

THE EPISTLE



Ye are our epistle written in our hearts known and read of all men . . .
2 Cor. 3:2

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH ✠ BAYSIDE, NEW YORK

VOLUME LV

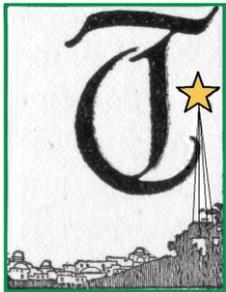
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

NO. 1

NOTES FROM THE PASTOR

☩: Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations. Hallelujah!

℞: Praise Him all ye people. Hallelujah!



The preceding versicle from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, for use in Epiphanytide (Epiphany Season Versicle No. 3) daily prayer, reminds us that the Christ who has appeared to us is a light to lighten the Gentiles, even as He is also the glory of Old Testament Israel and New Testament Israel—the Christian Church. A collect provided for use with *The Lutheran Hymnal* praises God that Gentile Christians, who no longer obey the Old Testament ceremonial laws, “are no longer strangers and aliens, but ... are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:19–20 ESV). The saints Paul spoke of included Jewish Christians, such as himself, who had been devoted to the ceremonial law. Though different groups within the Church today still struggle with sinful hostility as Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians did in the first century, this is temporary and will not exist in heaven. And even now, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are growing “into a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:21 ESV) as we mature in the faith. May God’s graciousness to us lead us to joyfully examine His moral law so that we may praise Him by doing good to all people, including fellow Christians.

Almighty and everlasting God, the Father of lights, who didst manifest Thine only-begotten Son in the flesh, making known His advent by a wonderful star to the Wise Men of the East, we praise Thee that Thou hast also brought us unto the fellowship of Thy beloved Son by the bright light of Thy Word, so that we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but partakers of Thy grace, fellow citizens with the saints, members of Thy household and heirs of Thy kingdom. Teach us to do Thy will, that we may crucify the flesh and serve Thee all our days, cherishing Christ in His members by relieving the needy and doing good unto all men. Guide us with Thy counsel; and afterwards receive us to glory in the land of eternal rest, where, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we shall laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



(Prayer for the Feast of the Epiphany, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, page 340 *alt.*)

THE EPISTLE

VOL. LV JANUARY ANNO DOMINI MMXIX FEBRUARY No. 1

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

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SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE

Divine Service . . . 10:30 A.M.
Bible Class . . . 9:30 A.M.
Senior Choir . . . 9:15 A.M.



IN OUR PRAYERS

Nick Braglio, Josephine La Port, Jane Wolf, Melinda Leon, Melissa Ramos, Bill Hundt, Marcia McHugh, Dennis Salmone, Joey Lee, Tina Pappas, Michael Elliott, Margaret Doersch, Patricia Redden, John W. Hamlin, Richard Branch, Laura Shinn, Isabella Ward, Evangelina Gasas, Joseph Carbone, Jane Bauer, Joan Pflug, Robert Firmery, Pearl Campbell, Haydee Quiñones, Hilda Berberina, Karen Davidowitz, Pia Haselbach & George Martin, Rebekah Stohlmann, Sandi Dunn, Joanne & Howie Voltmer, and Fernella Smith.

Shut-ins: Elizabeth McNally and Anne Lindroos.



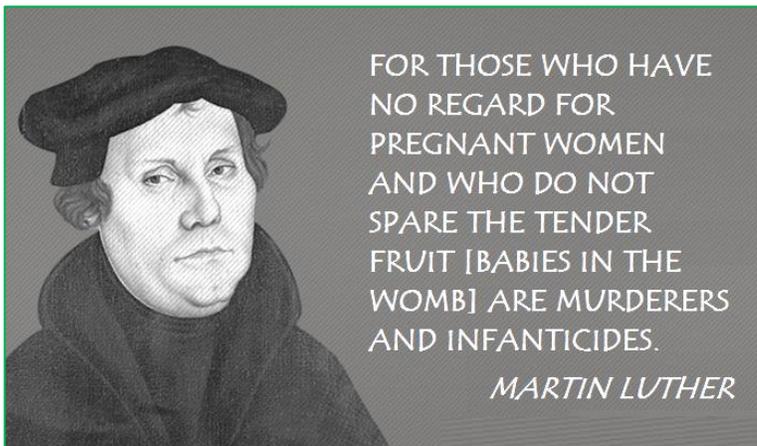
LCMS President's Statement regarding Gubernatorial Actions Expanding Abortion in New York, Illinois

A statement from the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in response to recent gubernatorial actions expanding abortion in New York and Illinois.

On January 22, 2019, the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on demand, the governors of both New York and Illinois signed laws to extend and promote abortion. As he signed the Reproductive Health Act into law, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo described it as the “evolution” of humankind in America. In Illinois, Governor J. B. Pritzker signed an executive order to ensure taxpayer funding of abortions, saying that it would make his state “the most progressive ... in terms of women’s reproductive rights.”

Life, not death, is the goal of humanity. History testifies that death is never the means through which justice and human rights prevail. We do not advance on the graves of our children. Germany, which sought eugenics as the solution to problems, now has strict abortion laws. To defend and support life is the goal of every just government, and the right to life is the hallmark of a good society. Yet abortion laws have allowed the abortion of more than 61,000,000 children since Roe v. Wade. That’s nearly 50 times the number of American soldiers killed in all wars. The abortion industry and its proponents take great lengths to avoid facing the fact that abortion dismembers a living child in a horrid pool of its own blood. This is barbaric.

Abortion is a lie. Science is on the side of life. We shall stand against the barbarism of abortion until our dying breath. Abortion is illogical, as we slaughter babies in the womb while developing ever-better care for other unborn children. Abortion contradicts the natural law written on human hearts that teaches us it is wrong to kill. Lawmakers and bureaucrats in our country have become emboldened to force citizens to go against their conscience. People publicly celebrate laws that lead to the deaths of children.



Our Christian faith teaches us to value life and to love each and every person as our neighbor. Love is life, and life is the great gift of love. Death is our natural enemy. This can be seen in our lives and in our world each day. Even the birds that seek food in winter testify that life is the goal of their movements and their work. The flowers that grow

toward the sun seek the light that enlivens them. We all live under God, who grants life to His whole creation. And in the giving of His Son to be the Savior, God shows that He is the Lord of life. Jesus came to love. He taught us to love all people, including those whom we consider our enemies. He taught us to unconditionally love every person, even those whom this world considers unworthy of love.

Jesus not only taught us to love, He brought healing and wholeness to the broken. He proclaimed peace to those who were troubled. He sat with those who were excluded. He lifted up those who were beaten down. But most of all, He loved through the sacrifice of His own life on the cross. He died to forgive the sins of all humanity. His forgiveness is a free gift for all who trust in Him, including those who suffer from guilt for aborting their child. He rose on the third day. The resurrection of Jesus is God’s grand statement that life is the goal of this creation. The resurrection of Jesus proclaims that all creatures find the goal of their existence in life. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so we learn that God treasures life over death.

We live as citizens in this world, and we seek to be obedient to our nation’s laws. We thank God for our leaders and for this great land He has given to us and for its precious freedoms and opportunities. The Lutheran Church—

Missouri Synod advocates strong citizenship and active participation in government. We obey the laws of our land and encourage those around us to do so.

We are, however, bound by our conscience to speak against those laws that are unjust and, especially, those laws that violate God's law and the natural law that binds all mankind. Abortion and other means through which humans kill humans violate these natural and moral laws that form the foundation of society.

Therefore, we stand against these actions and against all laws that sanction abortion or the taking of innocent life. We cannot stand silent when people elected to positions in which they are to protect citizens continue to pass laws and advocate for legislation that undermines the sanctity of human life. Our conscience is bound by both the Word of God and reason to speak for life as a precious gift of God and to speak against any and all who promote the killing of unborn children. We cannot hide the evil of these laws under the banner of "rights" or "privilege." Children's lives are at stake. They cannot speak for themselves. We will speak for them, and we will work to protect their lives. And we will continue to work to love and support the women who face difficult choices or suffer from the consequences of abortion. We support young mothers who have chosen life for their children. We work to provide adoption and other opportunities to care for children in need. And we continue to show God's mercy to all, just as He, in Jesus, has mercy on all.

We will work, love and pray that all might know the love of Jesus and trust in Him for salvation. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison
President, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

DESTRUCTION IN THE MOTHER'S WOMB IS A VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO LIVE WHICH GOD HAS BESTOWED UPON THIS NASCENT LIFE. TO RAISE THE QUESTION WHETHER WE ARE HERE CONCERNED ALREADY WITH A HUMAN BEING OR NOT IS MERELY TO CONFUSE THE ISSUE. THE SIMPLE FACT IS THAT GOD CERTAINLY INTENDED TO CREATE A HUMAN BEING AND THAT THIS NASCENT HUMAN BEING HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY DEPRIVED OF HIS LIFE. AND THAT IS NOTHING BUT MURDER.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER CHRISTMAS?

Entering Redeemer's sanctuary at Christmastime is a wonderful experience. For many, the beautiful decorations (and that wonderful smell of balsam) appear as if from nowhere. Then, after the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6) is celebrated, they disappear again, although some of the scent and quite a few of the needles remain, if you look carefully.

Despite the seeming effortless execution, which is by design, church decoration is as carefully planned as any military campaign and, it is hoped, produces fewer casualties. Somehow I managed to inherit the operation a number of years ago. Fortunately, the general plan was already in place. The pine garland outlining the windows, the wreaths between the windows, the tinsel tree in the chancel, the poinsettias on "risers" on each side of the altar, and the candle stands attached to the pews have been standard for more than 50 years, and probably more. Thank you to the old-time member(s?) of Redeemer who came up with the decoration scheme. It is always easier to achieve a goal when one already knows what that goal is.

The details of gathering all the materials and keeping them fresh, as well as praises for the faithful group (God bless them!) that comes out on a night the week before Christmas to decorate the church, is a story better suited to the November/December *Epistle*. The unsung hero of the *deconstruction* of the decorations is Maggie Wang, who sees to it that the tree is removed, the garlands pulled down, the candle stands stored away, and the wreaths taken off the walls. After the effort to put everything up, I find it a relief to return from my annual January conference knowing I will find the church returned to normal.



Still, there is work to do over the coming months in preparation for December 2019. Redeemer can boast of "environmentally conscious" decorations because our wreaths are disassembled and every part put to use. On nice afternoons during the summer, I put a chair out in the garden, and my mother removes the pinecones, bows, and berries, which I store to decorate the wreaths for next Christmas. But, there's more! She then unravels the wire that holds each wreath together and saves both the wire and the metal frame. These are used to make many of the new wreaths that appear at our annual Christmas fair. Most of the old greens end up in my compost heap, where they decompose into the "black gold" so beloved of gardeners. The compost nourishes the flowerbeds on the church property.

The poinsettias last longer than the cut greens, but, as memories of Christmas Day retreat into the past and we progress through the Epiphany season, they become increasingly incongruous. It is interesting how quickly something considered so beautiful and festive at the turn of the new year becomes annoying, but we do manage to squeeze every last ounce of benefit out of them. After Epiphany, those plants unclaimed by their donors are removed from the altar vicinity and placed as decorations in the narthex. Gradually, as they die off (and are composted), their numbers dwindle. By the time we reach Pre-Lent (Septuagesima, this year February 17), they will have disappeared for another year.

Richard Schaefer
Chairman, Board of Elders

Join Pastor Greg Dwyer for a tour of Germany,
including the Oberammergau Passion Play.

The date is May 2020;
tickets are becoming scarce!

Call 860-924-2467 for details.



MUSIC NOTES: Musical Signs of the Times

A philosopher once said: “The only constant in life is change.” As Christians know, only God does not change: “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6). In our time, change progresses at a seemingly faster pace than in earlier centuries, perhaps hastened by advances in technology and communication. Sometimes designated as “progress,” change has penetrated every element of life. Historians refer to widespread changes in society as “cultural” shifts, terminology that suggests a kind of massive alteration, and its inevitability. For example, it was not too long ago that everyone understood the word “marriage” to mean a union between a man and a woman. Through propaganda, people may come to accept this redefinition. In spite of its basis in an immutable God, the Church too, may be caught up by such developments. The adoption of contemporary culture



into worship is generally known as “inculturation.” Certain theologians maintain that the Christian Church has always adapted to the culture, and they even posit that inculturation is a good thing. For the average person attending church services, inculturation may become most apparent in liturgy and music. Today we debate these matters hotly, as is reflected in the phrase “worship wars.” In this essay, I would like to make a few observations on inculturation in church music.

The subject came to mind recently in a meeting of the American Guild of Organists, a national, non-denominational organization dedicated to the organ and church music. One of the workshops presented a program of “music for small adult choirs,” a topic that interested me, since I am always looking for new repertoire for our wonderful choir. The speaker introduced around 25 “anthems,” playing the rather difficult accompaniments well; the gathered musicians sang the choral parts. The pieces in question were produced

by several publishers, including the Gregorian Institute of America (Catholic) and Augsburg-Fortress (Lutheran), as well as commercial companies (E. C. Schirmer). Concordia was not represented. In most cases, you could learn a lot about the music just from reading the cover without viewing the notation inside or hearing the music in real sound. This information illustrates the process of inculturation, suggests how it happens, and sheds light on the question of its inevitability.

Inculturation usually involves changes in vocabulary—that is, the words we use to refer to things. In church music, changes may derive from business purposes, such as the goal of marketing to the greatest number of buyers. In this category belongs the use of the generic term “keyboard,” which now commonly substitutes for “organ,” the instrument traditionally and uniquely associated with the church. Among the pieces presented, the organ was specified in just three. Of course a keyboard can be any instrument or device equipped with a keyboard, including electronic instruments having amplification. A few pieces identified the piano as the accompaniment, but did not offer organ even as an option. Not unexpectedly, an occasional guitar was recommended, with music supplied by chord symbols rather than notation, a practice taken from jazz and other pop music. One also notes a variety of new terminology replacing the word “choir,” until recently considered standard nomenclature to distinguish church singing groups from secular ones. The substitutes tend to be neutral words devoid of the religious connection, such as “chorus,” “voices,” and “ensemble.”

Equally serious is that inculturation happens through changes in the vocabulary (language) of the music itself. That is, these compositions show a self-conscious attempt to sound “modern” or untraditional. Moreover, much of the content borrows from practices found in pop music. Indeed, the information on the covers did provide fair warning. For example, the absence of the organ as the chosen keyboard instrument. Music calling for piano rather than organ has for the most part abandoned the sound of “sacred music.” Pianistic writing normally involves arpeggios and filigree figures, also dense chords in series, all of which writing needs the piano sustaining pedal to be effective. Dynamic (expression) markings like accent signs are only possible on the piano. Pointedly, none of the pieces contained a part for the organ pedal or indicated how one could be added. Good choral singing (not to mention congregational singing) really benefits from a firm bass part, which is best produced by the bass keys of the organ pedal. Without getting into technical analysis of the pieces, I might comment that the abovementioned

“modernness” is achieved by several obvious techniques—deliberate violation of the classic principles of harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm. For example, composers write “wrong notes,” which create illogical dissonance in chords, they feature “incorrect” contrapuntal combinations, and they overuse certain unusual harmonic progressions (e.g., sudden flat-seventh) for special effect. A favorite with many recent composers of church music is syncopation (rhythmic accent placed on a normally unaccented position). In one piece I counted 92 syncopations within a total of 111 measures! Another example of rhythmic excess was a 78-measure piece which had 28 changes of meter. Needless to say, such devices soon become clichéd.

In summary, it appears that today’s church music suffers from serious problems. But perhaps that is nothing new. Questionable music must have started to creep into church compositions after the Reformation, because Lutheran writers in the 17th and 18th centuries said a lot against it. Strong words are found in an organ sermon by Ulm pastor Conrad Dietrich, who wrote that such [dance music in the church] is a “shameful misuse, not to be tolerated, and should be suitably punished” (*Ulmische Orgel Predigt*, 1624). The orthodox champion of (good) church music Hector Mithobius advised organists to “avoid all unfitting and frivolous mannerisms with courantes, passamezzos, and dances, in order that they not make a fool’s work out of sacred, divine music and shamefully defile



worship” (*Psalmodia Christiana*, 1665, title page, right). In the early 18th century Friedrich Erhardt Niedt (left) said of his church music that “everything is entirely serious and in good taste,” and he avoided “fanciful tricks, as if for dancing” (*The Musical Guide*, 1717). Over time, dance modes and similar lighter styles did make their way into mainstream church music, but boundaries were never totally removed. Theorist Johann Mattheson (1681–1764), expressed the middle-ground opinion that prevailed around the time of Bach: church music should “be joyful; yet in fear of God” (*Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, 1739). These comments document issues of inculturation in church music of the past. Some people might argue that they provide material proving the case for inculturation as a universal part of history. That may be. But then, it is

always a matter of choices—going one way or another. Organ, piano, guitar? With that in mind, we must recognize the vast abyss separating contemporary American culture from all other times in church history. No composer of the past could have imagined the phenomenon of pop music and the power it exerts today. Do we really want to admit it into the church?

Jane Schatkin Hettrick
Director of Parish Music

THE LIVING NATIVITY

Thank you to everyone who helped with the 2018 Living Nativity! This includes the many generous donations to the Angel Fund. Thanks to Frank DiCarlo, who contributed much time, talent, and treasure behind the scenes every night. Vital to the effort were the contributions of Annette Leroux, without whom the Nativity would not have gone forward. Thanks to Redeemer’s resident Boy Scout Troop, which has set set-up down to a fine art; Sandy Dunn and Denise April, who worked on casting and served as the “dressers” for each night’s performance; and the ladies who served delicious hot chocolate and cookies each night. Thanks also to all the cast members, from church, school, and community. Visit Redeemer’s Facebook page to see their photographs!

