



# The Homestretch

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

St. Paul wrote to his young friend and assistant, Timothy, "the time of my departure is at hand." He was referring to his death, knowing that the time was near for him to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. He wanted Timothy to prepare himself to assume the charge and carry on the work faithfully. Though I have no reason to anticipate death in the near future, I can and must say now to this congregation, "the time of my departure is at hand." God willing, I will continue to serve as pastor at Messiah until June 23, 2019, 13 days prior to the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination. I have been discussing this transition with the Board of Elders for about 5 years. It is now time for the whole congregation to enter the process of planning the future of the ministry in this place. I want you to be able to do this without fear of offending me or appearing to nudge me out of office. I am retiring on my own accord, without the slightest pressure from anyone. Thank you for your kindness and patience with me through the past 38 years. Marcia and I will do everything we possibly can to make the process of transition a successful one. (Marcia will leave her job in the church office, but her employment at the school will not necessarily be coterminous with my retirement. She is, after all, much younger than I!)

Significant changes in life almost always create anxiety. Marcia and I are also entering uncharted waters in our lives. Though most people who have gone before us have recommended it highly, we are aware that some have not done so well in retirement living. We have received much good advice and are making plans to keep ourselves occupied in useful things.



Messiah Lutheran Church has never experienced a change of this magnitude either. Historical precedent of transition after long pastorates raises caution flags. That's why I asked the Board of Elders to start thinking through and planning for this challenge in plenty of time. Frankly, many pastors would be very reluctant to follow a pastor who had served for 39 years in the same place. I, myself, would have such reservations. There are plenty of reasons why this kind of transition is often a challenge, but I think it would be wise to focus on the success stories instead. Some congregations have been blessed with two or more successive long pastorates in their history. I don't know whether their transitions were as smooth as their history might suggest, but whatever challenges they faced fostered unity rather than division. I am quite sure that such success can be correlated to spiritual maturity on the part of both congregation and pastor (s). Spiritual immaturity is often exposed at these stress points.

Spiritual maturity recognizes that the Church belongs to the Good Shepherd, Jesus – not to the under-shepherds or to the members themselves. In the midst of the changes of this passing world, the Lord remains unchangeable. His Word is unchangeable. When the under-shepherd is sent by and devoted to Jesus and His Word, the flock is not spooked by a strange voice. ALL the shepherds sent by Jesus speak with a united voice, the voice of Scripture. It is familiar to the sheep and they follow it. The various instruments God uses to speak this voice are only superficially different. The mature pastor understands that the true sheep respond to Christ's voice, not his. He nurtures that love and trust in Christ, and does not attempt to put himself forward. The mature congregation knows that a true pastor is not recognized or judged by worldly standards, but by the voice of Christ. They will honor, love, and follow the one who leads them to Christ and faithfully teaches them His Word. Thus, their loyalty does not have to be switched with every pastoral change, because their loyalty is to Christ, not men. Such deeply rooted spiritual maturity is not easily panicked or overthrown by the devil.

About five years ago, the pastors and Elders  
*(Continued on page 2)*

**Inside this issue:**

A Little Leaven—Pastor Chryst	2
Are You a Faithful Steward?	3
Meet Your Fellow Members	4

*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

of Messiah conceived and set in motion a plan to call an associate pastor who would have time and opportunity to establish his credentials as a faithful preacher of the Word and follower of Christ. Pastor Chryst has been with us now for about three years. His devotion to Christ and faithfulness to His Word is abundantly evident. As promised, the members of Messiah will have some options at this point concerning the way forward, but you will not have to do this under the duress of a pure vacancy. Pastor

Chryst will continue to be your pastor in this place until the Lord chooses to call or send him elsewhere. Just as he has now, so he will continue to have complete pastoral authority to administer the means of grace to this flock. Your promise to honor and sustain him as your pastor at his installation will not change in the least. Under the leadership and direction of Pastor Chryst and the Elders, the congregation will determine the best way forward in ministry. All the members will have opportunity to participate in this

process. The Elders will soon set forth a short term recommendation to the Voters Assembly.

Let us together, collectively and individually, be earnest in prayer that the Lord's good and gracious will be done to the glory of His Name and for the welfare of the congregation.

Blessings,  
Pastor Huebel

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## *A Little Leaven* by Pastor Tom Chryst

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April's "Hymn of the Month" at Messiah was LSB 654, "Your Kingdom, O God, Is My Glorious Treasure". It got me thinking, especially verse 2, which reads:

***Your kingdom, O God, is a live with the power  
Your Word and Your Spirit bestow.  
Like yeast they affect the whole measure of flour,  
enabling your kingdom to grow.***

At first I was a little put off by this comparison, recalling that yeast or leaven is a biblical picture of sin and corruption. Jesus warned his disciples about the "leaven of the Pharisees" which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:2). Like the yeast in a batch of dough, a little goes a long way.



And then there's this from Paul:

***Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the***

***whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)***

And so in this comparison, **unleavened bread, then, comes to represent a purity**. It is not corrupted. It is the true teaching, the wholesome nourishment that is not touched by malice and evil. It is the humility of heart that true Christian love expresses, not the boasting of the wicked.

Likewise, it hearkens **back to the Passover meal**. Remember when the Israelites left Egypt – it was in a hurry! There was no time to let their bread rise, to sit around and wait for the yeast to do its thing. And so at

succeeding Passover meals, the Jews ate unleavened bread as a reminder of the haste with which they left their bondage in Egypt. A not-so-subtle reminder of the swift salvation of God.

**We use unleavened bread in our observance of the Lord's Supper.** We don't have to use unleavened, but we do it for a number of reasons. One is in keeping with the unleavened bread Jesus would have used as he instituted the Supper. Another is very practical – they don't spoil easily.



These little, blandly flavored wafers become vessels for the very **body of Jesus Christ himself!** Such a simple element, but in, with, and under it – the very God of Gods. And all this for you, a sinner. All this for your forgiveness. To take away any leaven in your life, any power or sting of sin, any corruption of flesh or spirit.

**But leaven is not only used as a metaphor for sin or corruption.**

In Matthew 13, the passage on which our hymn of the month is based, we read the words of Jesus also concerning leaven:

***"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."* (Matthew 13:33)**

And here, **Jesus uses the picture of leaven in a positive light**. A little bit goes a long way. And it even works, or at least starts to work, in a hidden way. Similar to the idea of a mustard seed (which he uses in the verses directly before), the smallness of the leaven, the

simplicity and humility of it, can yet have a great effect.

The comparison is obvious. **On the one hand we have the leaven of sin.** Just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. Just as eating one forbidden fruit lead to all the suffering and sadness and misery and death that ever was. And just as sin continues to grow and propagate itself, often with our aid, so that quickly it can get out of hand. Think of the white lie that grows and grows in the children's book. Or of the consequences of a sin you committed long ago and far away – a sin that still haunts you and maybe changed the course of your life. All sin can be traced back to the seemingly tiny corruption of one false move, one moment of rebellion – and all creation is fallen into death and chaos because of it.

**But the good news is that the kingdom is also a leaven.** The gracious, ruling activity of God in this world is also a small and quiet thing that has great and wonderful effects. Think of the simplicity of baptism – a

little water, a few special, precious words. And there grows a life-long comfort sure. Think of the word of God, humble and simple – even accessible to children. And a steady diet in it makes one wise unto salvation. Or think of the Christian love shown by parents and family members, the quiet example of faith of someone's great-grandmother. All of these are the leaven of the kingdom. The quiet and small and not-so-flashy ways that God gets his business done, and brings his promises to fruition.

Or take Christ himself – just as sin entered the world through one man, and death reigned. So now, through one man, Jesus Christ, has death been destroyed. And from his humble beginnings, born of a virgin, and from the scandal of his cross, has gone forth the message of salvation until the world has been leavened with the good yeast of God's grace in Jesus Christ. **A little bit goes a long way.**



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## ***Are You a Faithful Steward?*** by Pastor Huebel

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Last month I began this series of newsletter articles on stewardship. I focused on the biblical concept that stewards manage and administer property that belongs to their masters. As believers, we are stewards of all that God has entrusted to us in this world, not only our material wealth, but our bodies, gifts, talents, opportunities – our whole lives. We are not our own. We are bought with a price. The motivation and power of the stewardship life comes from our faith in Christ's redemption. We love and serve Him because He first loved and served us.

When Jesus taught about stewardship responsibilities, He continually emphasized two characteristics, faithfulness and wisdom. "Who is the faithful and wise steward?" He asks. St. Paul affirms that "it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor 4:2). Who of us would entrust valuable property to a person we did not trust or who was not trustworthy? So also, God requires of us that we act faithfully with all that He has entrusted to us. But what does faithfulness mean? I propose a simple working definition as it applies to the stewardship life:

**Faithfulness is recognizing our blessings as gifts entrusted to us by God for the purpose of producing fruit for Him, and using them accordingly.**

We cannot be faithful if we do not recognize our blessings. How can we employ God's blessings properly, wisely and efficiently if we do not acknowledge them first? Unfortunately, our sinful flesh blinds us to many of the blessings God daily pours out on us. It is good to take inventory from time to time. Luther reminds us in the first article of the Apostles' Creed that "God has given me my eyes and ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses." We are fearfully and wonderfully made, woven in our mother's womb for God's purposes. Each of us is custom-made to serve God in a unique way. Even before considering material wealth, let us realize that God has made us specially for His purposes. Luther adds, "(God has given me) all that I need to support this body and life." God feeds and clothes us, and provides us with so much more than we "need." Everything that we possess in this world, from the clothes and food on our table to our bank accounts, mutual funds, houses, and cars belongs to Him

and has been entrusted to us. He owns the title to everything. The Bible speaks also of spiritual gifts given to each one for the common good (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11). No believer can say he was not given special gifts to serve the church. God has given us the means of grace, the precious Gospel and the sacraments through which faith was generated and is nurtured in us. He has given us faith itself, for we "cannot by our own reason and strength believe in Christ or come to Him." He has given us brothers and sisters in Christ, the Holy Christian Church, and the congregation to which we belong. ALL of these are gifts and blessings entrusted to us to care for, nurture, develop and use to His glory as good stewards.

We cannot be faithful if we do not recognize these blessings as gifts of God. Many people recognize and use their blessings, but only for selfish purposes. They imagine that they are "self made men" or perhaps even lucky. They do not recognize the Giver of every gift and blessing. St. Paul asks pointed questions: "Now who makes you differ from one another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you

*(Continued on page 4)*





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*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

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Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)

## Meet Your Fellow Members by Dawn Holden

You may have met her voice if you've called the church office early in the week, or in person after the second service one Sunday, while she corralled her 4-year-old social butterfly, daughter Ellie.



But now it's time to get to know new member **Lesley Lara** a little better.

Lesley joined Messiah in October 2017. She is a native Texan and a lifelong Lutheran, even attending a Lutheran

school from kindergarten through 6th grade, in DeSoto.

She is from Duncanville, but moved to Keller about two years ago to be closer to family, including her grandparents, Walter and Waldeen Cornelius, Messiah members.

Lesley is the newest member of Messiah's personnel, as she serves as church secretary and records manager, working Monday through Wednesday.

In her downtime, she enjoys refurbishing furniture, as well as going to public parks with Ellie. Southlake Bicentennial Park is one of her favorites.

Lesley said she enjoys attending church with her family, as well as having Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy for Ellie to attend.

## Faithful Steward? cont.

did indeed receive it why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7). Those who boast in themselves or their superiority over others in any matter are foolish. They do not recognize the Giver upon whom they depend for every breath they take. Do we recognize all our blessings as gifts of God?

We cannot be faithful if we do not recognize that these gifts are only entrusted to us. Jesus told a parable about a vineyard leased to tenants. The tenants began to think they owned the vineyard and cast out the true owner (Matt 21:33). A similar crime is committed by all who forget that their blessings and gifts still belong to the Giver who expects to receive the fruits. When we use our entrusted gifts and blessings for selfish ends only, we insult the One who entrusted us with His property.

We cannot be faithful if we do not recognize that our blessings are entrusted to us for a purpose. Luther puts it this way in his explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed: "He has redeemed me ... that I may live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness,

innocence and blessedness." He has not redeemed me so that I may live for myself, but for the One who died for me and rose again. Jesus says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). God expects to receive fruit from our use of the gifts He has entrusted to us.

Even if we theoretically recognize all of the above, we are not faithful unless we put it into practice by actually using our entrusted gifts in accordance with God's will. In the parable of the talents (Matt 25:25-26) only one servant is rebuked. He is the one who was lazy, and did not put his master's talent to work but placed it in a napkin and buried it. The Lord did not give us gifts and talents to waste. We are to put these things to work for Him. How do we do that? Jesus Himself shows us the way. He invested His whole life to serve mankind. St. Paul puts it this way:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became

poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor 8:9)

Jesus used His whole life to make others "rich." It is our joy as stewards to use the riches God has given us to bless other people. God especially calls us to serve our fellow members in the body of Christ and to advance the mission of the Church. This is the way we are to use our spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7), and our material blessings (Phil 4:14,16; 2 Cor 9:6-8). God also calls us to share our blessings with those in need (Acts 2:44-45; 1 John 3:17).

Are you being faithful with all that the Lord has entrusted to you? I know that there is much in the way of sins of omission in my own life, and I suspect it is true of others as well. With St. Paul we can say, "O wretched man that I am!" With St. Paul we can also say, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In that victory, let us go forward in our stewardship lives by putting God's gifts and blessings to work in love.