

Faith Matters - July 2020

150 THE LIFE OF FAITH Past Present Future 1870-2020

Pastor's Page

"This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes." – Preface to Romans, by Martin Luther

By the time you read this, we will be about two or three weeks into our summer preaching series on St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Our series, "The Heart of Romans," dives into the middle chapters of this significant New Testament epistle. Hopefully, so far, you are experiencing what Luther described: bread for your soul that becomes more precious each week.

You may have noticed that we typically base our sermons off the Gospel reading of the week. This makes sense, of course, since we want to emphasize the good news of Jesus and examine his life, death, and resurrection. However, during the summer months, the assigned lectionary readings typically serve up semi-continuous readings through an epistle. This summer's schedule of readings from Romans was too good to pass up!

The book of Romans is unique among the epistles because, unlike the other epistles, Paul is not responding to a specific issue or question posed by the receiving community but is rather introducing himself and his theology. Thus, the book of Romans lays out a systematic introduction and explanation of St. Paul's theology.

Theology can be simple. The core message of Christianity can be boiled down to "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so." It can be summarized in simple creeds, like the memorize-able Apostle's Creed.

At the same time, theology is deeply complex! It has difficult to understand terminology and a myriad of connections that need to be made. Obviously, it's important to grasp the simplicity of the faith, the easy theology. But also, it is important for Christians, as they journey in faith, to grapple with complex theology. It deepens your understanding of your faith and God's love for you, but also improves your witness to others!

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335 Main St. S.
Hutchinson, MN 55350

Phone: 320-587-2093
Email:
office@faithlc.com

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St. Paul's epistle to the Romans is complex theology. Luther says, "We find in this letter, then, the richest possible teaching about what a Christian should know: the meaning of law, Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, justice, Christ, God, good works, love, hope and the cross. We learn how we are to act toward everyone, toward the virtuous and sinful, toward the strong and the weak, friend and foe, and toward ourselves."

So dive deep with us this summer as we journey through "The Heart of Romans." Do some additional personal study, memorize some of the key verses, ask questions, meditate on Paul's words, and taste the bread for your soul!

See you in church (and it's great finally to be able to see you in church again!)

Pastor Dave



Q: During the pandemic lockdown, I saw some churches had families celebrate Holy Communion at home, without a pastor present. That seemed odd to me, but what actually is the role of the pastor at Holy Communion?

A: This question from a member of Faith is insightful, but also very complex. It is an issue that has divided Christian churches for centuries. Basically, there are four different views on it.

Some churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, believe a properly ordained pastor or priest is *essential* for Holy Communion to be genuine. They claim that clergy receive a special grace or power in ordination that allows them to turn (or "confect") the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. Without such an ordained priest, there can be no sacrament.

Other Christians, including some Lutherans, deny that pastors have any *personal* power to make Holy Communion effective, but they do insist that the pastoral *office* is essential for it. Only a properly ordained pastor can genuinely preside over Holy Communion. If no pastor is available, Holy Communion cannot be legitimately celebrated.

A third view is that pastors are in no way *necessary* for Holy Communion, but for the sake of *good order* in the church, a pastor should normally administer it. In a situation like the pandemic, it could be theologically appropriate for families to administer Holy Communion at home, but only with the greatest care for theological integrity and responsible usage.

The final approach has no deep concern for who administers the sacrament, so that volunteers from the congregation might take turns at the altar. This belief is usually held by churches that do not place a high value on the sacraments and see Holy Communion as merely a symbol that reminds us of Christ's saving work, but does contain his own body and blood. Many Evangelical churches subscribe to this view.

Of these four views, the third one, focusing on the pastoral role as one of *good order* in the church, is the conviction we hold here at Faith Lutheran. We insist that Holy Communion as a means of grace depends entirely and only on Christ's promise in the Words of Institution. Just because of those promises, however, it is a gift of such precious value that it should always be handled with the greatest care, respect and good order. It was those concerns, and not any notion of a necessary pastoral role, that led to our decision to abstain from Holy Communion while we were not able to gather together for worship.

This is, of course, a simplified summary of profound theological arguments. If you have further questions or want to discuss this more, please don't hesitate!



Upon This Rock

The good news about the church's mortgage is that the balance continues to drop sharply. After the June payment, **90% of the**

original amount has been paid! The remaining balance is now under \$330,000 and we are some 14 years ahead of the original payment schedule. The mortgage has been a model of faithful and responsible stewardship.

The not-so-good news is that monthly giving to the Upon This Rock capital campaign, which covers the mortgage payments, has dropped significantly. That is due, in part, to many members of the church having completed their pledges. We are so grateful for that, but the drop in giving means that we are having to rely more on reserve funds to make each payment. If those reserves get too low, we will have to reduce our monthly payment and extend the time before the mortgage is paid off. Please continue to support Upon This Rock, even if you have completed your original pledge, so that Faith can retire this debt as soon as possible. Thank you!



Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

When the Minnesota governor declared in March that worship services could not be held, one pressing question for Faith's leaders was what impact that might have on giving to the church. Not to worry! The Faith family has been so generous and faithful in supporting the ministry of the church that total giving year-to-date is actually ahead of 2019! Faith's elected leaders and staff are so thankful for that abounding generosity. Please continue to be faithful stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to you.



Greetings Faith Lutheran!

As you know, we have begun our outdoor worship services! Under better circumstances, we would have had a volunteer schedule drawn up and ready to go, but in the era that is COVID-19, we have naturally hit some setbacks. Nevertheless, we managed to whip everything together in a short amount of time, but we still need a small group of people helping every Sunday morning to set up outdoor worship in the park. So, my Faith Matters is solely dedicated to inviting you to assist with worship. Every Sunday at 8:30 AM in the park I will be there, and I hope you will join me. Even if you move one thing, you will have contributed, and that's all we ask. So please join us.

Blessings,
Will



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“Faith Alive in ‘95”

This picture was taken at the 125th Anniversary celebration of Faith Lutheran Church. Looking back in historical archives, we found an article written about this celebration. “Faith Alive in ‘95” was the theme of the 125th celebration. Rev. Tim Maland was quoted as having said, “I hope that members of the congregation today will become sensitive to some of the great sacrifices which members in earlier times made in behalf of the mission of the church. Hopefully, we too can continue that sacrifice, giving, so the mission of Faith can continue and grow in outreach to others.” Words true for us still today.



Challenges midst of CoVID-19 in the mission field

As India continues its attempt at the world’s biggest social isolation effort to halt the new coronavirus outbreak, millions are struggling to navigate weeks of canceled public transit, closed businesses, and therefore no Sunday services and mission outreach.

Two things were happening before the pandemic hit. First, the church and ministry were severely opposed. Second, because of this opposition, there has been a prayer movement that resulted in great unity among the national Christian community. In spite of severe opposition, the Bishara ministry has been responding maturely and collectively to its challenges. As a result, the ministry has been growing spiritually and numerically.

Brothers and sisters at Bishara have been praying for the Lord to enlarge their borders, and the Lord has answered with an unexpected opportunity to reach more people. The challenge that Bishara now face is harnessing this new reach, and developing tools for follow-up and discipleship in a new teaching model. While we had to close our Bible school, we are working on our complete syllabus from written materials to audio, visual, and digital versions.

The Hindu right-wing political groups are also now a serious threat to Christianity in India. Christianity is looked upon by Hindus and Muslims as an inferior religion accepted by inferior men and women because of the material advantages to be derived from connection with a mission organization. This, of course, adds to the difficulty of reaching the higher castes among the Hindus and the Muslims who are reluctant to be associated with a community that is not considered respectable. About two per cent of India's population is literate. This percentage, even if it were that high among the less-favored classes, makes evangelistic work slow and costly.

How can you pray for Christianity in India?

Pray for the new converts who experience both violent persecution and intense cultural pressure to return to Islam. Christians are in need of support and relief as they are constantly pressured, and sometimes attacked, in efforts to force them to return to their previous Islamic beliefs. Ask God to protect those who are actively involved in preaching, evangelism, and outreach as they are at risk of being attacked by radical Hindu extremists and Muslim fundamentalists.





Please Remember in Prayer

Please remember all those who are serving our country through active duty:

- Braiden Bjorge (Marines - grandson of Sandy Curtiss)
- Mike Bjorge (Air Force, Qatar - son-in-law of Sandy Curtis)
- Corporal Colin Bos (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Dawn Bos)
- Sgt. Jason Gaulke (El Paso, TX - nephew of Alice Fransen)
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Mason Rutledge (Navy, New Orleans, LA - son of Lenny & Patti Rutledge)
- Col. Rob Skaar (Minneapolis/St. Paul Air National Guard - son of Dave & Marian Skaar)
- LT Brett Stadskev (Navy, Corpus Christi, TX - son-in-law of Judy & Tom Felber)
- SPC Ryan Wersal (Army, Fort Meade, MD - son of Roger & Laurie Wersal)



Remember our Faith members in nursing homes & health care centers:

Bryant Homes - Maple Plain

Ardell Novotny

Cedar Crest - Silver Lake

Patricia Lambert
Bernice Vorbeck
Lucille Wehking

Harmony River

Margaret Alrick
Betty Jensen
Ruth Larson
Karol Nolte
Joanne Olesen
Jean Pittman
Doyle Thielman
Harriet Thor

Meeker/Manor Litchfield

Harold (Swede) Sandgren

Oaks

Marcella Brede
Beverly Kirchner
Ellsworth & Delores Lorentzen

Pines

Mayonne Martin

Prairie Senior Cottages

Pat Fimon

Woodstone

Betty Garberich

Faith Lutheran Church		
INFORMATION & STAFF DIRECTORY		
335 Main St. S. 320-587-2093 FaithLC.com		
Pastors		
Scott Grorud	320-587-0171 (home)	scottg@faithlc.com
Dave Wollan	320-583-2385 (cell)	davidw@faithlc.com
Paul Knudson	320-587-2227 (home)	paulk@faithlc.com
Paulus Pilgrim, Visitation	320-234-9753 (home)	paulusp@faithlc.com
Jeffrey Amundson, Intern	320-587-2093 (office)	jeffa@faithlc.com
Staff		
Marsha Schmit, Director of Pastoral Care & Evangelism	marshas@faithlc.com	
Will Holt, Director of Music & Worship	willh@faithlc.com	
Kristen Matthews, Director of Youth & Family Ministry	kristenm@faithlc.com	
Laura Weikle, Director of Children & Family Ministry	lauraw@faithlc.com	
Sara Wegner, Interim Finance Coordinator	finco@faithlc.com	
Wendy Magruder, Administrative Assistant	wendym@faithlc.com	
Jim Brodd, Custodial Services Coordinator	brodd@hutchtel.net	

Faith Lutheran Church
335 Main Street South
Hutchinson, Minnesota 55350

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OUR MISSION IS:
BUILDING FAITH
*"EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST"*
EPHESIANS 4:12

TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:

FOLLOW JESUS
ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL
INVITE ALL PEOPLE
TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH
HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

**Newsletter via
USPS or E-mail?**

Would you like to receive your monthly Faith Matters newsletter via e-mail? It saves the church postage and printing costs, and you get to see it in color every month! You can request a change to e-mailed newsletters by sending an e-mail to office@faithlc.com requesting the change.

An icon of a yellow envelope with a white newspaper sticking out. The newspaper has the word "NEWS" written in bold red letters on its front page.