loretta worked as a domestic engineer and a secretary until retirement twelve years ago also. Her hobbies are the grandchildren and babysitting when needed. She also belongs to a card club and the Ladies Red Hat Society.

We enjoy traveling, which included trips to Alaska, Spain, Morocco, and our favorite place, Austria, and have gone on twelve cruises. We own a 1930 Model A Ford and have driven to Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit, Indianapolis, Lancaster, and Williamsburg, mostly driving on secondary roads seeing sights you wouldn't see riding in a modern car.

We are very pleased to be charter members of Lighthouse Lutheran Church where we get a spiritual understanding of the Bible. We love the friendliness and camaraderie of the members and pray for our congregation to grow in God's Word.

LORETTA'S PEACH JELL-O SALAD

- 2 3-ounce packages peach or apricot Jell-o
- 1 29-ounce can sliced peaches; drain but save juice
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 8-ounce container Cool Whip

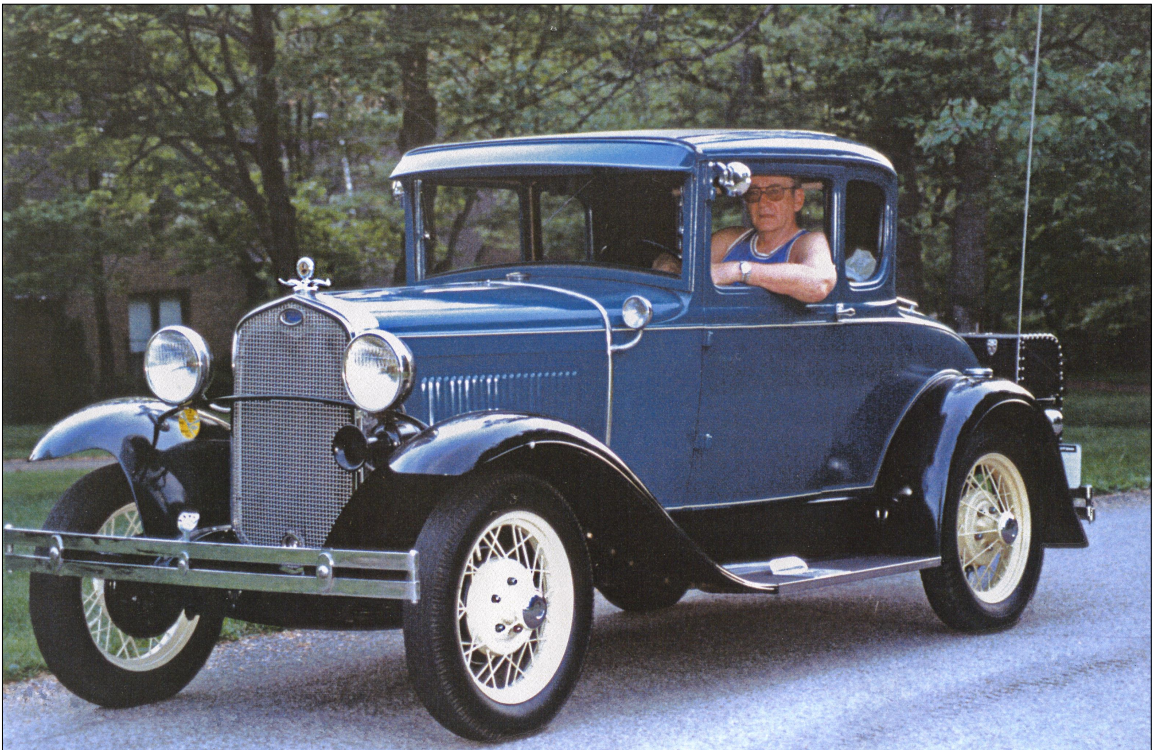
Dissolve Jell-o in one cup HOT water.

Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup juice.

Whip cream cheese and add to Jell-o mixture.

Beat in sliced peaches and fold in Cool Whip.

Pour in 9-inch x 13-inch pan.



ALEX AND LORETTA'S 1930 MODEL A FORD COUPE

The Model A was produced from October, 1927 through 1931. 4,849,340 were made.

Getting Acquainted

This is the sixth in a series of articles about our members, offered to help us learn more about our fellow Christians at Lighthouse Lutheran Church.

KURT AND CAROL DEHAVEN

Kurt and Carol met in 1985, when Kurt applied for a sales clerk position at Murphy Mart in Pine Creek Plaza, where Carol worked in the Management field. Little did Kurt know he would get the position, but he would also, in his words, meet the love of his life, his soul mate.

Kurt was born in February, 1963 in Dormont. Shortly following his birth his family moved to Gettysburg. When Kurt was five, the family moved to the Ingomar area. He graduated in 1981 from The North Allegheny High School. In the fall of that year, he began studying Meteorology at Penn State University. After three years of study, Kurt decided Meteorology was not his career of choice, and he returned to his family home to find work and decide what he wanted to do with his life. He found work at North Hills Passavant Hospital, working as a Unit Clerk/Nursing Assistant. It was then that he decided he enjoyed working in the medical field. In 1991 Kurt graduated from Sewickley Valley Hospital School of Nursing. Following graduation he accepted a position in the Critical Care Unit of Sewickley Hospital. He transferred to the Open Heart/Critical Care Unit of The Beaver Medical Center. While working at the Medical Center Kurt began his studies at The University of Pittsburgh to obtain his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. He graduated from Pitt in April 2004 with his Master's Degree as an Acute Care Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner. Kurt works with Pulmonary Partners, LTD. in McCandless, working out of UPMC Passavant Hospital.

Carol Lynn (Heitzenrater) was born May 1947 in Sewickley. She lived in Fair Oaks until moving to Economy Borough when she was 6 years old. Carol is a graduate of Ambridge Area High School. She studied Business Management in Indianapolis, Indiana. Carol worked in the management field with the G.C. Murphy's Company, and the Murphy Mart System, where she met Kurt. Following the closing of Murphy's, Carol worked at the Verland Foun-



dation in Sewickley, until she had to leave that position to care for her ailing mother.

Kurt and Carol married in Gibsonia on September 4, 1987 and are anxiously looking forward to celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary this year by renewing their marriage vows on Royal Caribbean's cruise ship, "Allure of the Seas," with the captain of the ship presiding.

Kurt and Carol's interests together are traveling, especially cruising, attending Pirate games, golf, yard work, eating out, evenings with friends playing dominoes, and spending time playing with their thirteen-year-old "dog-er" Windie. They also enjoy taking an active roll in the activities at Lighthouse Lutheran Church.

Kurt is also active with the Free and Accepted Masons, following in his grandfather's and father's footsteps by earning his 32nd Degree, teaching Adult/Infant CPR, woodworking, and searching old cemeteries.

Carol is interested in reading, cooking, collecting recipes, photography, painting ceramics, and crafting.

We come to Lighthouse Lutheran Church through a calling from our Lord and Savior. We are firm believers that we go nowhere by accident. Wherever we go, God is sending us there, wherever we are, God has put us there, and He has a purpose for us being there. We believe Christ has something He wants to do through us wherever we are.

RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS CAKE

1 cup of Good Thoughts
1 cup of Consideration of Others
2 cups of Prayer
2 cups of Faith
3 cups of Sacrifice
3 cups of Service
4 cups of Forgiveness

MIX THOUROUGHLY.

Add Tears of Joy, Sorrow, and Sympathy.
Flavor with Love and Respect.
Blend well.
Fold into Daily Life.

Bake well with the Warmth of Human Kindness and serve with a Smile.

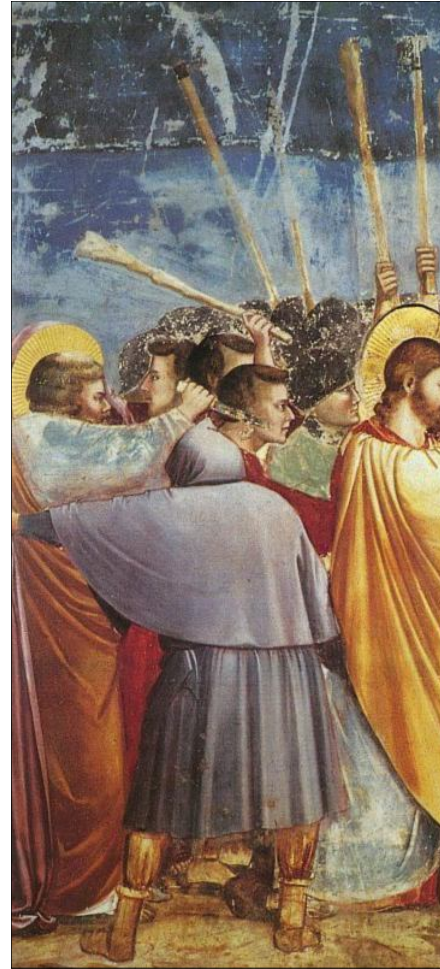
IT WILL SATISFY THE HUNGER OF STARVED SOULS.

IMAGES OF THE



The Last Supper (1501-1505) *detail*, from the Holy Blood Altar, limewood carving by Tilman Riemenschneider (ca. 1460-1531) in the now-Lutheran historic St. James Church in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany

photo by Wolfgang Sauber, 2007



Above: The Kiss of Judas (1305) by Giotto, part of the Scrovegni cycle in the Cappella degli Scrovegni

Above Right: The Crucifixion (ca. 1260-1270) by Giotto, Brussels-1577 Rome) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Right: Ecce Homo (Behold the Man) by Giotto, 1295-1299, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Florence, Italy

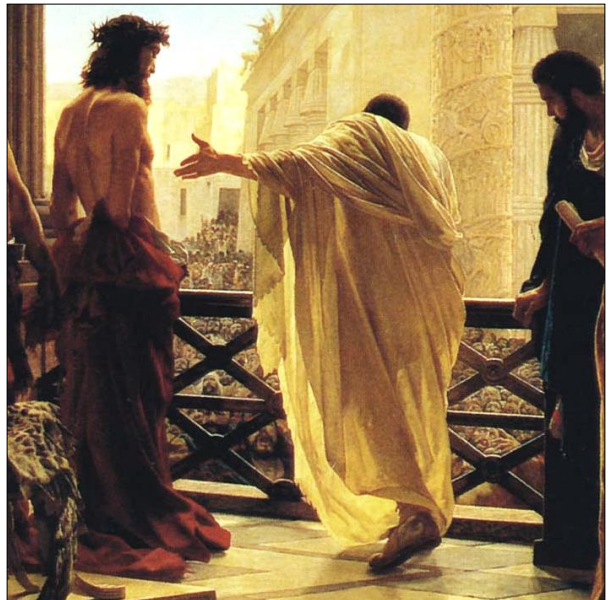
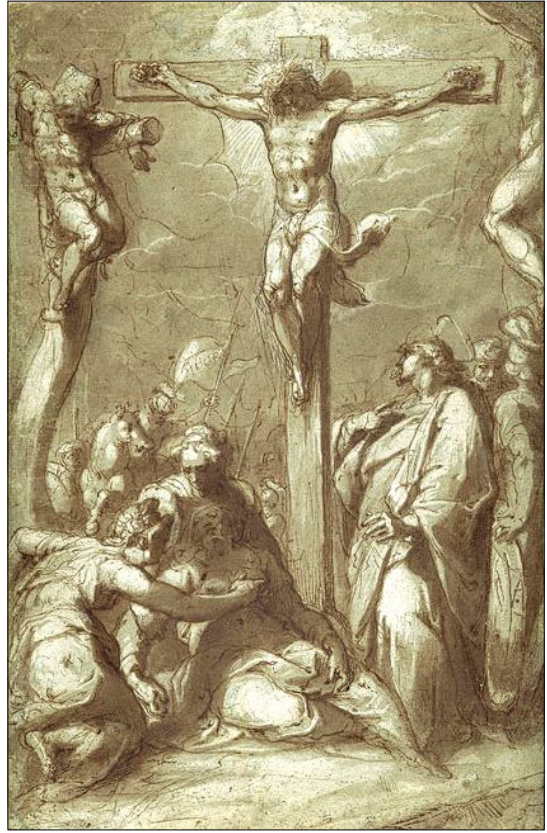
PASSION



by Giotto di Bondone (1266-1337), part of the fresco
in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy

(1570) by Flemish artist Hans Speckaert (ca. 1540
in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

(1879) detail, by Antonio Ciseri (1821-1891) in the Gallerie
Vaticane, Rome, Italy
copyright expired





Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was born a slave in Philadelphia. Around 1768 he, his three siblings, and his mother and father were sold to Stokely Sturgis, a Delaware farmer.

In 1777, Allen was converted to Methodism, which in those days was a dominant force in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. In 1780 he made an agreement with his master to purchase his freedom, which he did by manual labor and preaching at Methodist churches. In 1786 he finally became free at a cost of \$2,000.

In that year he began to preach at St. George's, a mixed-race Methodist church in Philadelphia. After Allen's arrival, the black membership of the congregation increased so much that Allen requested a separate place of worship for the black members. Instead, a balcony was constructed, where the blacks of the congregation were expected to sit. Despite this arrangement, Allen's commitment to Methodism caused him to remain a part of that congregation until 1792, when he and other black members left St. George's. This was after he had been forced to leave his place on the main floor during the opening prayer.

In 1794, the Free African Society, which had been founded by Allen and the Reverend Absalom Jones in 1787, began the African Church of Philadelphia as part of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Jones became the denomination's first black priest, but Allen was still devoted to Methodism. He used his savings to buy and move a blacksmith shop to property which he owned in Philadelphia. This became the Bethel African Church in 1794, and Allen was ordained its deacon. In 1796, when Bethel became a Methodist congregation, an unsuccessful control takeover was attempted by white Methodists. However, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that Bethel was owned by its congregation, which could therefore control who would serve there.

Many other black Methodist congregations were formed in the Northeast over the next few years, and they experienced difficulties similar to those endured by Bethel. In 1816, Allen was instrumental in calling a convention of black Methodists, and it was decided to form a new body, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen was elected bishop and held that position until his death in 1831.

The AME Church was focused on bettering the lot of black Americans and steadfastly refused to disassociate itself from the Southern slaves. After the Civil War, the AME Church experienced a large increase in its membership and today numbers well in excess of one million people.

THE HEALTH NOOK

Some people will ask, “What is blood pressure?” Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries which feed the major organs, the heart, brain, kidneys, and lungs. Blood pressure is measured by two numbers. The first, or top number, is known as systolic blood pressure. It is the pressure when the heart squeezes to pump blood to the rest of the body. The second, or bottom number, is known as diastolic blood pressure. It occurs when the heart relaxes. A higher than normal pressure within the arteries and organs can cause the organs to stretch and thin the walls of the arteries, causing serious health problems.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a common health problem affecting nearly 30% of the United States adult population. Most of the time high blood pressure is “silent” which means you may not feel any symptoms. Nearly one-third of people who have high blood pressure do not even know it. If high blood pressure goes untreated, it can lead to other serious health problems including, but not limited to, heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, eye problems, or blindness. This is why it gets the name “silent killer.” However, in severe cases, symptoms of high blood pressure may include severe headache, fatigue, or confusion, vision problems, chest pain, difficulty breathing, irregular heartbeat, or blood in your urine. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should contact your physician/healthcare provider immediately.

However, high blood pressure can be controlled once it is diagnosed. Getting your blood pressure checked is the only way to diagnose hypertension. Screening checks, such as those we do at Lighthouse Lutheran Church the first Sunday of every month, is one of the first steps of diagnosing high blood pressure. If our Parish Nurses find that your blood pressure is high, they will strongly suggest you follow up with your physician or healthcare provider.

Once diagnosed with high blood pressure, there are many steps that can be taken to control it. Exercise, eating less salt, reaching a healthy weight, and taking the medications prescribed by your physician/healthcare provider are the most important steps you can take to control your blood pressure. High blood pressure can be controlled for a lifetime. Serious health problems can be avoided just by following the prescribed treatment given to you by your physician/healthcare provider. Hypertension does not have to be a death sentence. If you follow the few steps mentioned above, take your medications that were prescribed for you, you can live a long and healthy life.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own: you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”

We must take care of the bodies God has given us. Please take the first step and have your blood pressure checked by your Parish Nurses, so we can help you care for the temples, given to you by God, and that are filled with the Holy Spirit.

As always, if you have any health related questions, please feel free to consult with one of the Parish Registered Nurses. Bert or Kurt will be more than happy to discuss your concerns and help you on your journey to good health.

Kurt DeHaven

S t. Patrick

was early educated as a Christian and with reverence for the Roman Empire. When he was sixteen years old he was carried away from his home in Britain to slavery in Ireland by a band of Irish marauders. At the age of twenty-two, he escaped to Gaul (modern-day France) where he lived a few years at a monastery. After making his way back home to Britain, he resolved to carry the Gospel to Ireland, which at that time had only small, scattered Christian communities. He returned to Gaul, spending at least fourteen years preparing for his mission among the Irish.



Saint Patrick window in the Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland, California *NeitherFanBoy*

St. Patrick was consecrated as the bishop of the Irish Christians when he was in his mid-forties. His missionary activities brought him into conflict with the pagan High-king Loigaire, who nonetheless undertook to protect Patrick after a number of trials of skill between Patrick and Loigaire's Druids.

St. Patrick's efforts were carried out mainly in the north of Ireland. He brought Ireland into touch with western Europe, particularly Rome, and introduced Latin into Ireland as the language of the Church.

He organized the Christian societies which he found in existence on his arrival and planted the faith in regions which had not yet come under the sway of the Gospel. He resigned his position as bishop some years before his death in A.D. 461, at the age of seventy-two.

His devotion to the people of Ireland who had so grievously wronged him in his early years made a strong and permanent impression on them. Although never mentioned in any of his writings, the shamrock is said to have been used by St. Patrick to symbolize the mystery of the Holy Trinity and has been adopted as the national symbol of Ireland. His feast day is March 17.

KOINΩVÍA

Students of Greek praise the power of that language to express concepts with precision and depth. It appears that this is especially so in connection with *koinonea* (koi-nohn-EE-ah). The term is used nineteen times in the Greek New Testament, for the first time in Acts 2:42, where it refers to the sharing practiced among the first Christians in Jerusalem: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship.” 1 Corinthians 10:16 uses *koinonia* to describe the depth of the spiritual purpose in uniting with other believers in the sacrament of Holy Communion: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

Some kind of action is always implied in the word’s use (such as united participation in some venture) as is a spirit of generous sharing. The early Christians used *koinonia* to describe their relationship to the Holy Spirit. And *koinonia* can refer to a bond of trust which works against the social evils of betrayal and degradation.

Christians’ *koinonia* with Christ is the basis for their shared *koinonia* with each other. As 1 John 1:6-7 expresses it, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

It is comforting to realize that the congregation of Lighthouse Lutheran Church, as we strive to be faithful to the leading of the blessed Holy Spirit, is enjoying the Biblical experience of *koinonia*. May the following Scripture passages encourage us to continue on the path so auspiciously begun:

Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

1 Thessalonians 5:11a Therefore encourage one another and build one another up –

1 John 4:11-12 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Easter Thoughts



The Easter bunny was
my thought
Not many years ago.
I only dreamed of tasty treats
For how was I to know?

I didn't understand His death,
It held no tender worth.
I didn't think of Easter day
As a symbol of rebirth.

But now I pray that as we near
Once more the Eastertide,
That I recall His crown of thorns
And in His name confide.

I pray that I may keep my faith,
No matter what my loss;
And as the end comes into view,
That I may bear my cross.

—Dolores Fruth
(written at age 16)

Church Council Meeting Highlights

January 23, 2012, 7:30 P.M.

as taken from meeting minutes.

Pastor Dennis Whalen, Norman Amsler, Dee Eppihimer, Tom Kuny, Cindy Morris, and Carol Nicoletti were present.

Following devotions, the minutes of the November 21, 2011 council meeting and the December 18, 2011 congregational meeting were accepted as presented.

Dee Eppihimer presented the December, 2011 financial reports. End-of-year giving statements have been sent out to members and nonmembers. The treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

Pastor Whalen presented his report for 11/21/2011 through 01/22/2012. A copy of the Pastor's Report will be attached to the minutes.

Mel Roush continues to compile the directory.

Dee Eppihimer presented a proposal from PrimePay of Pittsburgh to process the monthly paychecks—a two-year contract at approximately \$80 per month for processing the paychecks and submitting all required taxes. There is a one-time setup fee of \$25 and the first two months of each of the two years would be free. It was moved by Norm Amsler, seconded by Tom Kuny, and carried to contract with PrimePay for our paycheck processing.

The council reviewed the annual report. Carol Nicoletti will copy and bind the report.

It was moved by Tom Kuny, seconded by Norm Amsler, and carried to appoint Dee Phillips and Gerry States to serve as our audit committee.

It was moved by Tom Kuny, seconded by Norm Amsler, and carried to continue the 2011 council officers for 2012. Council Officers: President—Pastor Dennis Whalen; Vice President—Tom Kuny; Secretary—Carol Nicoletti; Treasurer and Financial Secretary—Dee Eppihimer.

A suggestion was made by Carol DeHaven that a cross be displayed at the front of the sanctuary during Lent. Tom Kuny reported that we are permitted to do so. We have also been given permission to have a few additional church keys made.

An automatic external defibrillator (AED) unit will soon be placed in the church. We might want to consider training for some of our members.

A first aid class will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2012 at Unionville Methodist Church for a cost of no more than \$15. Details will be in the bulletin.

MUSINGS

muse—to turn something over in the mind meditatively

In our Christian walk with Jesus, it is important that we regularly and often have those precious silent times alone with Him when the presence of the Holy Spirit leads to a closer relationship with Him; also, that time is taken to forgo the company of others in order to study God's love letter to us, that we might learn His will for our lives. However, I have recently gained a greater appreciation of another important way to achieve a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

Something quite wonderful happens at Lighthouse Lutheran Church during the Sunday School hours with Pastor Whalen and at the Wednesday evening Bible studies led by Janet McClintick. An analogy is in order. Many years ago I took some violin lessons. I soon progressed from simple tunes to more involved ones. One day during a session with my instructor, he picked up his violin and, for the first time, added an accompaniment to the melody I was playing. Of course, the song gained a significant level of interest, but what I remember most about that experience was the exhilaration of making music in concert with another human being. We are social creatures and crave the companionship of others in many, if not most, of our endeavors. In *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis, after cautioning against falling into the custom of idle or harmful conversation, writes, "Nevertheless, devout conversation on spiritual things helps not a little to spiritual progress, most of all where those of kindred mind and spirit find their ground of fellowship in God."

Much of importance can be gained by learning together—sharing our knowledge, opinions, beliefs, and experiences of our lives in Christ with others of like mind. The Sunday and Wednesday sessions are so conducted that such interaction among the participants is encouraged. And the remarkable level of respect for each other that is exhibited is one proof that the blessed Holy Spirit is present, as indeed He is invited to be at the start of each meeting.

And what is to be gained from the performance of our Christian disciplines, both private and public? St. Paul, in his majestic encyclical on justification, exhorts:

And do not follow the fashion of this age,
but be transformed by the renewal of the mind,
so that you may prove what is the will of God,
His good and well-pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

Mel Roush