

St. Paul's Epistle— *February 2023*



Church Council Meeting—January 5, 2023

Those in attendance: Tim Anderson, Richard Christie, Leanna Hasbargen, Steve Rutkowski, George Aitchison and Sally Batdorf

Chairman Tim Anderson called the meeting to order. There were no additions to the agenda. The Minutes and Treasurer's reports were reviewed and approved. Briefs: 1) An update on the roof was given. 2) There was discussion about investigating the source of ground water getting into the church basement. 3) Joint Council meeting is scheduled for January 29th. 4) Election of Officers will take place when Pastor Quast returns in February. 5) Arrow Lift has been notified we are going ahead with cylinder repair. They will contact the church with a repair date. 6) Sunday School teachers will be meeting after worship on January 29th. 7) The proposed 2023 budget was reviewed with a motion made to recommend the proposed budget at the annual meeting. 8) There was discussion concerning the proposed sale of church lots to Stuart Milette. This will be discussed at the annual meeting.

There were no membership changes.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Submitted by ~ Sally Batdorf, Secretary



Lent begins on February 22 with our Ash Wednesday service at 5 p.m. The rest of the Lenten services will be alternating between St. Paul's and The Church of the Lutheran Hour on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. The schedule for those services will be posted in our bulletin and our website.



MSL Northland is a weekly, half hour televised ministry, produced in Duluth, Minnesota. We bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to you, wherever you're at. Services are led by pastors from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod from throughout the Arrowhead region of northeastern Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin.

Programs are broadcast on KBJR Channel 6 at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings.



**Our LWML Group is hosting a
VALENTINE BAKE SALE on Sunday,
February 12!**

This is a great opportunity to enjoy home baked goodies and help support mission projects with your freewill offering!

Our MITE basket is still available each Sunday to collect your pocket change. Those mites add up to help fund projects around the globe! Our next LWML meeting will be held Sunday, February 12 at 9:30 a.m.

Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits

Lent is starting, and that means its once again time to start collecting items for personal care kits! When natural disasters strike or war drives families from their homes, we feel compassion but often don't know how to help. Making Relief Kits is a simple, fun and tangible way to offer comfort to those suffering and express love to our neighbors in need. Kits are specifically designed to help people coping with poverty, disaster, conflict and more. Congregations play a critical role in helping ensure Lutheran World Relief has enough kits for the constant demand they receive. They provide much needed self-care and critical germ-fighting tools.

Be sure to shop for light or medium weight towels, which are easier for kit recipients to hand wash and air dry, take up less storage space and are less expensive.

Our collection schedule:

Week of February 26th: Bars of soap

March 26th: Towels

March 5th: Toothbrushes

April 2: Bars of soap

March 12th: Sturdy combs

March 19th: Nail Clippers

February Birthdays

Happy birthday to these members celebrating in February!

4th: Arlo Lucek

20th: Dave Wright and Marc Gorden

8th: Ken Leerssen

21st: Jean Houska

9th: Stephanie Morrison

22nd: George Aitchison and Paige Wold

11th: Michelle Hopkins

23rd: Amy Morrison

19th: Kathy Gorden, Bev Moorhead

25th: Rita Anderson

and Louie Swenson

26th: Roberta Christie





Greetings, People Loved by God, in the name of our Saviour, Jesus!

Dear friends, as we continue our look at the commandments, this time we examine the gift of life itself. The Fifth Commandment serves to protect and preserve human life above all else. It is stated simply in Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder." Luther explains that this means, "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need." As we will see, though this sounds quite easy at first, there is more than meets the eye to this commandment.

First of all, this commandment forbids us to take the life of an innocent person. This may happen in four specific ways: murder, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. God clearly forbids the taking of innocent human life because human beings alone out of all God's creatures are made in His image and likeness, meaning that there is a sacredness to human life that is unique. Indeed, God says (Genesis 9:6), "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."

Let's break this down further by each specific case. Abortion is indeed a sin against this commandment. The living but unborn human beings are persons in God's sight from the time of conception. Since abortion takes an innocent human life (the unborn having done nothing to warrant death), it is not a moral option except in rare medical circumstances (such as ectopic pregnancies) where it is necessary to prevent the death of another person (i.e. the mother). The Lord God says of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart."

Of course, abortion has been one of the premier political issues in our country for decades. With the Supreme Court's overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision, the abortion issue has been returned to the State governments. This means we Christians have a lot of work to do to make abortion unthinkable in the hearts and minds of people. While we acknowledge that there may be many sad circumstances in which conception can take place (rape/incest for example), yet we must hold that it is wrong to punish an innocent human being (the child) for the sins of the father. We know that every child is made in God's image, and every child is deserving of life and protection.

Another attack on life is seen in the advancement of euthanasia. This is the taking of the life of another human being, often those who are handicapped, infirm, helpless, aged, or even terminally ill. The culture of death in which we live can be readily seen by our acceptance and promotion of death as a response to human suffering. It is argued that if people are suffering they should be allowed to die. In Canada, it is given a nice euphemism to disguise the ugliness of the truth: M.A.I.D. = Medical Assistance In Dying.

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Though these decisions purport to begin with the person who is sick or depressed choosing to end their own life with assistance, it often does not stop there. It is a slippery slope where eventually it is the government, acting through medical professionals, to determine who is worthy of life and compassionate treatment, and who is not. What about the family members who simply don't want to be burdened with the care of an elderly sick parent? What about those who are physically well, but struggle with severe depression and need help? What about those who are physically handicapped? What about those who are merely poor and don't have an acceptable "quality of life?" Would it be better simply to end their lives? Out of supposed mercy? No, indeed.

We have murdered millions on the altar of convenience, whether it is the unborn or the infirm or aged, often spinning the lie that it is better to "die with dignity." Actually, it is better that human beings look with mercy and compassion on their neighbor and strive to help them in any way—alleviate their suffering through kindness and support, rather than death. God speaks very clearly (Proverbs 6:16-17), "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood." Furthermore, Christians are obligated to defend people (Proverbs 31:8), "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute."

Closely connected to euthanasia is suicide. This has become an epidemic in our society, particularly among our armed forces veterans and youth. This shows that there is much work to be done to cultivate a culture of life—and provide assistance to those who are struggling in this way. Yet God teaches us that each person's life is a gift from God who made them, to be ended only by Him. Suicide is murder of the self. We who have been created by God do not have the right to take our own life. God promises to care for us through all situations (Luke 12:22), "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." This is a particularly devastating sin for the family and friends of those left behind. The church must offer care and compassion to all those affected by this tragedy. As well as seek to care for those who are in the midst of struggling with the temptation of taking their life. God desires life for all—and His mercy for all people. We can help people through these difficult times by pointing them to Christ and His great love.

Beyond outright murder (taking of any innocent human life) God also forbids us to hurt or harm our neighbor physically. This means we ought not say or do anything which may destroy, shorten, or make his or her life bitter. A good example of this is how Joseph's brothers hurt both Joseph and their father Jacob by selling Joseph into slavery and leading their father to think Joseph was dead (Genesis 37).

Should anyone think that they have somehow managed to keep this commandment perfectly, Jesus teaches that even harboring hatred or anger in our hearts is akin to murder. Matthew 5:22, "I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." And St. John writes (1 John 3:15), "anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." And so we are all brought low by this commandment.

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One may ask, however, if there is any sort of God-given lawful authority that IS permitted to take another human being's life? Yes, lawful government, as God's servant, may execute criminals and fight just wars. Note that this means that the lives that are taken are not "innocent" human lives, but rather are guilty of some crime or are taking part as combatants in a war. Romans 13:4 states of the government, "He is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." While governments MAY lawfully take human life for just cause, they do not HAVE to do so. Other punishments (such as life in prison) are also ways to mete out God's justice against the wrongdoer.

So, then, beloved, what is it that God does require of us in this commandment? As we have already seen in our examination of the commandments, there are always two sides: that which is forbidden; and that which is expected. In terms of the Fifth Commandment then we are obligated out of love for God and neighbor to help and support our neighbor in every bodily need. Paul in Romans has sage wisdom to offer here (Romans 12:20), "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." The good Samaritan is also a great example of this teaching, as is the way Joseph cared for his brothers and father after rising to prominence in Egypt.

We, therefore, are also called to be merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbor. As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Our Lord Jesus often showed mercy to those in need (the Ten Lepers from Luke 17:11-19). It is our joy and privilege as Christians to follow His example and freely love our neighbor by supporting him physically, as well as offering God's forgiveness for sins that plague their conscience.

Finally, as our bodies have been created by God, they are temples unto Him, and so they should be treated with honor and respect. 1 Corinthians 6:19 teaches, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Therefore, we should avoid and assist our neighbor in avoiding the abuse of drugs and the use of any substance that harms the body or mind.

What joy it is to know, beloved, that God loves us so much that He has knit us together in our mother's womb. That He loves us so much that He bought us, body and soul, with the precious suffering and death of His own Son, Jesus. As we have been cared for and nurtured by God who gave us life, we also ought to cherish all human life, remembering that each and every person is someone for whom Christ has died. If God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son for them, how can we His disciples love the people of this world any less?

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Therefore, we are privileged to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors and point them to the life of Jesus as to why all human life is sacred and deserving of preservation and care. We have a long battle before us in our country. We have people steeply divided on many of these issues. But as we lovingly share our faith, and embody our faith with our actions, God may open peoples' hearts and minds to the truth: all human life is a gift from God. And He has purchased and won for us eternal life with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. God be praised for His unbelievable gift of life! Thanks be to God.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me (cell – 218.324.1948). I pray for you all, daily. May God's grace be upon you, now and always.

Yours In Christ,

Rev. J. Quast

Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, International Falls, Minnesota

Pastor, The Church of the Lutheran Hour, Fort Frances, Ontario

A devotion from Lutheran Hour Ministries

(Jesus said) "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7

There is a story which comes from the Middle Ages. It talks about an angel who wanted to give God the gift that He might value the most.

The angel went to earth and brought back drops of blood from a martyr, who had died in his Savior's service. Precious though those drops of blood were, they were not the gift God valued most.

The angel then collected coins that a poor widow had given to those who had even less than she. Those coins were special, but they were not the thing God valued most.

The angel hurriedly visited us again and brought back the tattered pages of a Bible, which had been used by a great preacher; the shoes of a missionary who had walked in a heathen land; and the laughter of a child who was loved by Christian parents. "These are wonderful gifts," the angel was told, "but they are not the gift that God values most."

One final time the angel returned to earth where he saw two men sitting near a fountain. One of the men bent down to drink and in the water saw his sin-ravaged face. Overcome by all his sins and the transgressor he had become, he began to cry. The angel, ever so quietly, moved up and collected a tear of repentance. But the angel delayed his return to heaven, so he might listen as the second man spoke of the Savior and the hope that comes from sins forgiven. Once again the first man cried. But this time he cried with joy at the Good News of the Gospel. He had been given faith in Jesus as his Savior. His sins were gone. He was forgiven. He had eternal life. The angel captured one of those tears as well.

The angel brought the tear of repentance and the tear of faith to heaven. Those two tears, mixed together, were presented to God ... and God smiled.

Now this is a *story* and the truth of the matter cannot be found in any Scriptural text. Even so, the Savior told us that repentance causes joy in heaven. Writing to the Romans, St. Paul asked, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (See Romans 10:14-15.) While we know the Holy Spirit alone gets the credit for the conversion of souls, we are also aware He uses people to share the story of what Jesus has done for us.

It is a desire to create that heavenly joy, mixed with a desire to obey the Savior's command to *go, teach and baptize*, which motivates your congregation, your Synod, and Lutheran Hour Ministries to "bring Christ to the nations." Like the Lord, we want to see as many forgiven sinners in paradise as is possible.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, grant that I may share the Savior's story of sacrifice with the lost world. If that is too big a task, use me to witness to the circles of my friends, family and neighbors. Then, by Your power, may repentance lead to tears of joy shed here on earth and happiness in heaven. In the Savior's Name I ask it. Amen.
