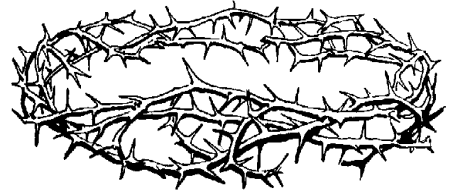


The Tidings



Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

March 2007

Midweek Lenten Services Continue

“Christ On Trial” examines evidence that demands a verdict: Who is this Jesus...for you?

We hear eye witness accounts of encounters with Jesus during the remaining Wednesday services at 7:00 p.m.:

- March 7** A former cripple is, herself, evidence of Jesus’ loose interpretation of Sabbath law.
- March 14** “Jesus, Disturber of the Peace!” Is it true? Prominent Jewish leader Nicodemus weighs in.
- March 21** Evidence that Jesus is a self-elected “judge and jury” is offered by a woman caught in adultery.
- March 28** Are charges of cannibalism true? A young man named John is called to the stand.

2007 Mission Trip Informational Meeting

Ever thought about doing mission work? Here’s an opportunity for a short-term commitment. Bethlehem will have a mission trip to inner-city Chicago from June 17-23, 2007 to help Lutheran Schools and other Christian organizations.

Find out what it’s all about at the informational meeting on Sunday, March 18 after the late service (11:30 or so).

District LWML Spring Workshop at Bethlehem

“Meet Our Missionaries...and MORE”
Saturday, March 24 9:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Remember how exciting it was as a child when a missionary spoke on your congregation’s annual Mission Sunday? You can have that same pleasure now by attending the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League’s Spring Workshop – “Meet the Missionaries and MORE!”

For the program, Rev. Dan McMiller, SWD LCMS Mission Executive, will bring along two missionaries who are spreading God’s Word to ethnic and other special populations in the district.

Other speakers include Susan Vang, involved in the SWD Hmong ministry; Jeff Kelm of MOST ministries, sharing info on the upcoming eyeglass mission trip to Puerto Rico Nov. 2-10; Jana Hoffmann, of Thrivent Financial, offering tips on working with volunteers, and Jan Wendorf leading a mission-oriented Bible study.

There will also be a breakout session where attendees will share their society’s successful activities and events – a great help for all who care about LWML and missions.

Use the registration form in the latest *South Wisconsin News* or register online at the district LWSML website: www.swd-lwml.org. There is no fee, but a free-will offering will be taken to cover materials. Bring a sack lunch, beverages provided. Fellowship period with check-in, coffee and rolls begins at 8:15 a.m.

Holy Week

Maundy Thursday/Communion

April 5 7:00 p.m. Peter’s evidence

Good Friday

April 6 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday Festival Worship

April 8 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

Easter Breakfast

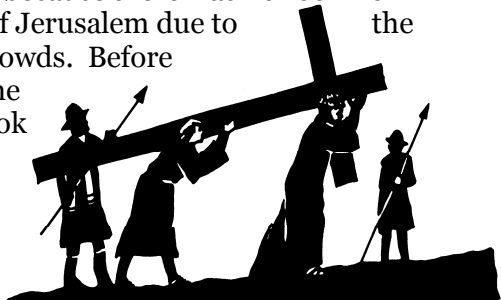
April 8 8:45-10:15 a.m.



Bearing a Cross

“Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus.” (Luke 23:26)

As Jesus was forced to carry His cross to Mt. Calvary Jesus apparently broke down along the route. At that moment Simon of Cyrene appeared. He had come all the way from Africa, evidently to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. He spent the night in the country, either because he had friends in the country or because there was no room for him in the inns of Jerusalem due to the large Passover crowds. Before Simon knew it one of the soldiers took hold of him and made him carry the cross after Jesus. St. Mark tells us that they “compelled” him to carry the cross. He didn’t volunteer. He was drafted.



Maybe you, too, have been drafted to carry a cross after Jesus. Maybe your cross consists of a wayward relative, someone who mistreats you, or of sickness and pain of the body. Like Simon of Cyrene you didn’t volunteer to carry your cross. You have been drafted.

Your own personal cross is not punishment for sin. Christ, when he died on Calvary, made full payment for every one of your sins. When the Bible says: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1)* that means here on earth as well as in eternity.

Simon was probably a believer in the Messiah who had been promised the people of God. Because he was compelled to carry the cross He saw how deeply Christ really loved him. He noticed how Jesus acted in patience toward the brutality of the Roman soldiers and how Jesus willingly suffered for our sins. Since every Christian cross is meant to bring you a deeper appreciation of what Christ means to you we can say to each other even in the darkest hours of distress: *“Strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet.” (Hebrews 12:12-13-Cf. 1 Peter 5:10)*

Simon’s cross-bearing was a blessing for others. Carrying a cross for the good of others is a blessing of suffering which we often forget. In the early days of my ministry a mother was dying in a hospital bed with liver cancer. She endured pain and her strength was waning. She had a large family and through her patient suffering and loving witness to

her Savior the whole family became much more conscious of God’s reality and several children who had drifted away from Christ and His Church returned. Maybe YOU will be asked to bear a cross in order to convert some-one or to strengthen someone in his or her faith.

Like all people Simon died. Simon’s sons, Rufus and Alexander, were well known in the early church. It seems proper to assume that Simon was a Christian, died as a believer in Christ, and is now enjoying the glories of heaven. It’s very possible that carrying the cross after Jesus gave him the faith which saved him. So, a cross has given faith to many a person since Simon. There are some church members who are Christians in name only; some who go to church regularly and observe all the outward forms of Christianity but have really never met Jesus; some who are so busy making a living and taking care of their social affairs that they don’t take time to think of their own salvation.

Some don’t even think about their eternal welfare until the Lord gives them some cross to bear. Tribulations help us keep our faith in Christ and keeping our faith in Christ guarantees us an eternal life in heaven.

So, no matter what your cross, look ahead. There is an eternal glory ahead for the cross-bearer. Jesus bore it as He looked ahead as the writer to the Hebrews says: *“For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2b)* YOUR joy is coming, too. *“We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body” (Phil 3:21).* Whenever a cross is laid upon you look ahead and praise the Lord. He has great and eternal things in store for you!

In Jesus,
Pastor Mueller

“For I resolved to know nothing while with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2)

NEXT Steps of ReFocus

"Go away from me," cried Peter. Get out of my life!

But Jesus didn't go away.

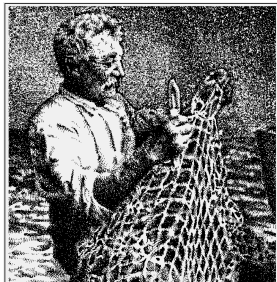
"I'm a sinful man," Peter con-tinued. I'm totally unworthy.

Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid." Then He added, "Follow me - I'll make you fish for people."

In a few brief words, Jesus offered Peter three things that He also offers each of us: a reassurance, an invitation, and a promise.

Jesus gave Peter reassurance "don't be frightened as if I'd come to threaten you. Trust me." Then came the invitation, "Come, follow me." Was it a command? A suggestion? I'm sure the tone of voice Jesus used, and the look on his face, made clear

that this was a firm but generous invitation. This is the Messiah. Peter realized Jesus was issuing a summons to join Him in whatever ahead - in the establishing of the new era. It was a call to both fellowship and action. "Come" was an invitation to a relationship with



"COME, FOLLOW ME,"
 JESUS SAID,
 "AND I WILL MAKE
 YOU FISHERS OF MEN."
 MATTHEW 4:19

lay

Jesus. "Follow me" was a summons to discipleship - to be identified with Him in His cause.

The promise came when Jesus said to Peter, "I will make you fishers of men." Peter knew that fishing for fish involved catching them in a net. So it was reasonable to assume that his role would be to haul people writhing and struggling into the kingdom. Peter encountered the same paradox that each of us faces when we hear Jesus calling our name. It seems to be a risky proposition - He moves in mysterious ways, and we often don't know where He's taking us, or why. Yet there is really no risk at all, because He cannot fail. His purposes will succeed.

So Peter was compelled to make a decision that would determine the course of his life. He could stay where he was, and remain for the rest of his days an unknown, unheralded fisherman. Or, he could launch out into the deep with Jesus and discover what happens when a man entrusts his all to God's Son. Similar choices confront every person who hears the call of Christ.

The call of Jesus was, and still is, short on detail but full of promise. Jesus offered Peter the chance to be actively involved in preparations for the coming kingdom, and he offers the same prospect to each of us. For Peter, and for us, to respond is to accept an invitation to significance. It is an incredible opportunity to know God in an intimate and personal way, and deepen that relationship so that each of us would begin to have an impact in the world.

Over 80 individuals from Bethlehem have participated in our "A Fresh Start" Bible Study. On

March 17 we will host our first ReFocus Summit where we will bring our focus from what is God calling each of us individually to accomplish for His kingdom to what is God calling Bethlehem to accomplish for His kingdom. It will be a time where we as members of Bethlehem will again experience the reassurance, invitation and promise from God. We need everyone's input and participation. Please begin now praying for this journey and seeking God's counsel regarding your participation. God is doing great things within and through Bethlehem and He is inviting you to go deeper with Him.

Peter R Imlah
 Youth & Family Minister

Kid's Activity from Hour



Website Lutheran Ministries

It's been said that children are evidence of God's promise for the future, bringing curiosity and delight into our world.

One of the great blessings of such curiosity is their enthusiasm and desire to learn. Like sponges, children soak up the world around them! And with technology continuing to explode, they are being exposed to more and more at an increasingly early age. How can we make sure that what they are seeing and hearing will reinforce the best, most necessary values?

Lutheran Hour Ministries shares in your desire to provide the very best for children, understanding the struggles of finding positive resources that build solid foundations for faith and learning. That's why they created **JCPlayZone.com**. It's an internet site with games, crafts, puzzles, coloring pages, and stories that make for safe online play for children ages 2-6. As an extra bonus, parents will find articles and encouragement at JCParentZone.com

Review of Communion Practices at Bethlehem

The Board of Lay Ministry has been asked on and off again over the past several years in essence "If the Lord's Supper is everything that Scripture and the catechism say it is, why we don't have the opportunity to receive it when we come for worship each week?" *The current practice at Bethlehem is to have communion on the first and third Sundays of the month.* Lay Ministers have had several discussions regarding this topic and no action was ever taken to change this practice.

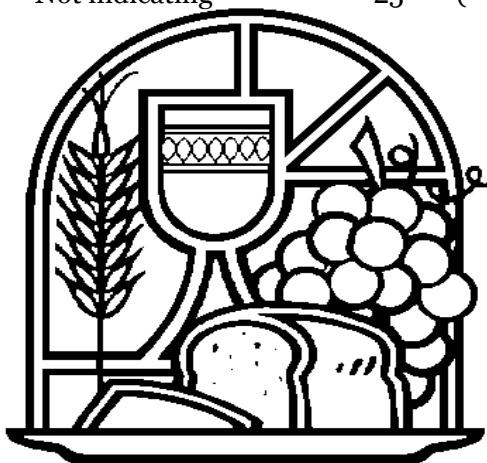
At our meeting held in January, a proposal was made to change the practice to offer communion

every Sunday. We had a rather long discussion regarding this topic and decided that the benefits of making communion available every Sunday outweighed any inconvenience this would cause, and the motion passed to offer communion every Sunday.

Following our meeting, I did some extra research on communion practices in the Lutheran Church and found some interesting information had already been gathered on the topic by a Lutheran Pastor in northern Wisconsin, Kenneth Wieting, and published in a Book entitled "The Blessings of Weekly Communion." In his book, Wieting points out that in the Apostolic church, communion was celebrated every Sunday. During the period of the Reformation, the Lutheran churches practiced weekly communion. The influence of Protestantism in the United States has suppressed this practice. In 1999, Wieting conducted a survey of all LCMS pastors. The intent was to measure the frequency of the opportunity to commune in the worship of LCMS congregations and to determine if there was any change in understanding of the scriptural, historical, and confessional witness to weekly Communion.

A total of 2,494 responses were tabulated from pastors serving in parish settings. This was more than 48% of the total parish pastors at the time of the survey. The geographic distribution was also an acceptable representation of congregations in the various regions. The general information concerning the frequency of Communion in their parishes was as follows:

Each Sunday service and weekly alternative	495	(19.8%)	
Each Sunday in rotating services	403	(16.2%)	
Twice monthly	428	(17.2%)	
Twice monthly and fifth Sundays	153	(6.1%)	
Twice monthly and major feasts	564	(22.6%)	
Monthly	57	(2.3%)	
Other variations/combinations	369	(14.8%)	
Not indicating	25	(1%)	



Of the eleven possible concerns listed on the survey that pastors would

anticipate in recovering the opportunity for weekly Communion, five were noted by more than 20 percent of the respondents (and by the way, these are the concerns I have heard from our members following our decision to go to weekly Communion):

1. The concern of members that the opportunity to receive the Lord's Supper weekly would make it too common (1,363 or 55%)
2. Length of service concerns (1,315 or 53%)
3. The lack of understanding of the scriptural, confessional and historical witness to every Sunday Communion at this time (1,235 or 50%)
4. The tradition of the last two and a half centuries of occasional Communion that is now understood to be the Lutheran tradition (1,003 or 40%)
5. Increased preparation and cleaning for the altar guild, concern over more frequent pressures of close Communion, and the lack of understanding of sin as our greatest problem and or understanding the desire to receive forgiveness as the highest worship in the Gospel (all about 20%).

I will summarize the comments made by Pastor Wieting regarding these concerns:

THE SACRAMENT WILL BECOME TOO COMMON

As Pastor Wieting states, it is in our sinful human nature to take good gifts for granted: our spouse, our family, our work, our country, freedom. But the Lord's Supper is no ordinary "good thing." It is the body and blood of Him who alone is good - God (Luke 18:19). Luther described Holy Communion as the sum and substance of the Gospel, therefore the frequency of its use should not be compared to other good things of this life, it should only be reasoned out the same way we would reason out the use of God's holy Word.

Pastor Wieting goes on to state that the problem with abuse or treating the Lord's Supper in a common way lies in our sinful hearts, not the availability of the gift. Baptism indicates that we are given grace to drown those sinful desires that tempt us to treat the Sacrament in a common way.

THE SACRAMENT WILL TAKE TOO MUCH TIME

Pastor Wieting feels this is an issue that is best handled by each pastor and parish in planning service times. Another option suggested is for congregations to look at Communion distribution practice. Because the Lord's Supper is already scheduled on the first and third Sundays, we should be able to adjust to this timetable every Sunday. Christ's presence in Word

and Sacrament each Sunday is exceedingly worth of whatever other adjustments are necessary.

In the early church, until well into the fourth century, communicants stood to receive the Lord's Supper. A more efficient Communion distribution that does not involve kneeling need not be irreverent. A congregation could have continuous distribution without harming people's faith. He goes on to state that while this may not be the first choice, but would the posture of the first four centuries of the church not be preferable if the only other alternative was denying God's people the opportunity to commune when they come for weekly worship? We need to be sure to start each service on time so that we have a better chance of getting out on time.

PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE WITNESS TO EVERY SUNDAY COMMUNION

The pastors surveyed felt there was a lack of understanding of the scriptural, confessional, and historical witness for every Sunday Communion. Pastor Wieting feels perhaps a study of the history of the Sacrament through the centuries and its recovery at the time of the Reformation would be helpful. Recovering the weekly opportunity to commune is not a program or a policy of an organization but the presence of the Lord of the Sabbath to teach and feed His people.

OCCASIONAL COMMUNION IS CONSIDERED THE LUTHERAN TRADITION

This is very similar to the previous point. A careful look at the Lutheran Confessions, along with the teachings and writings of Luther outside the Confessions, will help alleviate this concern.

OTHER CONCERNS: ALTAR GUILD & CLOSED COMMUNION ISSUES



We will need to recruit others to help serve on the altar guild. This is a very important service that is provided to the church with very little fanfare.

There is no greater reward than serving the Lord in any activity that is needed in the church, we just need to ask.

As for the concerns of closed Communion and the added pressure with weekly Communion, these concerns will not lessen in our age. We need to understand the loving nature of this practice to help explain it and practice it with joy and thankfulness.

Hopefully this helps to explain and support this change in our Worship schedule as a real benefit that allows every opportunity for members to receive the blessing and forgiveness of Holy Communion every week while attending Worship. Please pray for the successful implementation of this change in our Worship schedule that it all be for the Glory of God.

"I'm Committed to Care!"

Here's what one Stephen Minister has to say about Stephen Ministry:

"I was kind of sitting on the sidelines in our congregation. Oh, I came to church every Sunday, but the rest of the week I was focused on myself. Then Stephen Ministry came along. When I said "yes" to God's call to me for that ministry, I saw a lot of changes in my life. Now I'm committed to caring more about others than I do about myself. And you know what? I'm walking a lot closer with my Lord."

To find out more about Stephen Ministry, contact Ardie Nelson or Kathy Divine.



Have you felt the new energy in our church? The fresh start? It is a new chance for us to serve our Lord. We all have some talent to give. Our own growth and the growth of our church depend on the willingness of us all to invest that talent for others. As a member of this church you are called to share in all aspects of its life to include the Wednesday evening dinners and worship services during Lent. Please say "yes" to serving our Lord when asked by our various boards. There are opportunities listed in the bulletin and newsletter that give us a chance to serve on a short term or one time basis. God is honored as we exercise our faith in serving Him. Jesus shed His very blood for all of us – He gave everything He had. Scripture says "whatever you have given to the least of mine so you have given to me." The real question is "Can I be selfish with the gifts God has provided?" As members of the Body of Christ we all have the opportunity to respond to His Gift of Grace. Our Lord wants our first-fruits – not the leftovers. Let's pick this day to become an active part of the body of Christ.

See You in Church,
Anne Meyer
Board of Stewardship Chair

Lutheran Women in Mission

All women and confirmed girls are invited to the next Ladies' Guild meeting on Monday, March 5 at 7:00 p.m. We'll be working on details for the LWML District Workshop to be held at Bethlehem on Saturday, March 24 (see front page).

Knit or Crochet Bandages

We have an ongoing project to knit or crochet simple cotton bandages for tropical skin ulcer patients (size 8 needles or H hook). Pick up directions at the Women's Guild table by the mail slots. Finished bandages can be placed in the basket there.



Men's Retreat at LuWiSoMo

"THE MAN I WANT TO BE"
APRIL 13-15, 2007

Men of all ages will enjoy a relaxing and rejuvenating weekend in fellowship with other Christian men, with opportunities for spiritual growth, worship, and prayer. The date of the retreat is April 13-15. During the course of the weekend, we will be participating in sessions about being "The Man I Want To Be" led by Rick Adams, Director of Youth and Family Ministry from Trinity Lutheran in Mequon and Tim Dittloff, District Vice President of the Lutheran Extension Fund. The cost for the entire weekend is \$125, which includes housing at the Krueger Center, 3 meals on Saturday, breakfast on Sunday, and the costs associated with the program. We will be looking at ways in which we can be:

- "The Man Who Believes" – Making Every Day Count in God's Ultimate Plan
- "The Man Who Builds" – Leaving a Legacy of Faith for Those Who Follow After
- "The Man Who is Brave" – Turning the Disappointments of Defeat Into the Joy of Triumph

You can register by obtaining a brochure from the church office, or by going online at either LuWiSoMo's website (www.luwisomo.org) or Trinity Freistadt's website (www.trinityfreistadt.com) and downloading a registration form.

Opportunities to Volunteer:



Red Barn at Sunshine Place

Members new to Bethlehem may wonder about the "Red Barn." It's a thrift store run by volunteers from 5 Sun Prairie churches and was originally housed in a

red barn. Bethlehem will staff the store on Tuesdays from Noon-4 p.m.

The new store is located in the new Sunshine Place at 18 Rickel Rd. in Sun Prairie and plans to open sometime in April. Volunteer workers will be needed then and any amount of help will be appreciated.

Donations of good clothing and house-wares will also be welcomed **during business hours** once the store opens. If you would like to volunteer some time there, call Janine Much at 837-4405 for info.

In the past Bethlehem has realized at least \$1,000 per year from the efforts of these volunteers.

Sun Prairie Food Pantry Volunteers:

Plan to attend one of these training sessions at the new **Sunshine Place**, 18 Rickel Road:

Thurs. March 22 6-8 p.m.

Sat. March 24 9-11 a.m.

Tues. March 27 6-8 p.m. OR

Thurs. March 29, 9-11 a.m.

This is required training in the new procedures for providing food for those in need. Refreshments and a "sneak peak" of Sunshine Place follow. Questions: Karen Est 825-4296.

Bethlehem provides volunteers for the Sun Prairie Emergency Food Pantry every Monday evening from 5-7.

At the Bethesda Thrift Store

201 Cottage Grove Rd.
Madison, WI

Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., runs resale stores with 100% of the profits going to their clients with developmental disabilities. They provide for the spiritual as well as the physical needs of their clients. They are in great need of volunteers in their new Madison store located at 201 Cottage Grove Rd.

To volunteer or to have an information packet sent to you, please call Sherry at 920-261-3050 ext. 3531 or 800-383-8743 ext. 3531. You can also contact the area District Director Jim Clary at ext. 4437 or call Alice Hanson, store manager at the store on Monday mornings – 608-223-1228.

At Oakwood Village East

5565 Tancho Drive
Madison, WI 53718

Contact Kim Viney, 230-4238 or kim.viney@oakwoodvillage.net to volunteer for any of the following or for more information.

Village Mercantile – Volunteers needed weekdays and Saturdays once a month for

the gift and grocery store, M-F 9:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. or 12:30-3:15 p.m. or Sat. 12:45 – 3:15 p.m. Training provided.



Aviary Volunteer –

needed to help with light house-keeping for the caretaking of birds in the Community Center, Oakwood Seasons, Meadows and Knoll (4) aviaries once a week, most any day/morning or afternoon for about 1-2 hours.

At the Colonial Club Senior Activity Center

301 Blankenheim Lane
Sun Prairie

Would you like to put a smile on a senior's face, meet a grow-ing need in your own backyard, and reap the rewards of volunteerism? If you answered yes, and we sure hope you did, we invite you to team up with the Colonial Club to assist in one (or more!) of several areas.

Home-Delivered Meal Driver



Deliver noon, one day per week, to seniors in northeast Dane County. Routes and substitute opportunities available in Sun Prairie, Marshall, Cottage Grove and Deerfield. Route takes under one hour – a great chance to provide a hot nutritious meal and a friendly face to a senior in your community, enabling them to continue living independently in their home. Mileage reimbursement available.

reading. Weekly visits are a welcome addition to lives of seniors with little or no family in the area.

Kitchen Assistant

Provide general assistance for our nutrition program. Set tables, package meals for home-delivery, clean dishes, etc. Fast-paced environment

Lunch Helper

Help prepare lunch in our Adult Day Center. Set tables, set out food, and visit with seniors. 10:30 – 12:00. Monday and substitute volunteers needed.

Transportation Assistant

Assist our drivers as they trans-port seniors to and from our Adult Day Center. Prepare wheelchair lift, write down mileage, visit with seniors and other tasks. Morning (6:45 – 10:30) or afternoon (2:00 – 5:30) shift Tues. or Thurs.

Contact Lynn Pawelski, Volunteer Coordinator at the Colonial Club to find out how you can get started. Call 837-4611 extension #120 or email lpawelski@colonialclub.org.

Won't you please consider these opportunities to serve and make a difference?



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

300 Broadway Drive
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
608.837.7446



Worship:

Sundays 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School/Bible Class 9:10

Rev. Stephen M. Mueller, Pastor
Mr. Peter Imlah, Youth & Family Minister

www.bethlehemlc.org
Office@bethlehemlc.org

Friendly Visitors

Visit with an area senior in their home. Provide a friendly face, pleasant conversation and perhaps an activity such as cards or

