

THE VIEW

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A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

“Too Catholic?”

In my youth, I was taught (wrongly) that the most important thing we can do as Lutherans is to demonstrate that we are not Roman Catholic. Making the sign of the cross? *Nope, too Catholic.* But doesn't Luther direct us to keep this practice in the Small Catechism? *Yes, but it is still too Catholic.* Isn't it a remembrance of our baptism, and shouldn't we be reminding ourselves of our regeneration in Christ daily, even constantly? *Nah... it's just a superstitious thing Catholics do.* Don't we have places in our hymnal that recommend times for us to make the sign of the cross during the divine service, and doesn't the pastor make the sign of the cross upon the entire congregation in the Invocation and the Benediction? *Look, Pal! Are you secretly a Catholic? You can't be doing things that Catholics do, or people might start to think that you aren't a Protestant!*

It wasn't until I was in my late twenties that I stopped caring what everyone else thought and began to use the historic practice of making the sign of the cross. This, of course, went over like a lead balloon in my home congregation, and I received a bit of flack for it. It was during this time that I also developed a love for the Church's liturgy. The more I studied, the more I loved the traditions of the Church—once I understood the purpose and meaning behind them. This is especially true for the Sign of the Cross. It felt pretty good to personally and publicly remember that I was baptized into Christ through this very simple act. Making the sign of the cross may not be directly commanded by Scripture, but it absolutely sprouts forth from it.

If this historic practice is faithful to the intent of God's word and is beneficial to the confession and faith of the Church, then why not keep it, even if the “Papists” also retain the practice. And once people saw that it was a catholic (meaning universal) act of the church and not exclusively belonging to the Roman Church, others in my family and church started to reclaim this act of assured salvation too. Should we impose that everyone must keep this gesture? Absolutely not! We should not mandate anything that Scripture does not teach or command, but neither should we

hinder people by condemning faithful traditions that are good for the Church. Our Christian liberty permits us to keep it, or not keep it, according to our conscience. St. Paul wrote that how Christians were free to keep or disregard some observances, but they must do so with full conviction and honor for Christ by their keeping for foregoing a practice (Col. 2:16-23; Rom. 14:1-12).

Now, this does not mean that all practices that our other Christians counterparts do can or should be adopted, even if they may appear benign. A good example of this is prayers to (or through) the saints. Some have asked how petitioning St. Peter, St. Francis, St. Joseph, or even the Virgin Mother, Mary, is any different than asking my neighbor to pray for me or a loved one? In one sense, it isn't; since the Church, both Militant and Triumphant, is at work praying for Christ's Kingdom. But there are some big theological issues with praying to or through the saints who are at rest in Christ. I can physically communicate with a fellow believer, who is still alive in this world, and ask him or her to pray; I can't do that with a believer who has passed from this life and is awaiting the resurrection; unless I make the huge theological leap and assume that humans acquire omniscience and omnipresence in death. Where does it say in Scripture that those who have died can hear our petitions? Yes, your Triumphant loved ones are praying for you, as they pray for all Christ's Church who are still in the tribulation, but not according to your specific requests to find you lost car keys. There is one Mediator, who hears and intercedes on your behalf, and that is Christ alone (1 Tim. 2:5). It through him and in his name that we pray (John 16:23-28). Not all practices that our fellow Christians do are something that we should copy; however, there are some good practices, that are commended by God's Word and that the Lutheran Church as desired to keep that have fallen away because it is seen as "too Catholic."

Perhaps the thing most tragically sacrificed on the altar of things that are considered "too Catholic" is Private Confession and Absolution. The retention of this practice was so desired by the Lutheran Reformers that it was expressly addressed in the Augsburg Confession. Article XI states:

Of Confession they teach that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible according to the Psalm: Who can understand his errors? Ps. 19:12.

Both Private and Corporation Confession and Absolution are essential components of the Office of the Keys. After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" (John 20:22-23). This also coincides with His teaching from Mathew 18:15-20, which has both a personal and communal aspect to repentance and forgiveness. As the Body of Christ, we are entrusted with the Office of the Keys, which either binds or releases someone from their sins. The forgiveness is given by Jesus and for the sake of His atoning sacrificial death as the propitiation for our sins, but the proclamation of His grace is carried out by His Church, specifically through the man who was called by God and the Church to serve as Christ's representative for the administration of His Word and Sacraments.

Early on, Lutherans wrestled with whether or not Confession and Absolution should be considered a Sacrament. It bears the earmarks of the Means of Grace since it is instituted and commanded by Christ, and it most certainly delivers the forgiveness of sins. Both Luther and Melancthon

occasionally categorized Confession and Absolution as a Sacrament, but ultimately it was excluded because it lacked a physical, visible element (that is, unless you consider the priest/pastor to be the method of delivery, but that had the potential introduce doubt into God's grace if the clergy is found to be unworthy or unscrupulous). Yet the right handling of God's Law and Gospel, such as through Confession and Absolution, is the primary purpose of the Pastoral Office. They bring the Law to bear upon the heart and conscience of the sinner, and issue Christ's gracious pardon through the proclamation of the Gospel or it's physical applications (Baptism, Lord's Supper).

While the corporate (public, collective) form of the Absolution was maintained, the private or individual practice declined. A misguided stigma was attached to Private Absolution because of harsh mandates, and phony confessions in order to list enough things to appear sincere. There is also the fear of judgment because the confessional booth's attempt to hide one's identity is comically insufficient. Meanwhile it also fails in its most basic function because it leaves the penitent hiding in the shadows, never letting sin come into the light that they may be rightly addressed. On top of this, penances wrongfully give the impression of earning one's forgiveness. These flaws were corrected by the Lutheran Reformers by bringing Private Confession out of the booth and focusing on Absolution, rather than Penance. In the end, however, it was fear of looking "too Catholic" caused the Lutheran Church to follow suit with other Protestants, who abandoned the practice altogether, which is something the Reformers desperately sought to avoid.

Today, Private Absolution is treated like a vestigial appendage. It exists, but is unused. This is a shame, since there is no greater means by which a Christian can find relief from persistent and disheartening sins. The help of the pastor, as Christ's representative, can alleviate the guilt and burden of sin. While the first step of acknowledging sin before a confessor is the hardest, by vocalizing our struggles and shames to another person, there is relief in knowing that the pastor will hold your confession in confidence, pray for you, and seek to help you against temptation. We are not meant to battle Satan alone. It is Christ who fights for us, and the assurance of this comes from the man who stands in Christ's stead and absolves us as though from the mouth of Christ Himself. This could be done through a formal rite, or it could be as simple as a private conversation, a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen, and perhaps some friendly advice that is rooted in God's Word.

God has graciously given us His Word and Sacraments for the consolation of troubled consciences, but there are times when we need to hear the Absolution of Christ delivered to us in a more personal and direct manner. We know that the full forgiveness is given to us in the Divine Service, but there are times when Satan tempts us into doubting this truth. Private Absolution has existed in Christ's Church from the beginning to face this assault and strengthen Christians against it. Therefore, the Lutheran Reformers fought to retain this practice for this comforting of God's people, even though others cast it aside for being "too Catholic". Should this practice be mandatory for all to do? No. But it may help you if you are made weary by sin or the devil's attacks. Private Confession and Absolution is not "too Catholic," it is an inheritance entrusted to the Church catholic (universal) for the consolation and healing of the Body of Christ.

OUTDOOR PROPERTIES: Water Leak Update

Our water system has sprung a leak in the main line. We received a notice from the County that our system was using water even after hours. So, we checked all of the inside fixtures. Despite making some minor adjustments to a few toilets, the leak continued. At my request, the County sent out a person twice to check the flow rate and accuracy of the meter. I also hired the Leak 1 Detection company to come find the location of both the water line and the leak. When the site was marked, I hired Faith Mountain Plumbing to send a crew to find and fix the problem. Their initial digging at the marked location did not find the pipe or the leak. After 2 and a half days of digging, the plumbers only found the water line. While the leak detection rep returned on the 2nd day of digging, he was not helpful.

A temporary valve placement by the plumbers told us that the leak is somewhere in the 300-foot section of pipe that runs under playgrounds, a driveway, and down to the city water meter. However, our property blueprints and charts are not detailed enough, and are somewhat incorrect to aid us in knowing the exact location of the main line. Therefore, I decided that the plumbing crew should not spend any more time digging holes.

The Faith Mountain Plumbing supervisor suggested that we hire a boring company to replace the entire water line. I agree with him. The age of the existing pipe is the major factor. The section of 40-year-old PVC pipe removed for the temporary valve shows several stress lines. Even if we repair the pipe, another break could happen somewhere else at an unknown date. In fact, there may be more than one leak at this time. The new line will be a stronger, longer lasting pipe. It will also be easier to install than digging more holes since we know where the pipe starts (at the meter) and ends (at the building). I have asked for 3 bids for the boring process. This will be a costly repair and will require approval from the Church Council and Congregation.

Finally, since the Leak 1 Detection company did not find the pipe or leak, I will be working on getting a full refund. The inaccurate results from that company resulted in a higher cost for the plumbing crew and additional property damage to the sidewalk, driveway, and underground drainage system. Therefore, I will also pursue reimbursement for some or all of those related costs.

Your patience and prayers are greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you have any suggestions or comments. Bill Paris, Outdoor Properties

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VISITORS PARKING AREA

Several visitors worship with us weekly. We do have a designated Visitor Parking area for them as indicated by the white sign with blue letters. While it may be convenient for you to park in the Visitor Parking spaces, they are for our guests. Other parking spaces just as close to the front door are available. Please consider "loving your neighbor as yourself." Thanks, Bill Paris



Outreach and Community Concerns



Happy New Year! The mission of the month for January 2024 is the Hendersonville Rescue Mission. The Rescue Mission is located on Maple Street in downtown Hendersonville. It has been an integral part of the community since its founding in 1981. Here's what their website says about what they do:

The general purpose of the Hendersonville Rescue Mission shall be to minister to needy persons by way of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them and helping to provide for their spiritual and physical needs. Through prayer and generous donations from the community, HRM no longer just serves delicious hot, balanced meals to the public, but also provides shelter, guidance, education, support and hope to those looking to better their lives. The food services at the Mission are quite unique in that the food is delicious and the entire public is welcome to join us for a meal, not just those staying in our living quarters.

Our Good Samaritan Medical Clinic consists of volunteer physicians who provide basic medical services to those who do not have healthcare or could otherwise not afford it. By providing these services, clients and others in need can maintain better health and continue working or searching for employment and remain productive citizens. hendersonvillrescuemission.org

Prayer List

Long Term Illness

Robert Kish (Mincer)
Cynthia M. (Lundquist)

Michael Terzian (Keeney)
Brian Keeney

Joyce (Kruse)
Brenda Ridgeway (Amato)

Gretchen Sweetser
(Mincer)
Mary Coffman (Coffman)

Annette & Jim Bodden
(Heaphy)

Surgeries and Illness

Tom Berryman
Daniel Bush (Kaufman)
Carol Walters
Marianne Bugner
Albert Bugner
Donald Young (Rappley)
Marjorie Zell
David Moore (Gonzalez)

Dewayne Grooms
(Gonzalez)
Kurt Dellutri
Jackie Fry
Madeline Biddle
Jan Tharp
Wally Rose Mincer
Joe Gabriel (Amato)

Agapia Dragan (Luecke B)
Joanne Blanchard (Clancy)
David Hawthorne
Vicki Fisher
Mary Hill
Betty Ude

Personal and Family Concerns

Betty Ude
Roger & Kay Lund
(Heaphy)
John Renick
Nancy Stang
Joann Kapugi

Kaufman Family
Debbie Leger
Sandi Rivers (Ryel)
Wayne & Karen Mathis
(Steen)

Teresa Fisher & children
Colby & Audrey
(Kaufman)
Karen Ude

Homebound

Warna Berryman
Albert & Marianne Bugner
Kathleen Fox
Joann Kapugi

Suzie Karnatz
Dianne Luecke
Jan Nelson
Sue Smith

Nancy Stang
Betty Ude

Compassion and Sympathy

Ministry Concerns

Our Preschool staff, children & families
Christopher, Nicole, James, Wyatt Duncan (medical issues)
Evangelical Lutheran Church & School in Laotchikit, Haiti
Pastor Dale Kaster (Missionary, Czech Republic)
Pastor Daniel Jastram (Missionary, Japan)
Pastor Daniel Conrad (Missionary, Dominion Republic)
Erik and Katie Saunders (Seminarian)
Josiah and Hannah Schultz (Seminarian)
Jacob and Caroline Moede (Seminarian)
Adam and Emile Nieting (Seminarian)

Birthday Blessings

01/01 Carol Walters
01/08 Mary Kaufman
01/12 Jim Wing
01/19 Rick Sanborn

01/20 Bill Weege
01/21 James Stoltenberg
01/24 Mary Mckinney
01/25 Michele Maloney

01/26 Sarah Christensen
01/26 Eleanor Claycomb
01/28 Nona Schmook
01/29 Joann Kapugi



Good evening from the Moede family,

It has been a busy few months, but I am pleased to announce that our baby girl has been born! I would like to introduce to our family at Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church the newest member of God's family, Lyla Grace Moede, born and baptized in November.

I apologize for not keeping in touch more frequently, life has taken time away from me! We will send more pictures soon of Lyla using the wonderful gifts you all sent us. Blessings to all of you this Thanksgiving season and on the Time of Christmas to come.

Blessings in Christ,

Jake

Dear Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church,

I wanted to say thank you for continuing to support me while I am at Seminary, your generous donations make it possible for me to be here learning how to be a pastor in Christ's Church. Classes just recently wrapped up as we look forward to a nice break and some good family time together. This semester was a challenging one and so a little break to celebrate the birth of our Savior will be wonderful! I have treasured the years of learning and growing here, and I just want to thank you again for all of the support you have shown to me over the last year. It seems crazy to say that there is only 1 more semester before I am done with school and will be serving in Christ's Church.

My wife Hannah is continuing to love being a teachers aid at Christ Community Lutheran School in the first-grade classroom. She continues to amaze me every day by how she cares for Simeon and me. She is a wonderful support system to me, and I thank God for her every day. God has blessed me with more than I deserve in this life with her and my son. And we have another little one on the way! We are so excited to meet our baby boy or girl this June. Simeon is about to turn 2 and will be a big brother very soon! God continues to bless us with more than we deserve. I want to thank you for the continued support you have shown me and my family! It really makes a difference in our life. May God bless you and keep you always as you celebrate the birth of our Savior this Christmas season.

DECEMBER 2023



MERRY CHRISTMAS *from the Schultzes*

The Preschool Christmas Program was held on December 8th. We had a big crowd of parents, friends and family! The program was enjoyed by all! Special thanks to our wonderful Preschool Staff, ECM Board members and other church members for helping put this together. Merry Christmas!



Board of Missions Update

... But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' (Luke 10:33 - 35)

Seminary Support

Adam Nieting, a second-year student at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, was added to our Mission support, now totaling four seminarians. If his name sounds familiar, his Dad was pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Asheville. Adam is married to Emily who is pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice.

Each seminarian was sent Christmas blessings of \$1,200 toward their tuition and \$300 to be used where it is needed most. Please pray for these seminarians and their families for a joyous 2024 and faithful guidance in their studies. Also, prayers of thanksgiving for the birth and baptism of Lyla Grace Moede, daughter of another of our Seminarians, Jake and his wife Caroline.

Lutheran Seminary in Laotchikit: With approval of Church Council we have agreed to assist Dr. David Somers of the Haitian Lutheran Mission Society of Canada (HLMS). His organization has

been unable to wire existing donations into Haiti. We will trial using our existing designated fund for the Laotchikit seminary to wire their funds to the Laotchikit seminary using our bank relationship. This seminary has students participating globally!

Haiti Medicines Update We have donated \$3,400 of designated offerings to improve the medicines available to Nurse Renee. It was a timely blessing to him and the people of the central plateau as they were recently hit with a dengue fever outbreak, in addition to the already existing cases of scabies and eye infections.

Sponsorship of Haiti middle and high school students Update. We still have opportunities for sponsorship, please prayerfully consider sponsoring one of these students.

Alaska Mission June 2024 – Please see Bill Paris or Barbara Volk to discuss this excellent opportunity to share Christ’s love with an Alaska village.

Sue Glossop



Ladies Guild January 2024

I am very much looking forward to my involvement in LWML in 2024. LWML has always been a blessing to me. I feel that it has strengthened my faith with its workshops, Bible studies, devotions, and other excellent materials. More importantly, it keeps me connected to other women of faith throughout the world, a truly awesome thing!

This year, my hope is that many of you reading this will consider joining us at one of our meetings or signing up to be a “mailbox member”. Our meetings are the second Monday of every month (we take a break in July and August) at 1 pm at always include an insightful devotion and a time of refreshment via cake and coffee. Mailbox members are those who for whatever reason are not able to join us at our meetings but want to stay connected to what our ladies’ group is doing and contribute when they can. To become a LWML mailbox member, simply talk to Debby Zagone or email her at debbyzagone@gmail.com.

Upcoming LWML/Ladies Guild Activities:

Banner Inventory—take pictures of Décor Inventory and Sorting
Business Meeting, January 8

February-- Lunch for Preschool Staff
Business Meeting, February 12

Easter Baskets for Senior Lunch at First Methodist
Business Meeting, March 11

Many hands make for light work! Won't you join us and spread the joy of knowing our Savior and serve the Lord with gladness?

Christmas Lunch and Caroling

Thank you to everyone who came to enjoy Christmas lunch together. Craig Escude provided a wonderful surprise with the piano music. Everyone enjoyed fellowshiping then Paul Mincer sent carolers to our shut in members.



The Maloney Family sang to
Jananne Nelson

Parish Life

Parish Life made Christmas Poke bags with treats and sweets. Thank you to all who delivered these surprise treat bags. A big thank you from the members who are grateful to get these, it helps them to know they are not forgotten.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who came to help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. The many hands that helped made the project go much faster.

Thank you to all who purchased the poinsettias to decorate, Bill Kruse, Lyn Heiple, Donna Watkins, Barbara Volk, Bob & Judy Morin, Paul & Eve Hagedorn, Craig & Michele Escude, the White Family, Alan Hicks, Homero & Sylvia Gonzalez, Leah Ryel and Linda Albright.

Please Join Us

We are taking down the Christmas decorations in the church on Saturday, Jan. 13 at 9:00am. We will have coffee and goodies for volunteers.

NO NEED TO MISS CHURCH SERVICES OR EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Information for accessing church service or evening Bible Study

Online: Video will be found on the home page at <http://www.mtpisgahlutheran.com>

The service bulletin will also be available on the homepage.

Phone: Service will begin at 10:45 am, dial in direct with no access code to (508) 924-5662 or call toll-free (844) 802-6666 and enter access code 889956

YouTube: Recording link will be published on the home page once it is available.

A DVD is available outside church door in the red box on the wall.

For complete information on church events, please visit the website:

<https://mtpisgahlutheran.360unite.com>



Please contact
Karen.Lundquist@yahoo.com

*statista.com

We are actively reaching out to our neighbors through Facebook & Instagram.

Social media is a little bit like soup. Most times it's tastier and more nutritious with added spices & ingredients. I'd like to encourage more 'cooks' at Mt. Pisgah Lutheran to add flavor to our 'social media soup'.

You have much to share! Please write a few sentences about what's happening in your committee, Sunday School class or as you get together to quilt or sing in choir.



All we need is one paragraph & one photo /video from each committee in the church.

In 2023 there are 243.5 million Facebook users in the United States.*

It's a powerful, vast, virtual mission field, a free-to-use tool where we can shine the light of Christ every day!

Please ask adults for permission to use their photo on Social Media