



In the months that have passed since Rev. Matthew Harrison was elected President of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, we have seen a much-welcomed and long-overdue return of synodical emphasis from things of this world – structure, politics, sometimes short-sighted emphasis on human processes and activities – to the things of our faith and our Christian Church. Instead of focusing on the *business* of the Church, our leaders are turning their focus to the *purpose* of the Church. And in doing so they have introduced an exciting summary theme entitled “Witness, Mercy, Life Together – in Christ, for the Church and the World.”

The first of the three aspects of this threefold emphasis is Witness (*martyria*). The Greek word *martyria* was originally a legal term referring either to testimony given by someone or the person who actually gave the testimony. We know it today as the source of our word martyr, referring to those who gave their life for the sake of their Christian faith. Refusing to renounce their faith – even when threatened with torture or death – was and remains a powerful witness to Christ.

The second of these three aspects is Mercy (*diakonia*). The word *diakonia* literally means “waiting at table,” and is used in Acts chapter 6 when the disciples were spending so much time serving the physical needs of Church members that they had little time to actually preach and teach. They concluded: “*It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*” Today the Church continues to serve the physical needs of God’s people, and the Missouri Synod actively supports numerous mercy initiatives – earthquake relief, aid following floods and other disasters, etc. – in both the United States and, indeed, many nations of the world.

The third of these three aspects is Life Together (*koinonia*). *Koinonia* is usually translated as “fellowship,” and refers to the fellowship in Christ that all Christians share. This concept of fellowship can refer not just to the fellowship that St. Paul members enjoy, but more narrowly to the Communion fellowship of receiving Christ’s body and blood in the LORD’s Supper. *Koinonia* can also be translated as “participation,” representing our participation – our Life Together – with Jesus because of His saving work on the cross. As St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:9: “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD.*”

The work, the focus and the life of the Church truly is not on the things of this world, but on the salvation given to us by Christ Jesus. The cross is and always will be the center of our Life Together, together as members of St. Paul Lutheran Church today and as members of the Church triumphant in heaven for all eternity.

In Christ,

Pastor Terry O’Brien

# Miracles *of* LENT

Early in the Church's history, the major events in Christ's life were observed with special observances, including His birth, baptism, death, resurrection and ascension. As these observances developed, a period of time was set aside prior to the major events of Jesus' birth and resurrection as a time of preparation.

During Lent, the Church's worship assumes a more somber character. The color for the season is purple, a royal color often associated with penitence. The "Gloria in Excelsis" is omitted from the liturgy, as is the "Alleluia" that is normally sung prior to the reading of the Holy Gospel. By not using the "Alleluia" – a joyful expression meaning "Praise the LORD" – until Easter, the Lenten season is clearly set apart as a distinct time from the rest of the year. Additionally, it forms a powerful contrast with the festive celebration of Jesus' resurrection when our alleluias ring loud and clear.

There is strong evidence that the liturgical season of Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Christian Church. Lent traditionally begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Saturday (the day immediately prior to Easter). Officially Lent includes 40 days, but that is not the number you'll get if you count the days beginning with Ash Wednesday and continuing through Holy Saturday. This discrepancy is due to the fact that the six Sundays during Lent are not included in the 40-day count because every Sunday is considered a "mini-Easter" that celebrates Jesus' victory over sin and death.

Many (but not all) Christian churches hold special services during Lent, most often on Wednesdays. On Ash Wednesday many churches (but again, not all) offer the imposition of ashes during the worship service. Wearing ashes is an ancient symbol of mourning, and imposition of ashes in the form of a cross on the forehead serves as both a gesture of repentance and a powerful reminder about the meaning of the day and the season. Ashes can symbolize the reality that all sinners are dust and to dust we shall return, while reminding worshipers of the need for cleansing and purification. Although wearing ashes is frequently mentioned in Scripture, it is in no way a requirement for the Christian; indeed, it is entirely optional and a matter of personal choice on Ash Wednesday.

In addition to St. Paul's usual Sunday services, a number of special services will be conducted each Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. beginning on Ash Wednesday. Our theme this year is "Miracles of Lent," and we hope that you will join the members of your St. Paul family for as many of these special services as possible.

March 9, Ash Wednesday Divine Service: "The Miraculous Darkness"  
March 16: "The Miraculous Tearing of the Temple Curtain"  
March 23: "The Miraculous Earthquake"  
March 30: "The Miracle of the Splitting Rocks"  
April 6: "The Miraculous Raising of the Saints from Death"  
April 13: "The Miraculous Faith of the Roman Soldiers"

In addition, these Holy Week Services will be held:

April 17, Palm Sunday Divine Service  
April 21, Maundy Thursday Divine Service  
April 22, Good Friday

And, of course, the Easter Celebration Divine Service on Sunday, April 24!

# ***Congratulations***

... to all members of St. Paul Lutheran Church who are celebrating birthdays or wedding anniversaries during the month of March. Please send any additions or corrections to Barb Turner in the Church Office.



## **March Birthdays**

- |    |                      |    |                   |
|----|----------------------|----|-------------------|
| 3  | Charles Hinton       | 13 | John Livesay      |
| 4  | Lana Cross           | 13 | Darrell Stremming |
| 4  | Jared Matthews       | 14 | Kerstin Allen     |
| 4  | Georgette Merrifield | 23 | Gayla Kiser       |
| 5  | Mackenzie Bingaman   | 24 | Nancy Ashcraft    |
| 7  | Todd Horton          | 24 | Wally Bingaman    |
| 10 | Sharon Sue Castle    | 27 | Wendy Law         |
| 10 | Kim Kresin           | 29 | Bob Grotts        |

## **March Anniversaries**

- 7 Tim and Jeannie Karbach (*8<sup>th</sup>*)
- 16 Al and Joanne Leonard (*14<sup>th</sup>*)
- 20 Clarence and Judy Rigdon (*38<sup>th</sup>*)
- 21 Roy and Deborah Small (*41<sup>st</sup>*)



## **Serving Our Lord in His House during March**

**Communion Assistant:** Joe Marcin  
**Elder on Duty:** Buck Miller  
**Altar Guild:** Nancy Ashcraft, Joann Miller

**Ushers:**  
Adam Cross, Head Usher  
March 6: Tim Karbach, Rick Wilcox  
March 9: Dave Allen, Rob Amling  
March 13: Tom Bingaman, Darrell Stremming  
March 16: Bill Merrifield, Jerry Stone  
March 20: Rob Amling, John Livesay  
March 23: Todd Bockewitz, Rob Merrifield  
March 27: Rich Amling, Mark Miller  
March 30: Dick McGee, Wayne Miller

**Acolytes:**  
March 6: Mackenzie Bingaman, Allison Kresin  
March 13: Christa Bingaman, Josh Simac  
March 20: Mackenzie Bingaman, Anna Simac  
March 27: Allison Kresin, Josh Simac

**Greeters:**  
March 6: Bill and Georgette Merrifield  
March. 13: Bob and Betty Grotts  
March 20: Jason and Amy Simac  
March 27: Rob and Debbie Amling

# March 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>27</p> <p>9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class</p> <p>10:15 Divine Service</p> <p>11:30 Junior Confirmation</p> <p>3:00 Game Day</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7:00 Ladies Guild</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Pastor O'Brien Vacation</p> <p>6:30 Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>6</p> <p>9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class</p> <p>10:15 Divine Service</p> <p>11:30 Junior Confirmation</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>6:30 Bible Class</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:00 Bible Class</p> <p>5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>7:00 Ash Wednesday Service</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>13</p> <p>9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class</p> <p>10:15 Divine Service</p> <p>11:30 Junior Confirmation</p>	<p>14</p> <p>6:30 Elders Meeting</p> <p>7:30 Church Council</p>	<p>15</p> <p>6:30 Bible Class</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:00 Bible Class</p> <p>5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>
<p>20</p> <p>9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class</p> <p>10:15 Divine Service</p> <p>11:30 Junior Confirmation</p>	<p>21</p> <p>District Pastor's Conference, Bloomington, Illinois</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:00 Bible Class</p> <p>5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>
<p>27</p> <p>9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class</p> <p>10:15 Divine Service</p> <p>11:30 Junior Confirmation</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7:00 Ladies Guild</p>	<p>29</p> <p>6:30 Bible Class</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:00 Bible Class</p> <p>5:15 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>7:00 Lenten Service</p>	<p>31</p>		

## Pastor, why does the date of Easter change every year?

That is a very good question. It is also a question that is impossible to answer in just a few words or even a few sentences. The answer is very complicated.

Although we as Christians *know* a lot about Easter – after all, Scripture *tells* us a lot about Easter – we don't know *exactly* when Christ's resurrection took place. There is no uncertainty in any respect about the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, but we simply do not know the exact dates of any of those events.

Many people assume that Easter is directly tied to the date of the Jewish Passover since all of the Gospel writers state that Jesus and the disciples gathered in the upper room on Maundy Thursday to eat the Passover meal. But since Passover is an eight-day celebration, more precise definition is needed.

Scripture *does* clearly state that the resurrection took place on a Sunday, and in 325 the First Council of Nicaea voted to always celebrate Easter on a Sunday (unlike Christmas, which is always celebrated on December 25, and may fall on any day of the week). Special tables were created to compute the date of Easter for each year, and those tables were revised on multiple occasions. Today those tables calculate the date of Easter based upon three rules:

1. Easter falls on the first Sunday following the first ecclesiastical full moon that occurs on or after the vernal equinox; and
2. This particular ecclesiastical full moon is the 14<sup>th</sup> day of a tabular lunation (new moon); and
3. The vernal equinox is fixed as March 21.

Based upon these rules, a complex set of calculations has been developed, and you can see the details at this web site: <http://quasar.as.utexas.edu/BillInfo/ReligiousCalendars.html>. This level of math is far beyond my capabilities, so it's far easier for me (and probably you, too) to look at a chart prepared by the experts.

Under this system, Easter can never occur prior to March 22 or later than April 25. But there's one more complicating factor. Western (Roman Catholic and Protestant) Christian Churches base their calculations of the Easter date on a Gregorian calendar table, while Orthodox Christian Churches (such as the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox) base their calculations on the older Julian calendar. Occasionally those calculations will arrive at the same date for Easter – in 2011, the same April 24 date will be used for all – but in most years, Easter will be celebrated on different dates. For example, while we will hold our Easter celebrations next year on April 8, Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on April 15. When we celebrate Easter 2013 on March 31, Orthodox worshippers will wait until May 5.

Like I said ... it's complicated. Really, really complicated. The *Lutheran Service Book* (page xxiii) conveniently includes the dates of Easter all of the way through 2050. The earliest date listed is March 25 (in 2035 and 2046), and in 2038 Easter will be celebrated on April 25. Here are the dates for the next ten years:

2012: April 8	2017: April 16
2013: March 31	2018: April 1
2014: April 20	2019: April 21
2015: April 5	2020: April 12
2016: March 27	2021: April 4