

# Pastor Sailer's Page

Vol. 17, No. 2

Faith Lutheran Church  
Sioux Falls, SD

January 17 & 18, 2015

## STATE OF THE CHURCH: Not Ashamed

*At about the time the President and Governors are giving their "State of" addresses, I offer you my annual look at how things are going at Faith.*

A skinny, bespectacled, pimply 8<sup>th</sup> grader back in 1973, at Redeemer Lutheran Church, in Dickinson, ND, heard his pastor speak these words of blessing over him: *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,"* (Romans 1:16). Those words have guided his life, and, I hope you would agree, they define how your bald, bespectacled senior pastor carries out his ministry to and with you.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Does this represent how we carried out our ministry as a congregation in 2014? Yes! We unashamedly held out Christ as the world's only Savior – our Savior – in our worship services, our classes, and our many other activities. Our congregation is supporting Sioux Falls Lutheran School and Lutheran High School of Sioux Falls with funds, students, teachers, and leaders. We are among the leaders in financial support of district and synodical missions, in the South Dakota District. We, again, sent members on short-term international mission trips – to Hong Kong and Nicaragua. We supported our member, Emily Goddard, in her last year as a GEO in South Africa. We continued to reach out to those around us, as Faith is the worship home to African groups, and as we lead in the SonShine Days ministry to African immigrant children. Our various groups (Goodwill Aid, Ladies' Auxiliary, FACs, youth, etc.) are all concerned about knowing Christ and showing Him to those around us. We celebrated the long-time ministry of our office secretary, Darlene Friesen, and bade farewell to her, in this capacity. We welcomed a new secretary, Lan Kuhlmann, in this important "first-contact" and professional staff-support ministry of our congregation. Our members, in their daily vocations as workers, family members, and citizens, are living and speaking the Gospel. In

these ways and more, we were not and are not ashamed of the Gospel!

In 2014, Faith undertook a significant remodel and "freshen-up-the-facility" project. What a beautiful Welcome Center we now have. What wonderful new flooring and paint, and other improvements were made! These facility improvements speak to us and others that we care about the Lord's house and His work. No, we are not ashamed of Him and His Word.

Considerable improvements were made to the church's Web site. (You'll have to check out [www.faithlutheransioxford.org](http://www.faithlutheransioxford.org)!)

We had hopes of doing more with our congregational bylaws in 2014, improving them, making them more dynamic and formative in our Gospel ministry, but much more work remains. Some of our members began to seriously evaluate what we are doing as people of the Great Commission ("Go, make disciples of all nations..."), and began brainstorming ideas about how we can do a better job of being bold with the Gospel. They call this the "Matthew 28 Project." More about this project will be unveiled in these early days of 2015. These members are not ashamed of the Gospel!

Conversations and study about more intentional family ministry and about our full-time ministry staffing have been held. Much more study and conversation on these issues will be held in 2015.

Statistically, we began 2014 with 732 baptized members and 562 confirmed members. We ended the year with 758 baptized members and 576 confirmed members. Not much change percentage-wise, but rather dynamic when you see how we've arrived at these numbers. Take a look! In 2014, at Faith, there were:

- ❖ 11 baptisms of infants and children;
- ❖ 7 juniors confirmed;
- ❖ 29 transfers in from LCMS congregations;

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- ❖ 2 professions of faith (non-LCMS Lutherans joining our congregations);
- ❖ 5 re-affirmations of faith (former members of Lutheran congregations seeking membership once again in a Lutheran congregation);
- ❖ 3 weddings;
- ❖ 5 funerals or memorial services;
- ❖ 14 transfers out to LCMS congregations;
- ❖ 13 members released or removed.

Our weekend attendance average was 305 for 2013, up from 294 in 2013. Our average weekend offerings were \$12,762 – that’s up from \$12,023/weekend in 2013.

As we move ahead into this New Year, what lies ahead is known by our God, but not by us, in many respects. We do know that the year ahead will be a busy year, with all of our groups active in growing in their knowledge of God’s Word and seeking ways to serve Him. More mission activity will happen near and far, with SONShine Days, VBS, Sunday Service2, and a trip to Hong Kong and a medical mission trip to El Salvador on the horizon.

Yes, we are a busy Gospel place. We are not ashamed of the Gospel. And yet, there is so much more work to be done. In last year’s State of the Church page, I described what we could be doing; the same could be said today: *“...it seems we could do more to serve the needs of our community, especially since we are located in a part of Sioux Falls where so many are in need of a home or employment or both. And so, as we move forward with Bylaw revision, we’ll have the opportunity to add some helpful revisions to our congregation’s governance and service structure to make us more efficient and effective in our care for those around us. ...”*

The Whittier neighborhood, where God has placed this church, is a wonderful and challenging location. We are a congregation with tremendous people resources and financial resources. One of our members has said we are *an island of wealth in a sea of need*. I agree, and I wouldn’t want Faith Lutheran Church to be anywhere else!

I’m confident we will move forward in our service to those in need around us, for we have a powerful and gracious God, who has given us His Son to be our Lord and Savior, and who has given us His means of grace as our tools to advance the Gospel. In that, and in all we do, it will help us to keep on asking ourselves, “Why has God established us as this ‘island of wealth’ in this ‘sea of need’?” It will be helpful for you to ask yourself, using words from our mission statement, “What can I do to KNOW Christ, GROW in Him, and SHOW Him to the world?” Fed and led by Jesus via Word and Sacraments, you can impact your own life and the lives of those around you in extraordinary ways, now and forever.

For you and I have the Gospel. It is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” It assures us that we have a God who has saved us. It speaks to us that forgiveness is certain. Everlasting life is certain. God’s presence and power are certain, until we reach our heavenly home.

So, let’s not be ashamed of the Gospel in 2015. Let’s step forward with Gospel-fueled confidence, as individuals and as a congregation!

*~ Pastor Scott Sailer*

**THE MISSION OF FAITH LUTHERAN:**  
***“Blessed in our journey of Faith...to KNOW Christ; to GROW in Him; to SHOW Him to the world!”***

