

Pastor's Ponderings

Pastor David Eisenhuth

It is said that most people's earliest childhood memories are of things that happened between the ages of two and five. Memories can be auditory (hearing), visual (seeing), or olfactory (smelling). My first memory is of the olfactory kind. Let me describe it.

I remember being in the First Congregational Church in Minersville, Pennsylvania. I was under one of the pews. Yes, I was playful—naughty if you wish—even then. The pastor was speaking. Suddenly the power of the flowers that decorated the sanctuary that morning became so strong as to divert my attention from whatever I was doing and thinking. In my mind's eye, or in this case nose, I remember that solitary moment very well. I crawled up to see what kind of flowers they were. Of course, they were lilies. It was Easter Sunday.

How old I was at the time I do not know. But that experience is ingrained in my memory. To this day, the scent of a lily will bring back that moment, frozen in time. The past becomes real for me on Easter Sunday.

What do you think the women who went to the tomb early in the morning that first Easter remembered? Could it have been the brightness of another day in Palestine? Could it have been the sight of the stone rolled back from the tomb that they expected to find sealed? Might it have been the angel who, at least in one Gospel account, greets them with the incredible news that Jesus was not there? Maybe it was a look into the tomb and the sight and scent of the now-abandoned grave clothes?

Whatever they experienced, you can rest assured that it was ingrained in their memories for all time. Of course, they would experience many things from that point on. They would enjoy the real presence of Christ appearing to them several times before his ascension. Then there would be Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection.

What is your recollection of Easter? What brings to mind the Easters of past years? Are they strong enough to make a connection between the past and present? May they be strong enough to allow you to look into the future.

Easter Day was for the first witnesses a turning point in their lives. I pray, as we experience the powerful drama of another Easter, you will enjoy the flowers, the beautiful paraments, the wonderful music. But it is the words of



the narrative that strike with such power at the heart of who we are. How can you but hear the story of that first, new day of life for Jesus and his followers, then and now, without feeling a shudder of disbelief and yet incredible joy.

We were so pleased to have a special event on Easter. Finn Michael James Williams received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism at our unity service at 9 a.m. Finn is the child of Lindsay (Gorsuch) and Kevin Williams. He was born on Friday, October 13. The fact that he was with us to receive the gift of Baptism was a miracle—the story of which we heard as part of the sermon. Miracles abounded at our celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

The lilies smelled great, but hear these words and believe: "He is not here! He has risen from the grave!" To this we add our alleluias!

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Christian Education & Family Ministry

Stephanie Angles

SCHOLARSHIP PACKETS

Scholarship packets are available in the church office. Applications are due April 29, 2018. Scholarship recipients will be announced on June 3.

PRAYER BLANKETS

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to the prayer blankets projects this year! Since September 5, we have donated 50 to the Washington County Public Schools' homeless coordinator to distribute to students in need, right here in our community.

TEACHER AND STUDENT RECOGNITION

Sunday School Teacher Recognition and Sunday School Student Recognition will be held on June .

GRADUATE RECOGNITION

A list of all Trinity graduates will be placed in the June 3 Mini-Messenger/Bulletin. Please submit your graduate's information to Stephanie Angles at sangles@tlchag.org by May 20.

CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN

We will take up a collection for the Children Helping Children project following both services on Youth Sunday on April 22. Thank you for your continued support of this important ministry!

YARD SALE

We will host a community yard sale on Saturday, May 26. The cost is \$10 per table; each additional table space is \$5. The youth ask for donations to sell at their table. A collection box will be in Fellowship Hall for donated items.

EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Join Pastor David for "Lust in the Dust," a biblical perspective on sex, at 7 p.m. Monday, April 23, and the next eight Mondays—skipping May 28—ending June 18.

APRIL TEAM MEETING

The next Chris Ed Meeting will be April 11 at 6 p.m. in the Parlor. All are welcome! We will discuss plans for 2018 Vacation Bible School.



Retraction of Obituary

The Jerusalem *Trumpet News* is publishing the following retraction, which has been paid for by the family and friends of Mr. ben Yosef. The *Trumpet News* refers our readers to his obituary that appeared in yesterday's Sunday edition. We take no responsibility for the content of this announcement. The unanimous decision of our news and editorial staff not to assign an investigative reporter to this story speaks for itself.

Mr. Yeshua (Jesus H. Christ) ben Yosef, Messiah and Lamb of God, who was executed by crucifixion this past Friday, wishes to inform his friends, and those who consider themselves his enemies, that he is no longer dead. He was raised from the dead by God on Sunday morning. (His empty tomb is being treated as a crime scene by the Roman authorities.) Following a few stops in Jerusalem, Yeshua will be appearing in Galilee as previously announced.

For the many persons reeling with grief, horror, and guilt over the events of the past several days, professional counselors are not being offered. All seeking help and comfort at this time are referred to the "servant songs" of the prophet Isaiah.

Yeshua's resurrection will be celebrated with a "fish fry for discouraged disciples" at their old fishing hole on the shore of Lake Tiberius, next Wednesday morning at 6:00 a.m. Fish and bread will be provided, side dishes will be appreciated.

The "Lamb of God" extends his love and condolences to all the religious and political leaders, as well as to the crowds of people who put so much effort into having him executed. Yeshua wishes to assure all who were involved that there will be no lawsuits resulting from their actions. Nor are his followers to think, now or in the future, of "avenging his death." Such an idea is a lie of Satan, since Yeshua Messiah is not now, nor ever will be, dead!

As for the Devil and the "powers" of sin and death, Yeshua proclaims the following Easter message: "Neyh-neener-neyh-neyh!"

For his friends, and those who consider themselves his enemies, Yeshua exclaims this Easter truth: "I am risen! You are forgiven! Rejoice and be glad! Alleluia!!!" (Pastor Chris Ramsey)

From the Organ Bench

Pastor Greg Shook

Dear Flock,

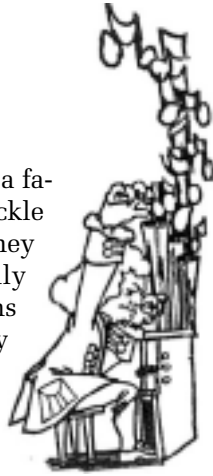
I would be hard-pressed to choose a favorite hymn. Parish Choir members chuckle and I say, “This is my favorite hymn.” They laugh because I say that a lot! I certainly have my favorites for the various seasons of the year. Our hymns are inspired by scripture, life experiences, and, for sure, the Spirit. For instance, the hymn text “It Is Well With My Soul” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymn #785) was written by Horatio Spofford upon the tragic loss of his family when their ship sank. A few people asked me what hymn (or hymns) were my favorites of the Lenten/Holy Week/Easter seasons. I can’t pick just one, but I’ll share two hymns that I dearly love.

“There is a Green Hill Far Away,” while not in our hymnal, is one. I first encountered it many years ago while free-lancing on oboe in the D.C. area, and I found myself in an Episcopal Good Friday service of music and the spoken word. The hymn text was written by Mrs. Cecil Alexander (1818-1895), generally regarded as one of the finest English women hymn writers. She possessed the great skill of making profound truths understandable to children. In 1848, she published a volume of children’s hymns that has never been excelled. It covered a wide range of doctrinal subjects such as Baptism, the Apostles’ Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer. Mrs. Alexander wrote over 400 poems and hymns intended exclusively for children. She wrote “There is a Green Hill Far Away” for the purpose of teaching her own Sunday School class the meaning of the phrase from the Apostles’ Creed, “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and buried.” We used the hymn this year for our Good Friday Tenebrae service. There are several tunes associated with the text, including one by well-known American gospel composer George Stebbins. My personal favorite tune to this text is by William Horsley (1774-1858). I remembered the text from my childhood. I particularly like the final stanza, “O dearly, dearly, has he loved! And we must love him too.” I wasn’t so concerned about theological theories then. All I knew was that Jesus had done this thing on my behalf, and I knew he died to make [me] good:

1. There is a green hill far away, without a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

2. We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains he had to bear,
but we believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.

3. He died that we might be forgiven, he died to make us good,
that we might go at last to heaven,



4. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin;
he only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in.

5. O dearly, dearly has he loved, And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood, And try his works to do.

When the much-anticipated hymnal supplement, *With One Voice*, was published in April 1995, it included many wonderful hymns that eventually made it into our current hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (*ELW*, for short). I remember sitting down with Dr. Clair one afternoon and playing and singing through some of the hymns in the collection. The one hymn that stood out for me was “There in God’s Garden” (*ELW* #342). This Hungarian Lutheran hymn in its original form had 15 stanzas and was a meditation on Jesus’s seven last words from the cross. Undergoing several variations, the version in our hymnal was translated and paraphrased by the great 20th century hymn writer Erik Routley. Routley chose stanzas one, two, and 12 through 15, and our hymnal prints them all as he wrote them, with the exception that the words “Peoples” takes the place of “All men” in the last stanza.

The scriptural sweep of the text is breathtaking, moving from Genesis to Revelation in the opening two lines. The text begins with the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) and in the next line to the last chapter of the Bible. “Not a garden but a city with the tree of life on either side of the river of the water of life, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). The second stanza identifies Jesus as the tree of life with branches that bear scars. The third stanza gives the image of thorns that are tangled in the tree’s foliage and will choke it—however, on closer examination, “Yet, look, it lives!” Christ lives, and in his life we find hope for life. Stanza four returns to the branches. “Christ the vine, we the branches, connected to Christ.” Stanza five offers a personal testimony that our own resurrection is rooted in the resurrection of Christ. Stanza six shows all heaven singing in thanks and in praise to Christ who offers us life and hope. The final line, and its invitation to look at Christ, now invites all peoples and nations to take, take it freely, a final Eucharistic reference. Beautiful, reassuring, and moving text.

The tune that so well fits this text was composed by American church musician K. Lee Scott (b. 1950). He was asked to write a tune and setting for the annual Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. Scott was so taken by this text he set to work on composing a tune. Scott gave the tune the name “Shades Mountain,” after the area where he lives in Alabama. The hymn uses the image of the tree of wisdom, knowledge, compassion, and beauty, whose name is also Jesus—and who evokes from all heaven a song of thanks for his passion, which offers healing, strength, and pardon to all peoples and nations. Pastor David and I decided to use this hymn as the Hymn of the Day on Easter:

1. There in God’s garden stands the Tree of wisdom,
whose leaves hold forth the healing of the nations. Tree of all knowledge,
Tree of all compassion, Tree of all beauty.

Continued on page 5.



The Paschal Candle

Pastor David Eisenhuth

As the cross was the focus of our worship during Lent through Good Friday, so the Paschal Candle is our focus for the celebration of Christ's resurrection and the whole of the Easter season. The Paschal Candle must be made of 100 percent bees' wax. It is usually adorned to reflect the festive nature of Easter. The rubrics (guidelines) for the liturgical year call

for a new Paschal Candle each year. Despite the cost, the symbolism of a newly blessed candle is important in the life of a congregation.

Our Paschal Candle is white. In the center is a stylized cross of gold, in the center of which is a heart of blood red. This represents the heart of Jesus, whose love for us was shown on the cross. Above the cross is a double band of red in which are the Greek letters A, *alpha*, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Ω, *omega*, the last letter of that alphabet. We are told in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, that Jesus is the *alpha* and *omega*, the first and the last of all things. Below the cross is another double band of red. In it is an image of the lamb that was slain.

In Revelation, Jesus is shown as a triumphant lamb seated on the throne of God. The lamb holds in its paw a flag with a red cross. This image is found in one of our stained glass windows. Try to find it!

Our Paschal Candle was blessed at the Easter Vigil. A new fire is supposed to be kindled from the sun by natural means, such as a Boy Scout with a magnifying glass. Absent that, a flint match will do. The new fire was blessed, and from it the Paschal Candle was lit. The date was put on the candle. Individual tapers were rhwn lit from the candle.

At the start of the vigil, a loud knocking was made on the closed doors of the worship space, in this case All Saints' Chapel. The celebrant said, "O tomb, open thy doors!" The procession then made its way into the worship space, pausing three times to thank "The Light of Christ." The response is "Thanks be to God." Once at its stand, the Paschal Candle was blessed with incense.

A cantor sang one of the most magnificent hymns of all Christendom, the "Exsultet." It reminds us of the gift of freedom God gave the people of Israel as they escaped slavery in Egypt. The image of moving from darkness to light is very powerful. The worker bees who made the wax for the candle also figured into the narrative.

At one point the chanting paused for the celebrant to put four grains of incense in the shape of nails on the arms

of the cross and one piercing the heart. These represent the five wounds of Christ.

After the "Exsultet" was finished, there were a series of lessons from Scripture that recounted God's saving action in freeing the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt to the promise of the Messiah. Opportunity was given for people to renew their baptismal vows. The first Eucharist of Easter usually follows after this, but I prefer for the Easter Vigil to end with the Affirmation of Baptism, reserving the first Eucharist of Easter for the next day itself.

Worship in the Easter Season

Pastor David Eisenhuth

Easter is the Queen of Festivals in the life of the Church. Most festivals are celebrated for an octave: seven full days following the festival itself. Easter is a week of weeks and is celebrated for seven full weeks. The Sundays are noted as being of Easter, as opposed to Sundays that are said to be in Lent. We do our best to keep that Easter spirit up for a full seven weeks. The flowers may disappear, but our cry of "He is Risen" continues.



From Your Church Council President

Judy Conrad

Due to the mid-March snow, your Church Council met one week later than usual. Here are the highlights of our meeting.

We reviewed and accepted a revised Trinity Church Council Covenant (see page 6). We are unsure how old the original was, but the content from many years ago still rings true today: faith, respect for others, and a team approach of acceptance. It is rooted in prayer. Indeed, we start and end every meeting with prayer, and have been studying the Book of Acts in depth. I am including the entire text of the Covenant in this newsletter for everyone to read. It is important that you understand the depth of commitment and faith based action that Council lives by.

The Covenant refers to our mission and vision. What is your understanding of what that means? “Making Disciples for Christ.” How do we do that? Who does that? Why do we do that?

Our full mission statement says:

- Trinity Lutheran Church is a discipling congregation—welcoming, growing, and caring in the name of Christ.
- Trinity Lutheran Church reflects God’s gracious love in Christ through our worship, fellowship, witness, and service.
- We strive to respond with love and charity to those in need—in our church, in our local neighborhood, and in the global community.
- We dedicate ourselves to continual prayer, Bible reading, and dialogue about how God is calling us to live our faith in the ever-changing world around us.

In the following months we will be looking at these words in detail. Discussions will be held with congregation members as well as the council to determine if changes are needed. Once we decide who we are, we can decide who we want to be, what we want Trinity to be about, and we can begin to look at long-range planning, which is sorely needed. Where is God calling us in his church?

This month, the Finance Team and the Endowment Board looked carefully at our giving so far this year. At last year’s Congregational Meeting, a budget was passed that included an increase in spending. I spoke at that time about the need for increased giving to support the budget so passionately asked for. We just completed week 12, and we are already almost \$19,000 behind in giving. This is not sustainable. Please search your hearts, your wallets,

and your pockets and try to increase a little each week. We are looking at creative ways to make giving more convenient. Many of us pay bills directly from a checking account. Did you know that you can contribute to Trinity in the same way? All you need is the name and address of the church. If you have any questions, please contact Colleen in the office. If you are not getting your envelopes, also let Colleen know.

The council members also spoke about the need to make contact with members who have not been attending. As you sit in worship, look around you. Who used to be there and isn’t? Those of us on Church Council made the commitment to call one person this week whom we have not seen at worship, let them know they are missed, and invite them to Easter service. We have lost some wonderful members in the last

year or so. We have gained some new ones. Some we have lost, we will not get back. Please reach out to someone you miss and let them know that they are missed!

Council is working very hard to represent you, our congregation. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or ideas, please find one of us and share it.



From the Organ Bench, Continued

2. Its name is Jesus, name that says, “Our Saviour!” There on its branches see the scars of suffering; see where the tendrils of our human selfhood feed on its life-blood.

3. Thorns not its own are tangled in its foliage; our greed has starved it; our despite has choked it. Yet look, it lives! Its grief has not destroyed it, nor fire consumed it.

4. See how its branches reach to us in welcome; Hear what the voice says, ‘Come to me, ye weary!’ Give me your sickness, give me all your sorrow, I will give blessing.’

5. This is my ending; this my resurrection; into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit. This have I searched for; now I can possess it. This ground is holy!

6. All heaven is singing, “Thanks to Christ, whose Passion Offers in mercy healing, strength, and pardon. Peoples and nations, take it, take it freely!”

Amen! My Master!

Soli Deo Gloria! —Pastor Greg

The Trinity Church Council Covenant

In order for the Trinity Church Council to lead the congregation well in its mission and ministry, we make these promises:

OUR PROMISE TO GOD

We promise to pray, alone and together, to thank God, praise God, and to ask for God's help in our lives and in our work for Trinity Lutheran Church, and we seek to listen and discern God's response.

OUR PROMISE TO EACH OTHER ON THE CHURCH COUNCIL

We promise to respect, care, and pray for each other.

We promise to regard our time on the Trinity Church Council as an opportunity to make an important gift to our church. We promise to listen with an open, nonjudgmental mind to the words and ideas of the others in our church and on our Church Council.

We promise to discuss, debate, dialogue, agree, and disagree openly in Church Council meetings, expressing ourselves as clearly and honestly as possible, so that we are certain that the council understands our point of view.

We promise to support the final decision of the Trinity Church Council, whether it reflects our view or not.

We promise to worship together often in Jesus's name, embracing a variety of styles, hymns, and spiritual songs which give glory to God.

OUR PROMISE TO OUR TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH COMMUNITY

We promise to demonstrate our leadership and commitment to Trinity Lutheran Church by our example.

We promise to support our Church pastors and staff so that their efforts can be most productive.

We promise to try to discover what is best for our church as a whole, in pursuit of our congregation's mission and vision, not what may be best for us or for some small group in the church.

We promise to give caring attention to the life of this congregation, seeing that the duties and responsibilities, as outlined in the constitution of this church, are fulfilled.

We promise to encourage our members to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas about the life and ministry of this congregation.

We promise to support the congregation's direct form of government that allows members to share their opinions directly with the pastors, Church Council, standing teams, and at congregational meetings.

Adopted March 27, 2018.

Our 150th Anniversary

Carol Brashears

Trinity's anniversary is just around the corner. In 2019 we will be celebrating 150 years serving our Lord. An organizational meeting for our 150th celebration will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10 in Memorial Hall. Come as we explore the ways to celebrate our past and look to our future. All are welcome! Contact Carol Brashears if you have any questions: (301)992-5016 or brash115@aol.com.

Anniversary teasers:

- What is the history behind the beautiful lily cross that adorns our sanctuary on Easter morning?
- If our cornerstone is marked 1909, why are we celebrating 150 years?



Prayer List

Peg Hardinge

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I credit Kathy Griemsman with this wonderful idea for our prayer list. From her suggestion, I created a new prayer list sign-in sheet for the 9 a.m. worship. There are now three columns: (1) names of folks who need our prayers; (2) names of folks for whom our prayers have been answered; (3) the circumstance (optional information), that is, the illness or situation for which we prayed, now resolved.

I will read these names and give thanks for our answered prayers during my prayer. Then, I will place this sheet under the cross on the W-9 altar.

James 5:16 instructs us to "pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Having this information will serve to demonstrate how the Triune God truly wants to answer our prayers and loves when we lay our burdens at the foot of the cross. It takes deep faith to hand our burdens off, but we will experience God's grace as we see prayer after prayer being answered. We will see *effectual, fervent prayers* in action and, hopefully, challenge ourselves to pray in ways we never did before.

My prayer for you: that you become best friends with the Holy Spirit and allow Him access to your joy, your sadness, your disappointments, and your dreams. He will not only show you how to help yourself, what to say and what to do, but He will walk every second with you and give you peace . . . regardless of your situation. I wish you all a good month, and I hope to see you this Sunday!

Three Occasions to Celebrate at TLC

Judy Conrad

We have three very important occasions coming up in the life of Trinity in the next months.

First, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 28, Sarah Schofield Wright will be ordained as a Lutheran pastor here at Trinity. It will be a wonderful day for Sarah, her family, and for the members of her home church here at Trinity. Bishop Bill Gohl will preside, we will have many guests, and a reception will be held after the service.

Second, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 5, our own Peggy Hardinge will be set apart as a Deacon in the Order of St. Stephen. Bishop Bill Gohl will preside at this service also, and a reception will be held following the service in Fellowship Hall.

And finally, at 4 p.m. on Sunday, June 10, we will formally install Pastor David Eisenhuth and celebrate the 37th anniversary of his ordination. Bishop Gohl will once again return to Trinity for a wonderful service—and, being Trinity—a party will be held here afterward.

These are three wonderful occasions in the life of Trinity, and we look forward to joyous celebrations. Each of these folks deserves a gift from their church. If you would like to contribute, please specify who you are donating to and send the check to the Church Office or place it in the Sunday offering plate. Thank you so much for any contribution you can make.



Sarah Schofield Wright Ordained April 28

The Church will give the gift of Ordination to Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Sarah Schofield Wright on Saturday, April 28, at 3 p.m. Sarah, a daughter of Trinity Church, has accepted a call as one of the pastors at St. John Lutheran Church in Sweet Air, Maryland.

Sweet Air is in Baltimore County, approximately 10 miles north of the city. The Rev. Bill Gohl, bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, will be here as officiant. The Rev. Dave Oravek will be the homilist.

This is an important day in the life of Sarah and Trinity. Please plan to attend to show your support as her sisters and brothers in the faith! A festive reception will follow the service.

Please Call Us If You Need Us!

If you have a caregiving emergency, please call Pastor Greg or Pastor David on their cell phones. It's okay to leave a message on the office phone—(301)733-2878—but should you have an immediate need, cell phones are the best way to contact them.

Pastor Greg's cell is (301) 992-1305. Pastor David's cell is (410) 487-3960. It's okay to leave messages there, as they will be heard and addressed sooner. Thank you!



Support Washington County Special Olympics Athletic Programs

Spaghetti Dinner

Raffle items, silent auctions, bake sale & more!

Saturday, April 14, 2018
1:00 - 5:00 pm

Trinity Lutheran Church
Potomac & Randolph Streets
Hagerstown, MD

Tickets: Adults \$8 in Advance - \$10 at the Door
Children ages 3-12 \$4 in Advance - \$5 at the Door
Children under 3 eat for FREE



Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.

Tickets are available from any Washington County Special Olympics Coach or Management Team member, email wco001@myactv.net or call 301-797-6853 and leave a message with contact information

Treat yourself & your family to spaghetti with meat or vegetarian sauce, salad or applesauce, bread sticks or rolls, and iced tea, coffee, lemonade, soda or water. Desserts will be available at an additional cost (wonderful baked sale items!)

What Would Jesus Have Us Do?

June Habeck, Outreach Ministry

Jesus's disciples were confounded that he associated and even ate with prostitutes and tax collectors. He responded to his followers, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers and sisters of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me." (Matthew 25: 40)

Who were "the least of these" in Jesus's time? The hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, imprisoned, and outcast.

Sometimes we might be confounded too. How are we to respond to folk who may make us uncomfortable when they are in spiritual need and may want to enter our church?

Many of "the least of these" in the society of Hagerstown today are already addressed by the disciples of Trinity. We provide the Food Pantry and Micah's Backpack for the hungry and thirsty, we serve at the Reach Shelter for the homeless, and we have the Clothing Bank for the naked. In the 21st century we treat the sick in facilities that are designed to heal and our clergy visit the imprisoned.

So who else would be "the least of these" in our midst today? Jesus was clear in pointing out those who are marginalized by society—those we do "not want anything to do with or with whom we do not wish to relate," as Mary Ellen George, a Dominican Sister of Peace, puts it.

Consider men and women with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), the autistic, the sexually abused, LGBTQ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans-gender, questioning) men and women, and foreigners fleeing violence and seeking freedom. Are they "the least of these" to Jesus or to us?

I had a recent experience with LGBTQ persons of faith who were hungry, outcast, and unchurched. Last fall I served two women who came to our Food Pantry for food. They were in their late 30s, healthy, articulate, educated, dressed in casual street clothes, and were married to each other. They said they had just moved to Hagerstown, so I invited them to our two worship services and told them our current pastor is gay. They thanked me and said they would consider it.

The two women came to the 11 a.m. service twice. A few people greeted and welcomed them. I spoke with them after the services, telling them about Trinity's outreach and activities. But they never returned. Perhaps the lack of people their age, the empty pews, or the people who avoided them due to their casual attire discouraged them. We'll never know.

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) is a program for Lutheran communities who publicly welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. RIC notes that the marginalized in today's society are leaving the church (or never entering it) when they experience "exclusion, judgment, and rejection from people supposedly acting in the name of Christianity." These churches use Old Testament words of intolerance and discrimination, growing further from the Gospel heart and soul of God.

What is it today that other churches, who build huge worship houses and fill the pews, do that we're not doing? There are a growing number of churches in America who are welcoming the 48 percent of LGB Americans who identify as Christian, according to Eliel Cruz.

Many of these (usually urban) churches attract the 70 percent of people born after 1980 who support same-sex marriage (data from a survey conducted by Pew Research in 2013). Churches who welcome diversity and practice inclusion are most attractive to young heterosexual couples with children. "They want their children to grow up surrounded by diversity, to see that they are loved no matter who they grow up to become," according to Reconciling Works: Lutherans for Full Participation.

For Trinity to grow, we can continue our outreach to "the least of these" and to those who are socially marginalized. The more socially diverse we are, the more welcome the neighborhood will feel to enter the front door as well as the side door of our church.

In the song "We are Called" by David Haas, Christians sing "we are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred and blindness will be no more!" We have welcomed diversity to our pulpit for years now (female and gay clergy); are we ready to grow even more in love, service, outreach, and congregational members?

Perhaps we are called into another direction of being God's instruments of love and grace: Trinity, the church of reconciliation, diversity, and hospitality to all of God's children.

Sources:

Cruz, Eliel. "LGBT People of Faith," <http://elielcruz.com/home/>

George, Mary Ellen. Dominican Sisters of Peace, "Jesus, the Marginalized, and Us," <https://oppeace.org/blog/2015/08/20/jesus-the-marginalized-and-us/>

Pew Research Center. 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org>

Reconciling Works: Lutherans for Full Participation, <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>





Birthdays

* Indicates under 10

** Indicates over 75

- 2 Aaron Dopson
Jane Drawbaugh
Timothy Higgins
Kathy King
Patrick McCarthy
- 4 Michael Brashears
- 10 Robert Hardinge
Jeffrey Reed
- 11 Kim Kline
Georgia Newman
- 12 Nancy Lehman
Sarah McCarthy
- 17 Shanta Pickett
- 23 Stephanie Angles
- 24 Therese Ramey
- 26 Bradley Kline
- 30 Leslie Allen
Kelli Palamar
Shane Pryor



Anniversaries

* Indicates 50 years or over

- 2 Jack & Diana Pryor
- 3 Scott & Diona Minnich, Sr.
- 12 Raymond & Dorinda Roof*
- 13 Linda & George Lemen*
- 16 James & Kelly Rohrer
- 22 Craig & Judy Robinson
- 23 Charlie & Jeanne Riley
- 25 Kevin & Nanette Dagliano

Thank You!

Altar Guild,

Many thanks for the lovely flowers. It's nice to be remembered by the church family. Also, a great big thanks to Barbara Smith who delivered them to me on a snowy day.

Sincerely,
S. Dorsey Martin, Jr.

Senior Ministry,

Thank you for the beautiful, colorful bouquet of flowers for my birthday. It was a nice surprise and I enjoyed them all week.

Thanks again,
Janice Keefer

Dear Trinity Family,

Thank you for the beautiful flowers I received for my birthday. A special thanks to Barb Smith for delivering them in the snowy weather.

Sincerely,
Elaine Byers

Dear Trinity,

Thank you for all of your kindness and support during Rick Hartman's illness and since his death. They are deeply appreciated!

Yours sincerely,
Leslie LeBlanc, Lauren Hartman Krach, and Sarah Hartman

Plan to Attend Ladies' Night Out on May 10

Save the date! Ladies' Night Out will be at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 10. Our program this year will be a person from the past: Mrs. Martin Luther. Jan Davis, a Christian Education Director from Hanover, Pennsylvania, will join us, portraying Katharina von Bora Luther.

Watch your weekly Mini-Messenger and email for more details. Tickets go on sale in mid-April.

Ice Cream Social and Movie June 9!

Karen Spessard

Mark your calendar now! Save the date: Saturday, June 9, at 2:00 p.m., Christian Education/Family Ministry and the Senior Ministry Teams will sponsor an ice cream social and movie. Additional details will be announced closer to the date. See you then!

Trinity Lutheran Church
15 Randolph Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Phone: (301)733-2878 www.tlchag.org

Sunday Worship at 8:45 a.m. and 11 a.m.
Sunday School for All Ages at 9:55 a.m.
Church Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

MAKING DISCIPLES FOR CHRIST

Food Pantry and Clothing Bank: (301)733-5651
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Washington County Literacy Council: (301)739-4208
Tuesday and Thursday: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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