



The Reporter

December 2021

The Reporter

Volume 19, Issue 10

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“The Power of Personal Invitations”

by Pastor Proeber

In the gospel of John there is the record of Jesus calling the first disciples. It is an interesting account where one person invites another. It started with Andrew. He was a disciple of John the Baptist and was approached by Jesus who said, “Come and see.” The first thing Andrew did was to go and find his brother, Simon Peter.

The next day Jesus found Philip and offered him the same invitation, “Follow me.” Without losing any time, Philip went to find his brother Nathaniel. His invitation was simple, just like the others, “Come and see.”

This account from the Gospel of John serves both as a reminder, and as a lesson to be learned and practiced. Our Savior has given us a gracious invitation. He has made us his people and set us apart to accomplish his holy will. It is a simple plan repeated at his Ascension—“Go and makes disciples of all nations.” We are familiar with these words, and we know what they tell us. Still, there are times when this simple directive becomes an insurmountable obstacle. We cringe at the thought of telling anyone about Jesus. Part of this fear comes from a lack of confidence and preparation. Part also comes because we are afraid of what the response might be.

It is a challenge to speak about spiritual matters in a world which has divorced itself from God and the truth of his Word. The end result is we tend to be “secret agents.” We assume a covert identity always hoping no one ever finds out we are believers.

Our fears and apprehensions can be overcome by remembering a few simple lessons. First, we are not responsible for the work of conversion. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit and the powerful working of the Gospel. Our responsibility is to either plant seeds, water, or fertilize. The Lord produces the results. A second lesson we need to remember is rejection will happen. While it doesn’t remove the sting of being rejected, we recognize people rejected Jesus, his disciples, the prophets, and the apostles. We also need to understand, the Lord doesn’t release us from our responsibility of sharing the truth because our feelings are hurt. The third lesson is possibly the most valuable. We need to recall Andrew and Philip. Once they were invited to follow, they went to their brothers and said, “Come and see.” They didn’t engage in a deep doctrinal dissertation, nor did they rely on an apologetic exchange, they simply said, “Come and see.”

For you and me this is something which is realistic and achievable. Come and see, is a simple, yet effective invitation.

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Invitation, continued from page 1

A couple of weeks ago, we witnessed the power of personal invitations. Just before Thanksgiving we had our annual pre-Thanksgiving pot-luck. This year was probably the best attendance we ever had. Besides a large representation from our congregation, there were also five visitors. These were people invited by others to come and see.

Now, coming to a dinner is different than coming to a worship service. The former does help the latter, however! At the end of the day, personal relationships are fostered and bonds are strengthened. This can lead to less resistance to a subsequent invitation. Possibly to a Christmas service, an Easter service, or another service.

This is a valuable lesson to learn and remember, because the time when people would just come to church is gone. No longer is this what people do. Also, gone are the days when Sundays were set aside for family time and family worship. Sundays are like any other day of the week with countless activities and distractions. This is what makes a personal invitation so effective. You are not inviting a person to something with which they will have to struggle through by themselves. With a personal invitation comes the assurance, "I will be there to sit with you. I will be there to explain what's going on. I will be there to help you meet other people." This is extremely helpful in removing obstacles and excuses from those you invite.



This month we will have some special opportunities to offer personal invitations. We will have our annual Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Certainly, all the precautions with COVID are still there, but we can work around them.

We still have our live stream every Sunday, in addition to these special celebrations. We will continue to have our in-person worship for those who are comfortable. We will even have a live-feed in the fellowship hall during the services. If you are concerned about being inside with a larger group of people, this will allow you to worship more comfortably.

Yes, this will probably be another unusual Christmas. We will have to make arrangements and plans accordingly, particularly with ever-present health concerns. Still, this should not diminish our ability to invite people to come and see what God has done for them. There are countless people in our community who need to know the comfort and peace of God's favor in Jesus. Be creative! Be bold. Be persistent. Be ready to share that beautiful invitation, come and see!

From heaven above to earth I come to bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring, whereof I now will say and sing.

To you this night is born a Child of Mary chosen virgin mild;
This little Child your Savior be from all your sins to set you free.

Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes, and see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair? It is the Christ Child lying there.

My heart for very joy must leap; my lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue that sweetest ancient cradle song.

“Thanksgiving Pot-Luck & Fellowship”

By Alan Todd



On November 21, at 5:30 P.M., Our Redeemer hosted a Thanksgiving meal in the fellowship hall to celebrate the Lord's blessings to all of us this past year, and to thank him for the grace he has shown and continues to show to each of us.

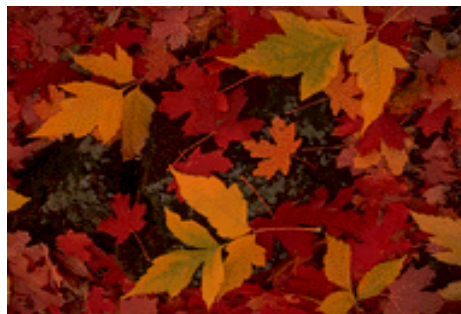
Jan Scheffler provided the table decorations and many of the 30 people who attended brought gifts of food and drink including a very nice turkey from Julie Schroeder who recruited husband Lance to perform the carving honors.

Pastor Proeber, literally back just minutes earlier from a combined Call and Voter's meeting in Lancaster, CA. at Our Shepherd Lutheran church, led us in prayer and then we all lined up at the buffet.

In addition to the traditional turkey dishes there were also pork dishes, casseroles of various types, salads, beer, wine, and, of course, desserts for all.

Everyone had a good time fellowshiping with one another and meeting some of the guests that were invited to attend by member friends. By 7:30,

the



“WELS Endowment Fund”

By Al Todd

For the second year in a row, the WELS Endowment Fund’s net investment return placed in the 90th percentile of the foundations that participated in the 2020 *Council on Foundations—Commonfund Study of Investment of Endowments for Private and Community Foundations®*.

The investment returns for the WELS Endowment Fund were 22.39% and 21.22% in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

“This is a tremendous blessing to the 235 WELS congregations and affiliated ministries that use the portfolios offered by WELS Investment Funds for their long-term investment needs,” says Mr. Jim Holm, WELS Investment Funds executive director.

The 2020 study marks the ninth year that Commonfund Institute and the Council on Foundations have partnered to produce this research. With 260 participating private and community foundations representing combined assets of \$115.4 billion, the study is believed to be the most comprehensive annual survey of its kind.

Please see me if you would like more information about our endowment fund, or would like to

**“The Power of Invitations”**

From the Archives

Karolyn Hanna originally submitted this short story in 2016, but it continues to be very appropriate.

On Monday a friend met me on the street and said “I noticed you were absent from our club meeting last week. Will you be there next week?”

“No,” I replied. “I can’t make it. Don’t look for me.”

Two men then asked me the next day if I would attend. I told the first, “I wish I could, but I can’t next week.” The second man I answered, “My schedule looks impossible, but I’ll try to find a way to attend.”

The morning of the meeting at the post office a fourth man asked if I would attend that evening. “I’ll try to come,” I replied, “but I may not make it.” Before I got to my car, a fifth man stopped me, and I promised to attend.

I don’t know whose official duty it was to contact me, but I couldn’t resist the invitation from five people. We all want to go where we are wanted!

If we want the lost, the indifferent, and the inactive to come to know our Savior, we must let them know. If we really want them to attend our church, we must find the opportunities to invite them. This is a joyful undertaking for every member of Our Redeemer.

“A Christian Perspective”

Submitted by Alan Todd

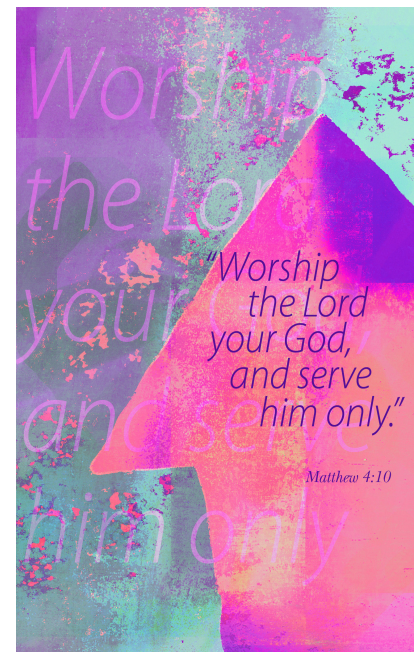
The following article was written in 2014 by Pastors serving the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod on the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. While our Synod – WELS – is not in fellowship with the LCMS, I think this was well written and thought out, and provides a concise answer to those who may be asked for the confessional Lutheran view of this existential topic.

Jesus grounds sexual morality not only in revelatory truth, but also in our created nature (see Matt. 19:1-9). When he condemns divorce, he does so because, from the very beginning, “the Creator” (NIV; “he who created them” NAS, ESV, NRSV) has made us male and female (Matt. 19:4). Jesus points to our creation as male and female, and therefore endorses the conclusion that “a man shall leave his father and mother, be united to his wife, and the two become one flesh,” quoting Genesis 2:24. As one flesh, the man and woman have been joined by God and should not separate.

Paul speaks within the same context of male and female using the same foundational passage from Genesis in his teaching on marriage (Eph. 5:22-33). And as he further discusses sexual morality in marital and unmarried life (cf. 1Cor. 6:12-7:40), he does so from within a perspective that acknowledges our created embodiment as male and female (“glorify God in your body,” 1Cor. 6:20), the expectation of sexual self-control whether married or unmarried (1Cor. 6:18; 7:5, 9), the call to live the life we have been given (vocation, 1Cor. 7:17, 24), and the priority of serving God in our daily lives (1Cor. 7:32).

The reasoning of Scripture regarding our sexual nature is therefore inarguable. In addition to the previous passages, Paul’s discussion of homosexuality in Romans 1 is important. He considers homosexual acts in the context of one particular trait of human sin: the suppression of the truth (Rom 1:18). He gives two examples of suppressing truth. The first is our refusal to acknowledge the divine power and nature which alone could bring about the created world, which results in humans worshiping creatures instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:19-23, also v. 25). Paul’s second example results from the first: because we worship the creation and not the Creator, we are also given to dishonoring our bodies rather than seeking the will of the Creator for their proper use. This, Paul says, is the reason humanity is even willing to ignore the obvious intention of our creation as male and female and exchange “natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” as women engage in sexual relations with other women and men engage in sexual relations with other men (Rom. 1:24-27). Paul’s understanding of the immorality of homosexual activity is grounded in our created nature as sexual beings, our embodiment as man or woman, and is not understood as an arbitrary moral rule revealed by God.

Moreover, within the Lutheran theological tradition, one may note the relevance of the explanation of the first article of the Creed by Martin Luther. Having confessed, “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of



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Perspective, from page 5

heaven and earth,” Luther’s answer to the question, “What does this mean?” is directly applicable to this discussion: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me *my body* and soul, eyes, ears, and *all my members*....”

To declare faith in the work of God’s creation in our lives is to confess that our bodies, with all their parts—including our sexual organs—are given to us by God our heavenly Father. The parts of the body are arranged and appointed “each one of them, as he chose” (1Cor. 12:18). It is from this consideration of the creation of the human body with all its members that the inspired apostle then develops the rich and beautiful image of the church as the body of Christ with all its members.

A biblical approach to sexual morality, therefore, is not simply grounded in specific Bible *passages* alone. It is grounded, first, in the truth of our nature as created beings (“natural law”) as that is understood in Scripture. From this standpoint, the Christian understanding of confused sexual identity is clear. Because Christianity takes our created bodies seriously, it is compelled to view it as a *disorder* of creation if a man or woman feels discomfort with his or her body and desires either to dress and act in the manner of the opposite sex or to “change” his or her sex by means of hormones or surgery. Ultimately, such feelings or actions are fruitless violations of our nature. Such surgery, for example, will not change the individual’s chromosomal makeup, but will only mutilate the body God has given.

If the person who is struggling with sexual identity but rejects the Christian church’s guidance in this matter, admonition and the call to repentance are needed; some measure of Christian discipline may also become necessary. Pastors and others in a position of care giving regularly require patience in both holding to the truth of God’s Word while just as patiently seeking to provide loving support as they seek to bring to repentance those who do not see that truth clearly or are otherwise inclined to reject it. This also includes seeking guidance from Christians who work in the mental health professions.

Restoring the Image of God



The purpose of the Gospel is to restore the image of God. Man’s intellect and will have, of course, remained; but both are greatly corrupted and weakened. The chief purpose of the Gospel is to restore us to that lost image, yes, to a better one; for by faith we are born again unto eternal life, or rather unto the hope of eternal life, so that we may live in God and with God and may be one with Him, as Christ says.

Nor are we born again only unto life but also unto righteousness, for faith lays hold of the merit of Christ and is sure that we are redeemed through the death of Christ. This produces another righteousness within us, namely the newness of life in which, instructed by the Word and helped by the Holy Spirit, we study to obey God. But this righteousness only begins in this life and cannot be perfected in the flesh. Nevertheless, it pleases God, not as though it were perfect righteousness or as though it were a payment for sins, but because it comes from the heart, which takes comfort in faith and relies on the mercy of God, through Christ.

(What Luther Says, Volume 2, page 884, par 2760)



“
I
bring you
good news
of great joy which will
be for all people.”

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee continues to sponsor events to provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We hope these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of Grace we proclaim. Please plan to participate, and to serve!

Chili Dinner & Decorating

On December 12th at 3:30 pm, everyone is invited to enjoy a chili dinner. If you have a favorite recipe, bring it for others to sample and enjoy. Salads, corn bread, and other sides may also be brought.

Following the dinner, we will decorate the inside of the church and fellowship hall. Yes, this is a departure from what has been done in the past, but this year is also a little different from previous years.

Once everything is decorated, we will return to the fellowship hall to enjoy dessert and fellowship. The evening will come to a close with some clean up.

Sadly, Christmas caroling will not be part of the evening. Many of the places we visited in the past are not open for groups to enter. So, please keep these folks in your prayers.

Mark this day on your calendar! Plan to be there, and have an enjoyable evening.

Advent Worship

This year's theme has focused on the Old Testament prophecies which proclaim: "Our Faithful God Keeps His Faithful Promises." This truth reassures us in uncertain and difficult times. It also provides us with the confidence to believe every word the Lord our God proclaims about —

A Righteous, Royal Branch

A Sacred Messenger

A Victorious Hero

A Loving Shepherd

Christmas Eve, December 24th

Christ, the Savior is Born! While it is a familiar message, it never loses its wonder and awe. This year we will turn our attention to the story of the three trees. It is a beautiful story from American literature which reminds us how God works, and especially how God works for our rescue through the birth of Jesus Christ. The candlelight service is at 7:00 pm.

Refreshments will be offered in the Fellowship Hall following the service.

Christmas Day, December 25th

The celebration of our Savior's birth continues with the 9:30 am service. When we consider what God accomplished with the birth of his Son, our sincerest desire is to come and worship the newborn King, again!

The Advent, Christmas and post-Christmas services will be in-person and live-streamed. Please keep an eye on your email for the link. Also, the services can be viewed on YouTube at a later date.

All of these worship services are wonderful ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people. Make sure you invite others to come and see the great things God has done for them. You may also share the live-stream link with them.

Notes & News

Handbell Choir

The “ringers” are concentrating on all of the upcoming Advent and Christmas worship services. We rejoice in the faithfulness of those who take time from their weekly activities to enhance our worship services with the bells.

If you are interested in ringing in the New Year, please give prayerful consideration to participating in this special area of service to the Lord and Our Redeemer.

Please speak to Debbie for more information.

GAUDETE

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Bible Study will continue through the month of December. Following Christmas, we will have a short break, then restart with the new year. Currently we are coming to the close of the Book of James. New, suggested topics are sharing our faith in a post-modern and woke culture and Christian worship. Other suggestions are welcome

and will be considered. If there is a particular study you would like to pursue, please speak with Pastor before the end of the year. Also, if you have not attended a Wednesday evening class in the past, why not make it a resolution for 2022 to attend!



Sunday Morning Bible Class

As always there is a regularly scheduled class after the worship service. Lessons are usually taken from one of the Sunday lessons. The format is simple, but it offers an overview, a clearer view, and my view (application). Each class is an individual unit, so if you miss a Sunday here or there, you will not lose any continuity. Future lessons will consider —

Birth of John the Baptist

Luke 3:1-6

Our Joy in Christ

Philippians 4:4-7

The Magnificat

Luke 1:39-55

There will be no class on Sunday, the 26th of December.

Sunday School for Children

The Sunday School continues to meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month.

We thank the Lord for the teachers who faithfully commit to teaching our children God's Word. We also thank the Lord for our parents who faithfully bring their children to receive the blessing of studying God's Word.

If you have any questions regarding our Sunday School, please speak with Sonja Todd or Sue Proeber.



New Opportunities for the New Year

We are always looking for new opportunities for service, outreach, study and encouragement. Please share your ideas with one of the current Board members: (Outreach — Josh Schueler; Pastor Proeber—Christian Life / Education; Jim Brown—Property). Our goal is to serve as many as possible with the Gospel.

PRAISE
THE
LORD,
FOR
HE
IS
GOOD

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Submit to Pastor Proeber (pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thanks to Alan Todd, and Karolyn Hanna for articles in this month's *Reporter*. Also, thanks to Sonja Todd for providing pictures from the Thanksgiving Pot-luck.

There is a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*, especially as we enter a new year. Throughout the past nineteen volumes, articles authored by members have made every issue more interesting. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber.



Meetings for December

Church Council	Tuesday, December 7th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, December 7th at 8:00 pm
Outreach Committee	Tuesday, January 11th at 7:00 pm

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to help.

Annual Voters Meeting - January 16th at 11:00 am

December Birthdays



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

1st	Al T.
12th	Bill W.
23rd	Barbara G.
25th	Our Savior, Jesus Christ

Please share updated information with the Pastor. Thanks!

Devotional Corner

"It's Not About Me"

After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.

Matthew 3:11

One could never forget meeting John the Baptist. His clothing was unusual. His message was unparalleled. The place where he carried out his work was unorthodox. Yet, even though everything in his life called attention to him, he would be the first to say, "It's not about me!" John freely confessed everything he did and said was about the "one who could come after him." This one would be the Promised One. This would be the Powerful One. This would be the One to follow.

I need to take John's message seriously. It's easy to think everything should be about me. People should pay attention to my schedule, my accomplishments, as well as my likes and dislikes. Unfortunately, this self-centered attitude also makes its way into my relationship with the Lord. God should see me the way I see myself. He should love me the way I am. He should even accept my attitude and good intentions for what they seem to be.

The problem is, it's not about me. If it were, I would be doomed to eternal punishment. I have to accept the truth there is nothing I could ever do to stand in the presence of the One who is more powerful than I.

This is why John's message is so necessary, and so precious. It leads me to look away from myself and look to the Savior God provided. In Jesus, God's Son who came into the world, I find perfection for my imperfection. I find unqualified obedience for my questionable intentions. I even find humble submission for my self-serving and selfish ways.

John's message is clear and it is what I need to hear. My life here, and my hope of life in heaven has everything to do with Jesus and his precious work. And honestly, I am thankful it's not about me, because Jesus is the One God the Father sent into the world to save me.

Prayer

O gracious God and Father, I thank you for the promise you gave concerning your Son. Help me look past my selfishness and self-centered ways to see the unselfish and undeserved love of Jesus my Savior.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."