



/ SEPTEMBER 2021

DISTRICT NEWS

MINNESOTA SOUTH

💡 TALKING POINTS WITH PASTOR



“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” **Is. 1:18**

Summers in Minnesota can be rather hot and humid. This year has been no exception. So putting on something made of heavy wool is the farthest thing from our minds. But summer is nonetheless a time when many sheep are washed up, groomed and sheared. Why? They need to be made ready for the fair.

Over the summer, each county has their respective fair, where plenty of sheep, along with goats, llamas, pigs, ducks, geese, chickens, rabbits, horses, cattle, the occasional camel, as well as a quirky carnival worker or two, are on display.

Those who show their animals at the fair seek the coveted prize “Best in Show” and a ticket to The Great Minnesota Get-Together — the Minnesota State Fair. They choose their best genetically

gifted animal and begin preparing it for show. Sheep are sheared, cows are trimmed, horses are groomed, pigs are washed and chickens are plucked. The animals are made clean and pristine. Then they’re brought before the judges to be evaluated according to the prescribed standards.

To be sure, it would be an oddity to see someone take a lame and unkempt animal into the show ring. Can you imagine what the judges would say if an unsheared, manure-covered, limping, disease-ridden sheep was brought in and presented before them? The “Best in Show” is awarded to the animal that measures up most closely to the judges’ standards of the ideal (or perfect) animal.

This can help us understand how we are judged before Almighty God. Left in our sins, we stand before the Almighty Judge as an unkempt, filth-ridden, diseased, death-bound human being. The standard of our judge is nothing less than absolute perfection. Sadly, try as we might, the “best” that we attempt to muster will only “show” our imperfections even more. As Isaiah reminds:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **Is. 53:6**

The fact is there was only one who could have truly received “Best in Show” — that was Jesus Christ. As a human,



Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford
District President

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JESUS

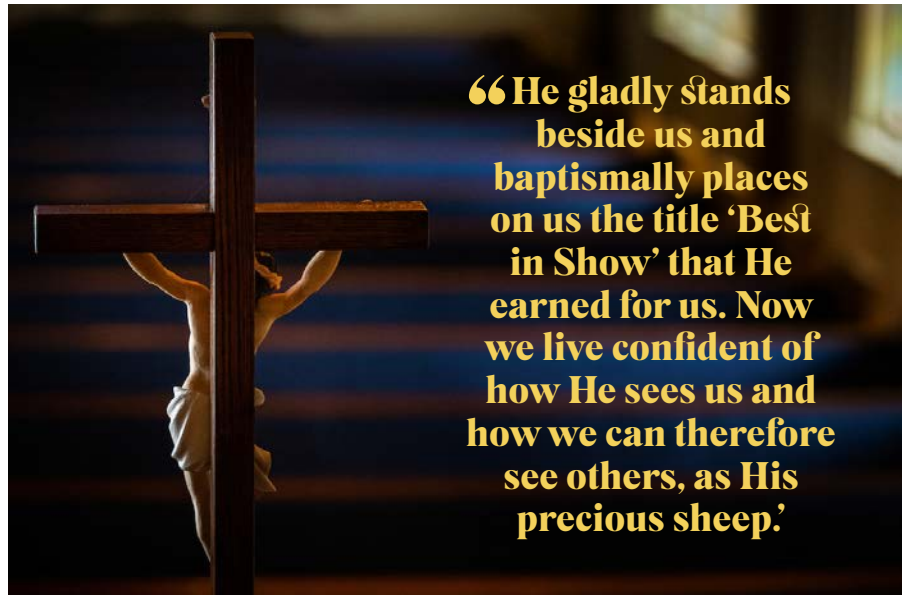
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He lived a perfect life, loved the Heavenly Father completely and obeyed God utterly and wholly, all so that wayward sheep (you and me) might be sheared of sinfulness.

Yet Isaiah declared that when He was put on display in front of the crowds and before His earthly judge (Pontius Pilate), “his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind” (Is. 52:14). The bloodied and beaten Lamb of God was stricken with our sinfulness, smitten with God’s wrath and afflicted with the death we deserved.

Yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. **Is. 53:7**

Crucified, dead and buried, Jesus Christ paid for our sins. Ironically, it is by blood that the stains of our sin



“He gladly stands beside us and baptismally places on us the title ‘Best in Show’ that He earned for us. Now we live confident of how He sees us and how we can therefore see others, as His precious sheep.”

are removed. In fact, by the blood of the Lamb, our sins have become white like wool. Now when we stand before the Almighty Judge, the resurrected Jesus Christ who is the Lamb of God makes us clean with the wool of His forgiveness.

Day by day, our filth, our imperfections

and our sins are all replaced with His everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Now He gladly stands beside us and baptismally places on us the title “Best in Show” that He earned for us. Now we live confident of how He sees us and how we can therefore see others, as His precious sheep.

New pastor in Dodge Center

Rev. Elliott Malm was installed as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Dodge Center, on July 19. From left, (front row) Revs. Tyler Werner, Elliott Malm, Brent Klein (circuit visitor); (back row) Mark Biebighauser, Kirk Griebel, Armond Boehme, Dr. Lucas Woodford, (district president), Loel Wessel and Greg Schlicker.



WE BELONG TO THE LORD

The importance of Christian funerals

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Rom. 14:7-9

By Rev. Brian Scoles

Senior Pastor, Our Saviour's, St. Paul

If I had to estimate, I would say that I've officiated at close to 150 funerals over the past 15 years that I've been at Our Saviour's. This has given me a lot to think about in regards to the Word of God and the purposes of a Christian funeral.

Purpose #1: An opportunity to grieve

If you've attended many funerals in recent decades, you may have noticed that they are often no longer called funerals. Instead, an increasing number are called "celebrations of life." This is a true shame. We cannot ignore death, and we dare not downplay its cold and bitter reality. Along with Satan and sin, death is one of humanity's great enemies.

God weeps over death. This is not hyperbole. Jesus wept as He approached his friend Lazarus' tomb. And remarkably, He wept for Himself as well:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. **Heb. 5:7**

Please do not insist on calling your funeral, or the funeral of your loved one, a celebration of life. In the wake of death, we must allow ourselves the opportunity to grieve.

Purpose #2: An opportunity to give thanks to God

A Christian funeral is an opportunity to thank God for the blessings that He gave to the deceased. In particular, we give thanks to the Lord for the benefits that we receive through Holy Baptism: "It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare" (Luther's Small Catechism).

We also have an opportunity to give thanks to God for the blessings that He bestowed through the deceased. This we see in the account of Tabitha (Dorcas) as recorded in Acts 9. In line with the account of Tabitha, we have

this Word of the Lord:

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" **Rev. 14:13**

Purpose #3: An opportunity to remember our mortality

A Christian funeral serves as a vivid reminder of our mortality. From dust we came, and to dust we will one day return (Eccl. 3:20). We are reminded "to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). We come face-to-face with the reality of God and His judgment: "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Purpose #4: An opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ

This, I would argue, is the most important purpose of a Christian funeral. Our faith stands or falls on Jesus Christ — and His resurrection. Consider and take to heart what the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, which he concludes with:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Cor. 15:56-57**

A Christian funeral provides a marvelous opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life. It provides an opportunity for those who were not raised in the church (and for those who no longer attend public worship) to hear God's Law and Gospel in the wake of their loved one's death.

At a Christian funeral, we hear and must swallow a bitter truth: the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). So we are eager to hear the Good News. While it is most certainly true that the wages of sin is death, it is also most certainly true that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

What does this mean?

In preparing for your funeral, or that of a loved one, please keep in mind that a

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Striving for 'Higher Things'

In early July, youth from Minnesota South District congregations enjoyed their time of worship, study and fellowship at the Higher Things Youth Conference at North Dakota State University in Fargo. The theme of this year's conference was "Forgiven," inspired by John 20:23: "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven."

Youth from Glory of Christ, Plymouth; St. James, Northrup; Redeemer, New Ulm; and St. John's, Rosemount, were in

attendance. What they reported enjoying the most were the robust singing of hymns in the worship services and the opportunity to see that they are part of a large community of Lutheran youth. They are already looking forward to next year's conferences.

For more information, visit HigherThings.org.

(Submitted by Rev. Christopher Horton, pastor, St. John's, Rosemount)

CONGREGATION MISSION RECEIPTS

For the period ending June 30, 2021

Actual receipts.....	\$155,387
Budget receipts	\$166,666
Over (under) amount	(\$11,279)

Year-to-date receipts

Actual receipts.....	\$1,088,805
Budget receipts	\$88,809
Over (under) anticipated amount.....	\$109,508

Use of mission receipts (YTD-year to date)

50% remitted to Synod (YTD)	\$404,479
100% remitted to Synod (YTD)	\$45,972
50% for district operations (YTD)	\$404,479
100% for district operations (YTD)	\$233,875
Total receipts	\$1,088,805

Mission receipts—2021 vs. 2020

Mission receipts — YTD 2020	\$1,088,805
Mission receipts — YTD 2019	\$963,728
Over (under) last year	\$125,077
2020 congregational receipts budgeted at \$2,100,000	

Minnesota South District LCEF

May 2021

New investments	\$2,087,719
Withdrawals.....	\$1,745,097
Net increase (decrease).....	\$342,622

Year-to-date July 1, 2020–May 31, 2021

New investments	\$23,036,313
Withdrawals.....	\$17,450,606
Net increase (decrease).....	\$5,585,707

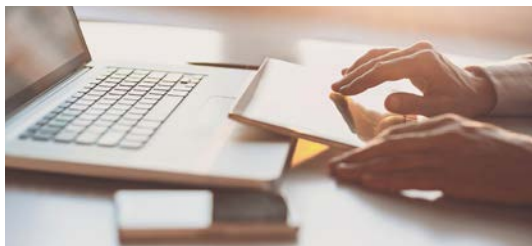
Share your mission

We are always in need of more submissions for the Minnesota South District *Lutheran Witness* insert. Why should you send them in? It helps remind us of what God is doing around the district.

It is also a way to share ideas for nurturing those God has already gathered into His church and for reaching those still outside of the flock with the Good News about Jesus. It finally reminds each of us that Christ's church is much larger than just our particular congregation.



news with us!



Please send submissions to:

- communications@mnsdistrict.org
- 14301 Grand Ave. South
Burnsville, MN 55306

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution.

Welcome, vicars!



Rev. Mark Loder, senior pastor and vicarage supervisor at St. James, Howard Lake, is pictured in center with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., students who were assigned as vicars in the Minnesota South District. At left is Aaron J. Beckman, who is serving at St. Mark, New Germany. At right is Zachary T. Klumpp, who is serving at St. James alongside Pastor Loder.

DEATH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

funeral is first, foremost and always a worship service. It is a Divine Service where our Lord comes to us with His Words of grace and truth, and during which we respond with our prayers and praise. In selecting what Scriptures will be read during the funeral, it is best to select passages from the Bible that reflect the four purposes of a funeral. In selecting what hymns will be sung during the service, it is best to select those that confess the hope that we have in Christ, both in life and in death, and of the resurrection that is sure to come in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.



As I continue to think about the various purposes of a Christian funeral, I recall what the author of the book of Hebrews said regarding Abel:

And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. **Heb. 11:4**

Our funeral gives us the same opportunity to let our faith in Christ speak even after we've taken our final breath.



The Olympic Games have ended. Athletes were in races to win gold medals. Some brought them home. Others brought home silver medals and others bronze. Many went home only with the experience of competing, which still deserves admiration.



Deb Vinkemeier
LWML District President

In any case, they all set a goal to be the best in the world.

The LWML held its 39th Biennial Convention in Lexington, Ky., June 24-27. Over 2,700 men, women and children

attended this convention. The theme was “Running the Race — Looking to Jesus.”

At the opening worship service, Rev. Dr. David Maier, Michigan District president, delivered the message and shared the story of the Olympic runner who was injured during his race, but continued even though he finished an hour after the other athletes. Why did the runner continue to finish the race through his pain? He replied: “My country did not send me to start the race. They sent me to finish the race.”

We are encouraged to stay focused on Jesus to help us finish our earthly race. Christ has finished the race for us by His victory over death, giving us eternal life with Him.

Celebrate LWML Sunday

The first Sunday in October is traditionally set aside for the observation of LWML Sunday, but it may be celebrated at any time during the year.

“Our Hearts in His Hand” is the theme for LWML Sunday 2021 and is based on Peter’s first letter to persecuted Christians in Asia Minor. In 4:8, Peter tells them:

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly.



The LWML’s heart is its members; our hearts have been made holy by God. We are fully dedicated to serving Him by serving His church at home and abroad. Our hearts for Christ are in His hand of service, wherever and whenever He has need of us.

LWML Sunday materials were authored by Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer, who recently retired as president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. To download, visit lwml.org/lwml-sunday.



Call for nominations

The LWML Minnesota South District Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for nomination for the 2022 LWML district convention, to be held June 17-18, 2022. More information on the nominations can be found at mnskwml.org. Go to “Resources” and select “Nominations” from the drop-down menu.

You can click the “Nominee Suggestion Form” link for a printable form. Contact info for Darlene Fretham, Nominating Committee chair, is included at the bottom of the form.

Two names are needed for each of the following positions on the 2022 ballot:

- ▶ President (nominee must have been on the Board of Directors)
- ▶ Vice President of Communication
- ▶ Vice President of Gospel Outreach
- ▶ Recording Secretary
- ▶ Financial Secretary
- ▶ Pastoral Counselor (two positions)

Also, one name from each conference is needed for the Nominating Committee.

The deadline for Pastoral Counselor nominations is Oct. 15. All other positions have a deadline of Jan. 15. Please prayerfully and thoughtfully consider who you believe could fill one of these positions. If your zone/conference is having an event, please share this information.

Present in spirit

Ladies join sisters at convention for worship



On June 24, 13 LWML members from several congregations gathered at Our Savior's, Excelsior, for the livestream of the opening worship service at the 39th Biennial Convention in Lexington, Ky.

What a joy to sing together, hear God's Word, listen to an inspiring sermon by Rev. Dr. David Maier, Michigan District president, and receive the body and blood of our Lord in Holy Communion. Dr. Maier said: "There is something divine about running the race when you have been knocked down. That's what God's forgiveness does. ... Run the race that I have set before you ... finish the race, in my strength."

Coming together in this way to pray and worship reminded us that the mission is in God's hands. He provides all that is needed and creates saving faith through His Word, communicated by missionaries near and far. We pray as did the believers in Thessalonica, to whom Paul wrote:

Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored. **2 Thess. 3:1**

Editor's Note: Special thanks to Rev. Mike Michalk, pastor of Mount Olive, Mound, and Lake Minnetonka Zone pastoral counselor, for officiating communion.

Bringing brighter birthdays

Early this past summer, the members of Good Shepherd, Owatonna, collected items for birthday cake kits. Then Good Shepherd's LWML Bible study group purchased the remaining supplies needed to complete the kits and put them together.

Amy Vincelli and her twin sons, Eli (at left in photo) and Will, then loaded all 32 birthday cake kits into their van and delivered them to the local food shelf to be passed out to those in need.

Helping to assemble and deliver the kits was a fun activity for children to help. They feel special as they help others feel special, knowing that others less fortunate will receive a cake and party items for their birthday.

Birthday cake kits can include a box of cake mix, frosting, candles, plates, napkins, a tablecloth, forks, banners, small party favors and small toys. Place them all in a disposable cake tin with a lid, add some ribbon and there you go! It is fun to theme the items as well, depending on items available at the store, such as unicorns, cars and flowers.

Editor's note: Do any of your society's members have unused Thrivent Action Team grants that would provide \$250 to put toward a worthy project such as this? If you do, but do not have the ability to apply online, perhaps you could work with a trusted friend or family member to have them help you work through the online grant application process. It may be easier than you think!



Ring again



One of these bells started ringing in Iona in 1919; the other in Slayton in the 1940s. The bells are now together at Trinity Lutheran Church, Slayton.

Century-old bell returns to make resounding praise to God in Slayton

By Scott Mansch

More than 100 years ago, a bell at Zion, Iona, rang regularly in praise to the Lord. Though silenced for decades when the small congregation in the tiny town merged with a new church in the nearby Murray County village of Slayton, the bell is once again sounding in joyous acclaim and devotion to God.

Trinity, Slayton, dedicated and consecrated its new bell tower on May 30, Trinity Sunday. The Iona bell, which dates back to 1919 when the Zion congregation moved into its church building, and a bell subsequently acquired by the fledgling Trinity group in Slayton in the 1940s, are now housed together in a new tower.

About 100 members and guests were at the dedication ceremony, which was held outside on the church lawn prior to Divine Service in the sanctuary. Rev. Dr. Curtis Peters, emeritus, who lives in New Albany, Ind., was baptized at Zion and confirmed at Trinity, is the only

son of Trinity to enter the ministry. He returned to his hometown of Slayton and delivered the sermon for the special bell tower event.

The bell tower project has been ongoing for some 50 years. When Zion was closed in 1968 as the church merged with Trinity, the old bell was taken to longtime Zion member Keith Oldewurtel's farm, where it spent years of silence stored in a corn crib and machine shed. Since that time, memorial funds earmarked for a special Bell Tower Fund have been set aside.

When the old bell re-emerged in Slayton on Trinity Sunday, the memory of departed faithful believers such as young Doreen Ann Priebe were honored. And that comforts Doreen's father, Ray, who along with his wife, Yvonne, have been Trinity members for decades. "It makes me very happy," says Ray. "Tell you what, I'm very glad that tower has finally been built."

Doreen Priebe was a 12-year-old head-

ed to a 4-H function when she died in an auto accident in June 1968. A memorial to the Bell Tower Fund in Doreen's name was the first of dozens that have been made in the last 50 years.

The special dedication service was led by Trinity pastor Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Williams. After the short ceremony outside, during which a large white cross was fixed to the top of the tower, members and visitors entered the church to the ringing of the bells. They will sound forevermore prior to services.

Rev. Dennis Brech, who served LCMS parishes in various Midwest communities before retiring in Slayton and joining Trinity, which is close to where his wife, Jan, grew up, was the driving force to finish the bell tower project. Dozens of other Trinity members have been heavily involved.

The new tower structure was developed by Chandler Machine Shop. It is electrically wired and will be rung before services and at special functions. Two other Slayton-area churches currently have bells that ring regularly. Trinity will now join the chorus, in resounding praise to God — and to recall the memory of the faithful who have gone before.