

Peace Lutheran Church

Volume 36 No. 7

July 2023



Re: VITALITY

"DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY – GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE"

Read I Peter 2:1-12.

In general, Peter addresses God's redemptive work upon us. And that we have been set apart by God, even when we were at one time His enemies. He has given us a new identity. This identity affects who we are and what we do.

What is this new identity? We are God's Chosen People.

Vs. 1-3 Peter begins his exhortation by reminding us that we are as newborn babes. He was addressing a community of new converts, of newly baptized. He calls for them to set aside destructive behaviors. He calls them to desire the pure milk of God's Word. By doing this, they would be demonstrating that they have tasted the graciousness of the Lord.

The same exhortation comes to you and me. We also are called to set aside destructive behaviors and to crave the pure milk of God's Word. This demonstrates our tasting of the graciousness of our Lord and Savior as His beloved children.

Vs. 4-8 This is not new to us. We have heard sermons concerning the Living Stone and our relationship as living stones. As we have been drawn by the Holy Spirit to accept Him, we are obedient. This sets us apart from the unbeliever who has rejected Him and therefore are disobedient.

Vs. 9-10 These words are "good news." As newborn babies, as living stones, we possess a new identity. But actually not so new. We have been given the same identity of God's Old Testament believers. Each of these facets of our identity are a sermon unto themselves. These are titles given to us by God, not of our own making. The New Testament Church is the New Israel.

And for what purpose? To declare His marvelous works – to reach out, serve Jesus, and to celebrate His love. We who were one no one, we who were once without mercy, have from the time of coming to faith, having been baptized, are a people in Christ Jesus and have been shown mercy.

So what does this have to do with Re: Vitality? We need to set aside destructive behaviors and unite to God's glory. Given to us is God's Holy Word. We seek to drink it in and then to apply it as a witness to our new identity in Jesus. He has given us the Sacrament of Holy Communion to bear witness to His goodness and mercy, granting us the forgiveness of sins so that we are enabled as individuals and as a congregation to endeavor in reaching out, serving Jesus, and celebrating His love.

As we continue in the process of Re: Vitality, may we accept and put into practice God's invitation as His chosen people.

To God be the glory!

Pastor Schroeder



PASTOR SCHROEDER'S DAY OFF Pastor Schroeder's "regular day off" will be on Wednesdays. There are a number of reasons for this change as was explained to the Elders.



In my newsletters over the last year, I have been lining out the what & why & how of Evangelism (Personal Witness & Congregational Outreach) and Education (Beginning at home & continuing in the congregation). This month I want to share a vision for our moving forward together as the people God has called together at Peace, with Colossians 3:8-17 as a guide:

⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Churches only realize real growth when their members organically build godly relationships with one another as they spend time together in God's Word, and take His Word back out into their daily lives at home and in their neighborhood/community. As disciples/followers of Christ, the most important thing for our lives is our faith in Christ as our Savior, that our families grow in faithful understanding & confession of who Jesus is and who each of us are as God's washed, redeemed & adopted children through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To help in this, the Sunday School Superintendent, Board of Education and I are working on a curriculum for this next year of Sunday School that facilitates teaching faith in Christ under the theme: Reaching Out, Serving Jesus, Celebrating His Love. This ought to sound familiar to us, as this is the mission statement of our Church! What an excellent place to begin making needed changes in how we work together as the "priesthood of all believers," than with this at the forefront of our time together! Bible Study & Sunday School are a two-fold blessing, providing ongoing foundational learning for children, youth & adults, as well as a place for children & parents, youth & families to confess their faith & discuss God's Word with one another.

The Board of Evangelism is working to facilitate opportunities for us as a congregation to get to know one another better, as well as provide easy opportunities for inviting others to join us for fellowship and receive God's gifts together. By our Lord's working through those who came before us, we are the people of God, those who have been washed clean, brought from death to life, and are being prepared for our heavenly home. We are also those He has called to this time & place as those He is working through now for the sake of others.

The Re:Vitality Taskforce is working toward a long-term plan for the purpose of helping us as a congregation move forward with the Saving Gospel of Christ in intentional & healthy ways. We will have goals & strategies to achieve those goals, as well as measurable milestones that help to keep us on track, so that our Church may be revitalized and joy-filled in our work together, and we may, with the help of God, be successful. Together as His people, our Lord equips each of us in many and various ways for the work of the Church: those youngest among us are enabled to learn with curiosity & fervor; youth & young adults are enabled to do & act for others as we continue to grow; Adults & young families are enabled to teach our children & others as we continue to grow; those of middle-age are enabled to stand firm in faith, raising up those who

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come after us in the wisdom we have obtained from those who came before, as we continue to grow; and the older & wiser among us are enabled to mentor those who come after us & replace the work we were once able to do by encouraging & teaching, so that the work of the church continues long after we are called home to our Lord's nearer presence.

It is our joyful duty to take up the work our Lord calls us unto at each stage of life, even through the changes that happen around & within us. It can be easy to allow ourselves to be paralyzed by our fear of change of our need to let go of the way things were, so that we can focus on the work our Lord blesses us with here & now. It can be quite tempting to allow ourselves to focus on the glory days of the past, that seem to have slipped away while we weren't paying attention. Yet focus on the glory days of yore doesn't keep them alive, but may make them a stumbling block for the opportunities we have here & now, dashing hopes for the days ahead to be even more glorious. It is good for us as "the priesthood of all believers" to remember that our best & most glorious days are always ahead of us, and that Christ's Word & Promises are unchanging!

As I have discussed previously, healthy congregations are 1st & foremost in the Word together, uplifting one another, strengthening each-other. While the climate & culture around us seeks to individualize and divide, the Word of God is the agent that binds us together, uniting us as the body of Christ, The Word made flesh. In seeking to unite us, the Word of God must carve away from us all that which pulls us away from Christ. This is good. But this is painful, as our individual wants & desires take a back-seat to the needs of the church as a whole, and the needs of those around us. But as always, Christ is the head of His body –the church– and therefore He & His Word must be in the drivers seat.

As a congregation, we have done a poor job of letting Christ be the driver, focusing instead on our own wants & desires, showing little care for one another, ripping & tearing & backbiting one another out of our love for self, rather than being willing to sacrifice of our time & efforts out of love for Christ and for one another. We must repent, turning away from ourselves and our sins, and believe the Gospel through which we are forgiven and made able to love as God bids we do. This is the 1st part of repentance. The 2nd and oft forgotten part, is having been reoriented by Christ's forgiveness, we seek to live a new life, clinging to that which is good & Christ-like, standing against the temptations & sins that we fell into before.

It is my hope that we as a congregation may cast off all the that which keeps us from joining together arm-in-arm under the banner of our Lord's cross out of Love for God, and Love for our neighbor. Whether it be fear, misunderstanding, unforgiveness, or other sin that clings so tightly to us as to choke out our faith, unity & focus on Christ, let us lay these burdens at the foot of the Cross. As those forgiven in Christ, let us be forgiving. Out of the joyful hope we have been gifted by faith in Christ alone, let us together seek to be continually equipped by our Lord for the awesome, inspiring & fulfilling work He has for us together: Reaching Out, Serving Jesus, & Celebrating His love.

How quickly would you notice if you were missing a finger? How about an eye or ear? As the body of Christ, we are called to laugh & cry, mourn & rejoice together as one. When one of our fellow members is absent from Saturday/Sunday worship, we ought to take notice. We ought to love Jesus (who loves us and them enough to go to the cross!) and them so much, that we check in with them to make sure they are ok. When a family with young children seems to be riding the struggle-bus in worship, we ought to show Christian love by offering a helping hand (or lap), or speaking a word of encouragement, rather than a scornful frown or complaining about the noise (there's already more than enough shame for the parent in their children being disruptive, and the Church with no sound of children, has no sounds of life!). When you hear someone complain, you have the chance to speak words that unite us in love & forgiveness pointing to Jesus, or worldly words that show no love and only further divide.

Showing real love for one another, reflecting Christ's love for us, means loving His Word enough to hear it preached in the sanctuary, and taught in Bible Study, and letting His Word reform us as His people. Showing His

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love for one another means discussing what you have/are learning in His Word with others, especially with your family, friends, and fellow members.

Forgiven brothers & sisters in Christ: Let us Love God & One Another so much, that we seek Jesus in His Word & Sacraments, allowing Him to fill us so much that we cannot help but share (overflow) His blessings with those around us. He has called us here at this time & place for those who have no lasting hope, those who so desperately need to know Jesus crucified for their forgiveness, those who need to know how much we love them, so that through us they can glimpse how much Jesus loves them. Grant this Lord, unto us all. Amen!

~Pastor Fitch

ODDS and ENDS

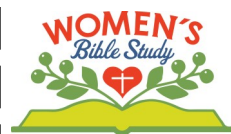
Lutheran Education Scholarship Applications are available for K-8th Grade, Highschool students attending a Lutheran School, as well as Applications for Students Attending one of our LCMS Colleges or Seminaries. We do ask that they be returned to the office by/before August 7th if possible, for review by the Board of Education.



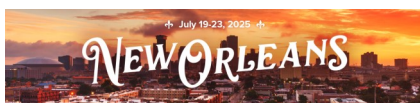
Pancake Breakfast – Tuesday, July 4th, we will have our annual Pancake breakfast here on our Church grounds again from 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.! Come out for a wonderful meal and be sure to spread the word! (Families receiving Lutheran Education Scholarships & Families of youth planning to attend the 2025 NYG are **expected** to help with this as part of the agreement & receiving of funds for LES /NYG). We are still in need of many hands for the 4th of July pancake breakfast. Please see the sign-up board in the Fellowship hallway! We have jobs for all ages!



“Sermon on the Lawn.” Come and enjoy the blessings of being outdoors, our beautiful resources and hearing the Word of God. Peace will conduct 2 outdoor services on our front lawn, Saturday, July 29 and Saturday, August 26. Come for worship and invite friends & family, as we celebrate God’s love for us and sing His praise. Chairs will be made available, but you are encouraged to bring your own comfy lawn chair. Watch the bulletin for more details.



Women’s Bible Study – A group of ladies at Peace would like to know how many ladies are interested in an evening Women’s Bible Study. We would also like to gauge if there is a need for childcare for the Bible Study time, so that our moms with young kids can participate as well. If interested, please contact Paulette Stecker (pfstecker@gmail.com) or Ashley Fitch (aehend7j@yahoo.com – 574-780-2749)



Youth and Family Fellowship & 2025 NYG – Pastor Fitch will be contacting our Jr High & Highschool families to find dates in July and August for our youth & families to get together for some food, fun & games.

Please keep your eyes peeled for details to come through emails/bulletin news/announcements! It is also time for us to be getting excited & preparing for the 2025 National Youth Gathering. In August we will be setting aside time for Bible Study, youth & parent planning meetings, and more!



Peace Mission Guild invites the women of Peace to a fellowship breakfast and Bible study on Wednesday, July 19th, 8:30 and following. A brief Bible Study entitled, "Chosen for a Purpose" will look at some of the unusual women God chose. Breakfast will be off-site at Paulette Strecker's house. (W412 Stumpf Ave in the quaint Village of Sherwood.

Mission Mites July 8 & 9. LWML is celebrating 80 years as an organization. We cling to the original purpose, to share the Lord's blessings through mites and offerings, to pray and study the Bible. Your contributions to mission mites, July 8 & 9, help to reach out to the lost with the Good News of God's love and salvation for all people.

Prepared by Loren Wahl, Congregation Chairman, May 31, 2023.

\$40,222 May Budget (anticipated expenses)

\$34,158 Actual May Income

\$36,337 Actual May Expenses

\$- 2,179

\$201,110 YTD Budget (anticipated expenses)

\$202,634 Actual YTD Income

\$183,117 Actual YTD Expenses

\$ 19,517

Summary: May 2023, expenses exceeded our income.

Good news: For 2023 YTD, income nearly matches YTD budget.

Bad news: Cash reserves are very low. Our weekly budget is \$9.2K. On May 31, 2023, cash reserves in the general fund were \$23k. The target is to have cash reserves equal to 2-3 months of expenses. This low amount creates a high risk.

Restricted funds: We have \$76K in restricted funds and \$288K in the endowment fund. But these monies cannot be used to pay ordinary expenses like utilities, insurances, and wages.



5th Sunday Fellowship Featuring Breakfast and Coffee Bar

Mark your calendars for July 30th and set your alarms to come to church a little early!

Starting at 8:00am in the fellowship hall there will be breakfast and a full coffee bar including hot coffee, cold brew coffee, and a variety of flavoring syrups and other coffee

add-ins. Come start your morning off right with a good breakfast and some great Christian fellowship. See you there!

The Church office will be closed at noon on July 3rd and all day on July 4th.



AN INVITATION TO ACT ENCOURAGING WI STATE LEGISLATORS TO KEEP WI A PRO-LIFE STATE

As you no doubt are aware, the US Supreme Court struck down Roe vs. Wade last year. As a result, laws concerning abortion were returned back to the individual States, as was the case prior to 1973. This topic is now before the Wisconsin State Legislature.

Since Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in January of this year, members of the congregation have wanted to in some way be involved in expressing their concerns over this topic. In the Elder's May meeting, they chose to support the following resource to the members of the congregation as was prepared by a member of our congregation.

If you're not sure of our Synod's position on abortion, there is a resource found on the wall of booklets in the hallway leading to the library. It is entitled "A Biblical Explanation Concerning Abortion."

Please consider writing your State Legislators an email or giving them a phone call. To help you to identify who you may wish to email or call, here is a list of contact information.

TITLE	NAME	EMAIL	MADISON PHONE
Senate President,	Senator Chris Kapenga,	sen.kapenga@legis.wisconsin.gov	608-266-9174
Sen. Majority Leader	Devin LeMahieu	Sen.LeMahieu@legis.wisconsin.gov	608-266-2056
Sen. Health Chair	Rachael Cabral-Guevara	Sen.Cabral-Guevara@legis.wisconsin.gov	608-266-0718
Assembly Speaker	Robin Vos	Rep.vos@legis.wi.gov	608-266-9171
Assembly Majority Leader	Tyler August	Rep.August@legis.wi.gov	608-237-9132
Assembly Health Chairman	Clint Moses	Rep.Moses@legis.wisconsin.gov	608- 237-9129
Local Senator	Rachael Cabral-Guevara	Sen.Cabral-Guevara@legis.wisconsin.gov	608-266-0718
Local Assembly Reps	Nate Gustafson	Rep.Gustafson@legis.wi.gov	608-237-9155
	Dave Murphy	Rep.Murphy@legis.wi.gov	608-237-9156

Here are some do's and don'ts when you email or call your state legislators.

If you are calling, it is best to call after 9:30 a.m. and not during the noon hour. Be friendly and ask the staff to take your message concerning our state remaining a pro-life state. Speak clearly, not fast, and not long.

If you are emailing them and it's urgent, it is best to email them not at night but between 9 a.m.-10 a.m. if possible.

Overall be aware you may be asked how you feel about abortions being provided in the first 9 or 12 weeks or some other question concerning your opinion on abortion, such as; should abortion be provided at any time? In most cases, you will probably not be asked any questions; they will just take down your name, where you are from and take your statement on abortion.

Last and most important, pray and ask God to guide you and give you the right words to speak, especially if you are asked any questions.

CELEBRATING THE MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES On Saturday, July 1st and Sunday, July 2nd we will be celebrating the Ministry to the Armed Forces. This is a branch of the ministry of the LCMS. We will recognize the freedoms that God has blessed us with in this nation, our veterans, and those who are currently serving in the Armed Forces. This service will feature patriotic hymns and songs. Serving in the Armed Forces in some manner – active, Reserves, or National Guard – are the following who are either members or associated with our parish are: Bree O'Brien, Jacob Powers, Father John O'Brien, Max Wienke, Christian Wachter, Rebecca Brennan, Andrew Hedman, Maggie Steele, Elam Evans, Pastor Keith GeRue, Macie Wienke, Ethan Tews, "Mickie" Steiger, Andrew Steele, Maxwell Lenaker, Benjamin Lenaker, Ryan Fulcer, Matthew Knabe



Re:VITALITY TASK FORCE: AN UPDATE

The Task Force has suffered a resignation. Kathy Ehlert is now on the Task Force as a Member-at-Large replacing Don Daley.

Last month... we spent time in a Bible study specially designed to set the foundation of our work. We begin in His Word and remain in His Word. There is no other foundation. As I wrote last month, to be overconfident and think we can do this work apart from almighty God is simply nonsense.

The Task Force is being prepared with additional resources to accomplish their work in preparing a Strategic Plan to be presented by God's grace at our Voters' Meeting in November. This includes learning about emotional systems and demographic information concerning our congregation and of our community.

As a part of this process of gathering pertinent information, you are now being invited to participate in the process. It is my prayer that you will participate.

Re:VITALITY: INTERVIEWS

In order to prepare a realistic Strategic Plan, you are being invited to get involved. In previous congregations, I personally conducted these interviews, which revealed the concerns and aspirations of the membership. However, as I am a resident pastor, neither Pastor Fitch nor I will conduct the interviews.

Interviews will be 30 minutes in duration – strictly 30 minutes! Individuals, couples, or even families can sign up for an interview. These interviews will not be anonymous, nor will they be conducted remotely. They are intentionally in-person.

The interviewers will be members of the Task Force. They will be asking three questions. They are;

1. What do you like here at Peace?
2. What would you like to see change at Peace?
3. What are you personally willing to do to help in the process of change(s)?

Notes will be taken, and a summary report will be prepared and given to the Task Force for its consideration in developing the Strategic Plan.

Interviews will take place on Saturdays, July 8 & 15, from 8:30 am-1:00 pm. It is hoped that at least 6 interviewers will be present to maximize the number of opportunities. You can call the church office for an appointed time to be interviewed. Again, these interviews can be as a single person, as a couple, or even as a family unit.

It is my prayer that you will avail this opportunity for the sake of our Lord and the ministry of our congregation.

By God's grace and the work of your leadership, we are able to keep moving forward, "Reaching Out, Serving Jesus, Celebrating His Love." The process of Re:Vitality will help us to intentionally move forward. It is hoped that by God's blessing that we will be able to express our "new identity as God's chosen people" once again and become a vibrant thriving ministry.

VITAL STATISTICS

Number of Baptized Souls: 406
Number of Confirmed Souls: 351
Number of Families: 248

Baptism:

June 11, 2023
Jack Norman Skolaski
Parents: Taylor & Kayla (Pierce) Skolaski

Peace Lutheran Church

Missouri Synod
1228 S. Park Avenue
Neenah, WI 54956-4252
(920) 725-0510

Rev. Ricky P. Schroeder

Pastor

Rev. Josiah Fitch

Associate Pastor



**Peace
Lutheran Church**
NEENAH, WISCONSIN – LCMS

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Reaching Out . . . Serving Jesus . . . Celebrating His Love



e-mails

pastor@peaceneenah.com
assocpastor@peaceneenah.com

Web site:

www.peaceneenah.com

Worship Services

Sat. 5:00 p.m.

Sun. 9:00 a.m.

Bible Study/Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Sundays

