ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH – HOLLAND, MN May 2021–NEWSLETTER 5

Certain current events are making it more difficult to live as a Christian in this world. Many of you are aware of [if not watching] the Derek Chauvin trial taking place in the Twin Cities. That on top of another recent death by police in Brooklyn Park has troubled many in our state. No matter how the trial is concluded and the shooting resolved, there will be many who will use these things as an excuse to promote violence and destruction. There are some people who do this to gain some perceived power or exact some kind of retribution. This will divide our communities even further leading away from peace. As one pastor in our district has put it, “This issue is a powder keg, regardless of the verdict…. Justice is important and there will always be many who know they have been unfairly treated, even if they find vindication. But the whole of society is affected if the scales of justice are not administered by way of careful rendering of the facts.” So we turn to God in prayer and direct our thoughts to Him concerning **everyone** involved. *Pastor Petrich*

Another event happening that will have a major impact on Christians is the Equality Act before congress. On first hearing this, it sounds like a good deal. But LCMS Synodical Pres. Matthew Harrison, has written a letter to tell us it is not. **Here are a few excepts**:

The church’s task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). “The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered” (AC VII 1).[1](https://blogs.lcms.org/2021/lcms-presidents-statement-on-the-equality-act#endnotes-1-2-3-4)

God rules His church by His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15–16). God rules the state by His eternal law, reason and reasonable laws for the common welfare. “Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God” (AC XVI 1; see Rom. 13:1–7). The church should not meddle in government affairs, especially in matters upon which the Word of God is silent. It is also wrong when governments act against God’s eternal law, reason and the basic civil rights of all people. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines this truth. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Throughout history, governments have acted unjustly — sometimes in the name of race, atheism, communism, religion and even Christianity — and curtailed or denied the rights of conscience and the free exercise of religion. And governments continue to do so. Our Lutheran and biblical confession is that “*it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29)” (AC XVI 6–7; see 1Peter 2:13–14).

St. Paul made use of his legal right as a Roman citizen (“I appeal to Caesar” Acts 25:11). “Christ’s kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air” (Ap XVI 54). Our Lutheran Confessions commend the seeking of public remedy for injustice. “Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God’s work, according to Paul (Romans 13)” (Ap XVI 59). Our God-given right to act as citizens is very important, especially now.

The Equality Act is before Congress. It sounds innocent. All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals.

Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24, when He stated: “***Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*** (Matt. 19:4–6)

In fact, those churches and institutions that are bound by the Word of God to the truth of marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that institution is contrary to the word of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:2), could be punished for simply standing on our consistent, ancient Christian beliefs. The Equality Act effectively outlaws the words of Christ, the sublime doctrine of Creation, the First Article of the Creed, and our “free exercise of religion” based upon the Bible and Apostles’ Creed. The biblical teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman is to be labeled forever a mere “sex-based stereotype.”

The Equality Act **expands the definition of “public accommodation”** and puts an ultimatum to individuals, religious non-profits, food banks, schools, charities, adoption agencies and others: “Change your faith-based practices or face government punishment.”[4](https://blogs.lcms.org/2021/lcms-presidents-statement-on-the-equality-act#endnotes-1-2-3-4)

**Religious schools** (K-12 and universities) are a prime target of the Equality Act, which will make it difficult to maintain standards for admission and codes of Christian conduct for students, faculty and staff.[5](https://blogs.lcms.org/2021/lcms-presidents-statement-on-the-equality-act#endnotes-5-6-7)  The Equality Act will forbid college students from using federal tuition assistance at schools that maintain standards of conduct on the basis of the Bible regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Sex-specific facilities** and female-only spaces could be eliminated. Biological males will have the right to participate in female sports, unjustly denying female athletes at our schools a fair competition and the due rewards of accomplishment.[6](https://blogs.lcms.org/2021/lcms-presidents-statement-on-the-equality-act#endnotes-5-6-7)

The Equality Act **will eliminate the significant protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act**, passed by Congress and signed into law in 1993.[7](https://blogs.lcms.org/2021/lcms-presidents-statement-on-the-equality-act#endnotes-5-6-7)  This law has provided strong protections for “free exercise of religion” in the face of overzealous officials.

The Equality **Act contains no conscience protections for medical staff** who choose not to perform abortions, even if they have religious objections. Because of its broad definition of “health” services, the Equality Act threatens the Hyde Amendment, which limits public funding for abortion. It also threatens Christian hospitals with elimination of funding for not performing “health” services, including abortion or genital mutilation.

The Equality Act was recently passed by the House and is currently pending in the Senate. The margin is razor thin. If it does not become law now, we can be assured that it will be pressed again.

**We encourage all LCMS people to:**

1. Treat all people with kindness and respect (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” Mark 12:31), while holding firmly to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

2. Become informed about the Equality Act and the issues of gender dysphoria.

3. Consider your role as Christian citizens and make your voice known to your elected officials, particularly in the U.S. House ([*house.gov/representatives*](http://house.gov/representatives)) and Senate ([*senate.gov/senators/index.htm*](http://senate.gov/senators/index.htm)).

4. Pray for our officials, government and the church in these challenging days.

Martin Luther once said, “Christ dwells only in sinners.” We recognize ourselves as sinners constantly in need of Christ’s forgiveness. We recognize the truth of the apostle Peter’s words, “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17). We know that Jesus’ opponents grumbled against Him by saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). This comforting verse applies to us sinners, and we welcome all others to join us at the feet of Jesus, the sole Savior of all (John 3:16). As Christians, we believe that God has created all people, and all are infinitely valuable and accountable to Him. As Christian citizens, we recognize and demand basic God-given civil rights for all people, even as we insist on the First Amendment rights of Christians.

No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. ***“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age***” (Matt. 28:20).

“***Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.***

***Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil***.” (1 Peter 3:8–9, 13–17)

Pastor Harrison

**Sunday Lessons and Hymns *[Guitar and/or Song sheet listed below]***

**Sunday April 25th**: Psalm 23; Acts 4:1-12; I John 3:16-24 **John 10:11-18**. **LSB** Morning Prayer **HYMNS**: “***The Beach Story***”, #709 “The King of Love My Shepherd Is”, #864 “Shepherd of Tender Youth”, “***One in a Hundred***”, “***The Sheep Song***”, #475 “Good Christian Friends Rejoice and Sing”, #710 “The Lord’s My Shepherd I’ll not Want”, “***The Baa Baa Song”*** #740 “I Am Jesus Little Lamb.”

**Sunday May 2nd**: Psalm 150, Acts 8:26-40, I John 4:1-11, **John 15:1-8**.  **LSB**: DS#3

**HYMNS**: #633 “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing”, #474 “Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen”, #691 “Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing” DISTR: #611 “Chief of Sinners”, #465 “Now All the Vault of Heav’n Resounds”, #919 “Abide O Dearest Jesus”.

**Sunday May 9th**: Psalm 98, Acts 10:34-48, **I John 5:1-8**, John 15:9-17. **LSB**: Matins

**HYMNS**: “***Easter Song***”, #556 vs1,2,6-8 “Dear Christian, One and All Rejoice” [Instead of Venite], #602 “The Gifts Christ Freely Gives”, “***He Is Risen***”, #597 “Water, Blood, and Spirit Crying”, ***#808*** “***O Sing to the Lord***”, #655 “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”.

**Sunday May 16th**: Psalm 47, Acts 1:1-11, **Ephesians 1:15-23**, Luke 24:44-53. **LSB** DS#4

**HYMNS**: #493 “A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing”, #492 “On Christ’s Ascension I Now Build”, #701 “Draw Us to Thee”, DISTR: #821 “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus”, #490 “Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won”, #495 “Look Ye Saints, the Sight Is Glorious”.

**Songs for Sunday, April 25th *“The Beach Story”***

1. Just a few weeks after Easter, The disciples had a wish,

So they rowed a boat together, Hoping they could catch some fish,

Though they tried, their nets were empty; A man called them from the beach.

“Let your nets down on the right side; All the fish are in your reach.”

**REFRAIN: Oh we want our Jesus Shepherd to gather us in,**

**[Good Shepherd, Go Good Shepherd!]**

**Since He knows our names and frees us from our sin.**

**He’s our Savior and our friend, And His loving has no end.**

**So let’s follow Him. Let the good life now begin!**

1. As the fish were all unloaded, Jesus fixed a breakfast meal;

Then He talked to Simon Peter, “Let Me offer you this deal.”

“Do you really, really love Me?” “Lord, You know You own my heart.”

“Then go feed My lambs and lead them; I will help you do your part.” REF

***ENDING:*** So let’s follow Him. Let the good life now begin.”

***“One in a Hundred”***

Have you heard about the little lost sheep who was one in a hundred?

He was missed by the shepherd who knew That he often had wandered.

Since the sheep were doing fine, He left the ninety-nine To look for the lamb he knew.

The good news is the lamb in the story is you! (ewe)

**REF: So if you’re one in a hundred or one in a million,**

**Or if you’re feeling lost as if you’re one in a billion,**

**Don’t you know? Jesus loves you so! You’ll never, never, ever be alone.**

The good shepherd went to rescue that lamb, Though his supper was cooking;

Although many hungry animals growled, He just kept right on looking.

When that lamb was found at last, The shepherd held him fast,

So glad that his search was through. The good news is the lamb in the story is you! (ewe)

**REF: So if you’re one in a hundred or one in a million,**

**Or if you’re feeling lost as if you’re one in a billion,**

**Don’t you know? Jesus loves you so! You’ll never, never, ever be alone.**

***“The Sheep Song”***

**Chorus**: **I just wanna be a sheep. Baa, baa, baa, baa (Repeat)**

**I pray the Lord my soul to keep I just wanna be a sheep. Baa, baa, baa, baa**

1. I don't wanna be a pharisee - (echo) PHARISEE? (repeat)

Cause they're not fair ya' see, I don't wanna be a pharisee (chorus)

2. I don't wanna be a sadducee - (echo) SADDUCEE? (repeat)

Cause they're so sad ya' see, I don't wanna be a sadducee (chorus)

3. I don't wanna be a hypocrite - (echo) HYPOCRITE? (repeat)

Cause they're not hip with it, I don't wanna be a hypocrite (chorus)

4. I don't wanna be a Canaanite - (echo) CANAANITE? (repeat)

Cause they raise cain all night, I don't wanna be a Canaanite

***“The Baa Baa Song”***

**REF: Baa ,baa, He’s the Good Shepherd ; Ev’rywhere I go He knows.**

**Baa, baa, He is my Savior; I will follow where He goes.**

1. Jesus loves me, Finds me, cares for me,

Watches, saves me, Leads baa-ck home. REF

1. I was so lost—Where do I begin?

He paid the cost For my sin. REF

1. I was so scared, Storms would frighten me,

I will not fear, He’s with me. REF

**Songs for May 9th “Easter Song”**

Hear the bells ringing, they’re singing that we can be born again!

Hear the bells ringing, they’re singing, “Christ is risen from the dead!”

**Refrain:**  The angel upon the tombstone said, “He is risen just as He said, Quickly now go tell His disciples that Jesus Christ is no longer dead!” Joy to the world, He is risen, Alleluia! He’s risen, Alleluia! He’s risen, Alleluia. [Repeat]

**He Is Risen**

He is risen! He is risen! He is risen from the tomb like He said. (Amen!)

I’m forgiven ‘cause He took away my sins.He loves me. He is risen! He is risen!

He is risen from the tomb like He said. (Amen!)

He is living And I’ve got to tell the world (I love Jesus)

I’m gonna clap my hands \*\*\* I’m gonna stomp my feet. \*\*\*

I’m gonna jump I the air (Whee!) ‘cause Jesus is alive!

He is risen! He is risen! He is risen from the tomb like He said. (Amen!) [Repeat]