



Advent Acts

February 2008
Volume 4, Issue 2

A Note from Pastor Justin:

Dear fellow servants of Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Risen Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ash Wednesday is just around the corner. No, you didn't hear me wrong- Ash Wednesday and the beginning of our Lenten Journey are just around the corner. It seems too quick to me; I can hardly believe that we are talking about Lent and heading towards Easter already as we seemingly just celebrated the birth of our Messiah. But make no mistake, the time has arrived. On February 6th we will gather at 6:15 for a meal followed by a service where we will have ashes applied to our foreheads while the words, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" are proclaimed into our ears. The ashes upon our foreheads remind us whose we are as well as officially start our journey called Lent.

Lent always does that though- sneaks up on us that is. I think partly this happens because we are always so focused on so many things at the same time that we lose track of time. Yet in the face of that reality Lent subtly breaks into our world. And always, the timing is perfect. Lent is all about slowing down, about stepping back to see what God is up to, about being reminded of our mortality and the fact that we are broken, and finally about Jesus Christ who breaks into our lives daily pushing us to take a step back and look inside of ourselves while looking out toward the needs of others. I pray that this season of Lent you would indeed step back and consider the magnitude of the marking of the cross which calls us to consider so many things.

According to the ELCA, the cross, which we put on our foreheads, symbolizes many aspects of our human existence:

- Ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin, as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).
- Ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. They were used anciently in the absence of soap.
- On Ash Wednesday ashes are a penitential substitute for water as a reminder of our baptism.
- Ashes remind us of the shortness of human life, for it is said as we are buried: "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."
- Ashes are a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

I urge you to consider all of these aspects and to pray daily that God would open to you a better understanding of what it means to follow him. This Lent, I plan to continue my practice of daily selected readings, and also read Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. I encourage you to find a new practice to add to your routine- perhaps this would be the first time you have partaken in a discipline- if so and I can be of any assistance please contact me. Some ideas of what you can do are: extended prayer and quiet time during the day, read and study a certain book of the Bible, or find an inspirational book to read and think about. Lent is a great time to dig deeper into your faith and I promise if you make an effort to do so you will be greatly rewarded. May God bless you and enrich your life of faith.

Honored to be your pastor,
Justin



Prayer List

Throughout this month, we ask that you lift these people up in your prayers:

We remember in our prayers: Peggy & John Grumbeck; Arnold Denter; Sara Skarshaug; Roger Bigcraft; Callie Hausler; Vicki Poswoski; Teri Hansen; Leonard Olson; Drew Palombizio; Katie McGuffin Noll; Pastor Len Etzel; Zack Gaz; Cam Deering; Mary Ghering; Cyndi Ansorge; Jennet; Bonnie Jean Zenner; Susan Puchovan; Phil Feiger; Debby Regiani; Margie Randall; all troops: those deployed and those at home; Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Traverse City; and our mission here at Advent.

Defining our Vision

On the weekend of January 4th some members of the church council participated in a retreat at the Omena house to start defining the vision for our church. We were lead by Pastor Clay Bates, the assistant to the Bishop. During the weekend activities each member took a *DISC* personal profile test to help define ways to better understand ourselves and others to create an environment to be more successful. The bulk of the activities evolved around learning about Visions, Missions, and Purposes, to help get us started to define what exactly our Vision Statement should say. We then went forward with brainstorming to get a full picture of what we believe this church wants to say to the world. We did not complete the Vision Statement because we believe that more members of the church body need to look at what we have started and have some input to make the statement say exactly what we are about. There will be a series of cottage meetings starting in February for members to look at this statement in progress and give their input. The statement will be finalized and presented to the congregation at the May congregational meeting. I hope to hear from you and what visions you have.

Peace and Love,
Nick Bank

February Readings

Here are the readings for Sundays this month:

- Feb 3** **Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2**
 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
- Feb 10** **Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32**
 Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11
- Feb 17** **Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121**
 Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17
- Feb 24** **Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95**
 Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Directory Update

We continue to work on the Photo Directory for Advent and we should be able to send it off soon to be printed. Our roster pages will list our members' names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. If you don't wish to have that information published please contact Michelle Anderson or Juanita Weber by February 7.

Thank You!.....Juanita & Michelle

Church Guild

We are collecting the completed fabric squares for our Advent family quilt. When yours is done, please bring it to church and put it in the labeled box which is on the coat rack shelf in the worship area. We would like to have the squares completed and returned by February 17.

The Advent Church Guild will be meeting on February 10 to create banners for our Easter celebration. If you would like to be a part of this project, please join us following the 11:00 service. Bring a sack lunch: no skill is needed, just your enthusiasm.

Mary

February Happy Birthday & Happy Anniversary!

Birthdays

- 2/1 Scott Coon
2/6 Gabi Hockenberger
2/7 Neil Roper
2/10 Eric Ellis
2/11 Bill Heiges
2/12 Dan Erfourth
2/15 Logan Grimm
2/16 Sue Olson
2/20 Becky Douthitt
2/20 Hannah Will
2/20 Michaela Williams
2/22 Elden Zang
2/23 Maggie Wentzloff
2/24 Margaret Welk
2/25 Irma Komoll

Anniversaries

- 2/10 John & Mary Jeffrey



The Gathering in Lansing

“God’s love is so tall you cant go over it. Gods love is so wide you cant go around it. God’s love is so deep you cant go under it.” Words spoken by the Bishop. While we were in Lansing I was honored to learn more about myself, the people around me, and God. One thing I learned about myself is that, when I’m having a rough day, listening to people talk about God soothes me. My mom always has this look on her face or this “hm” noise when she’s really feeling and understanding something. I notice when people are getting a lot out of a lesson, and almost every time I’m not really feeling the message. But then when everyone is fiddling around and seeming like they’re not getting anything out of the lesson, then that’s when I’m breathing it all in. So I thought “why is it always only me?” Then I thought maybe that’s part of Gods plan for me. And maybe I have a way of showing people what I see in God, and all the things I understand that maybe they don’t. I had lost myself for a while and struggling to find the right path. You see, I was always the shy, smart girl, but that’s not who I was around my friends, and I wanted to be the person to everyone that I was around my friends. So I started hanging out with different people because I saw how confident they were in themselves, and I wanted that confidence too. Slowly I started being more friendly and confident, but I was traveling down the wrong path at the same time. I knew it was wrong but I was too happy with who I was becoming to change back to being the quiet and good girl. After I went on this trip though, I realized I was ready to be my own person and stop following my friends’ lives, and live my own and still be who I wanted to be. Runks, the speaker, was so strong in his faith, but yet, at the same time, everyone loved him, and he was so confident! That’s when I saw that I could be everything I wanted to be.

Don’t hold back, do everything you want to do! You only live on earth about 85 years, so live to the fullest. The quote “live your life to the fullest” never really said anything to me until Runks said that if you’re a Christian you go to Heaven for eternity so do crazy stuff, and live your live to the fullest! Sign me up for death, so we can sit in Heaven and tell our awesome, and crazy ways we died. No one wants to hear that you died of old age in a hospital bed, I mean come on, that’s old school! I want to have the coolest death story, not some lame story that no one wants to hear! Runks also said “You don’t HAVE to live with Jesus, you GET to.” That speaks for itself. If you don’t listen to God, or you take the safe way out then your life will just build up with more and more problems until you can’t handle them anymore and you get destroyed. Live weak, because you can’t go through life saying you can do it all on your own and you’re strong enough to deal with your own problems. You NEED God,

no one can face everything on their own. You will not succeed if you try to do it all on your own, you WILL fail. Reading the bible is like speaking Hindu to me, so I need help understanding, and we all need help, we just can’t be afraid to get help. Just let go of your life, and leave it in the hands of God, and your life will change for the better. God won’t take the pain away, but he will strengthen you to get through it. Don’t just follow the journey, but focus on the journey.

Most of us put Jesus on a shelf in the closet, until we need him. But, what about your friend who has no faith in God, and will spend life in Hell because you haven’t brought Jesus off the shelf for other people. You only use him to get through your life, but don’t think about others. The world sees Christians in a bad way, and how judgmental we can be, so we have to take Jesus off that shelf so that we don’t turn people away from God.

If God always forgives us, then why does it matter if we sin if we already have a relationship with God, and a ticket to Heaven? Remember if you mess around with sin, it only gets deeper, that’s why we shouldn’t sin no matter what. The world is not our home, Heaven is, so we need to follow God’s standards, not the standards the world wants us to follow. Secrecy is the power of badness. When we’re alone we have a tendency to push ourselves farther to sin. Sin doesn’t satisfy you, it only brings temporary relief, just like junk food. Don’t let anyone tell you how to praise God. I can be very judgmental sometimes, and I didn’t realize how hurtful it was. Another thing Runks said was that everyone just wants to be loved, and nobody is only one thing. Just because of how someone looks or talks doesn’t mean they are only that. They have feelings and thoughts just like us, and everyone just wants to be loved. I always care what people think and I would hate it someone said I look ugly in my favorite shirt, I would be so hurt. Wouldn’t you? Or what if someone had a hat on that you thought was ugly, and they over heard you say it to your friend, but what you didn’t know was that they were close to their Grandmother and she past away a year ago and got that hat for them. How horrible would you feel? Sometimes we see in black and white. We don’t see anything besides either all good or all bad. See people as who they are, not how we label them. You can’t love God, if you don’t love people. We need to love people like God loves them, so that we can treat people the right way. Accountability sets you free. So if you want to live the dream God has for you, then say “God I’m coming home.”

-Jessica Rigotti

A Few Thoughts about the Effort to Make our Churches “Welcome” Places

Kelly Fryer, Lutheran Theologian and leader of A Renewal Enterprise, offers us some food for thought about what it means to be the Church- and furthermore how we, as Christians with a message, can be welcome to those we encounter daily.

[Chicago] This is a shout out to the woman who grabbed me after my final presentation at the Open Hearts, Open Doors Conference in Duluth, Minnesota a week ago. (The mission of this annual, ecumenical conference is to assist congregations in becoming more welcoming to LGBT persons and their families. It's the first conference of this kind that I've spoken at and it was awesome to be invited.) With a furrowed brow, this lady - in her 60's or 70's - said this after spending a day and a half listening to me preach & teach:

"I don't know what I think about all this (i.e. your presentations)...It took so much work to open these doors to everyone...and now you're telling us, 'Why do you have doors at all?'...(long pause) *and I think you're probably right.* But I'm going to have to go home and spend some time thinking about this."

I really appreciated her honesty...and her willingness to wrestle with new ideas, including this one: *Putting a sign on the front lawn of your church that says "Everybody is welcome here!" just doesn't matter...if no one "out there" can think of one good reason why they should care.*

In this postmodern, post-Christendom, post-ecclesiastical, post-bourgeois, post-personal, post-(you fill in the blank now) world people are no longer lining up to get through our doors. If they were, a welcome mat would be all we'd need. But they're not. They couldn't care less if "we" are ready to welcome "them" because *they* think *we* are irrelevant. And who can blame them. Mostly, we're answering questions they don't have. And it doesn't seem like we're even interested in the questions they do have.

Let me say this another way: They don't think we're irrelevant because we're not welcoming them into our places of worship. They frankly don't care whether we welcome them or not because they don't believe we have anything they could possibly want or need. This is one reason I just can't get very excited about the "let's make our denomination more welcoming" project that consumes a lot of people inside every mainline church these days. It's not that I think we shouldn't be welcoming. *That's a no brainer.* It's just that the project to become "welcoming" is, in some really big ways, so...last century.

In this new century, people "out there" don't care whether or not there is a congregation in their neighborhood that welcomes them. But I DO think they would be intrigued if they got to ACTUALLY MEET a living, breathing, believing, loving follower of Jesus on their home turf...in the house next door, in the cubicle next to them, working under the hood of their car, coaching their kid's little league team, running for city council, playing pool with them at the local pub. I think they would be really interested if they could see, in the way we ordinary Christians live and act and serve, what true freedom looks like. I think people would be moved to real curiosity if they ever found themselves in the presence of someone who shows them what it looks like to be really free...free from sin, death, and the devil (ala Martin Luther)...free from peer pressure, self-loathing, greed, bondage to material things, and all the other stuff that strangles the life out of people in this culture...free even from the suffocating politics and legalism and traditionalism of the institutional church...free to serve others, free to give themselves away to make a difference in the world, free to be the priests they were ordained to be at their baptism (no degree, no credentials necessary!), free to die to self for the sake of neighbor, free to love even their enemies!

Hoekendijk again: "Rarely do our words arouse amazement, but people look up when they meet a free person who uses that freedom to serve" (1954). No one looks twice at our "welcome" signs, anymore. But heads snap when a free person walks by! In this new century, WE will be the only church that matters. Not the building. Not the pastor. Not the membership roster. Not the clergy roster. Not the rules. Not the sign on the front lawn...no matter what it says. WE are the church.

I wonder what we would be fighting over, arguing about, and striving for if our heads were really wrapped around that idea. I know how you feel! You are welcome to use anything you find at The F Word for any noncommercial purpose as long as you include this notice: "(c) Kelly Fryer, <http://reclaimingtheword.com>. Some rights reserved."

Winterfest is February 16!

LA WinterFest will be February 16, 2008. Advent will be sponsoring a mini business expo - in our sanctuary. This will allow an advertising venue to small area businesses in hopes of boosting their winter income potential. If you have a small business, see Becky MacGirr to reserve a spot. Also, if you are interested in helping out with any aspect of WinterFest, there will be several opportunities for all kinds of activities. This is a great outreach to our community and a super fun time to be had by all.

The following people are assisting in worship this Month.

Communion Bread: Sue Olson
Altar Guild: Sally Peterson

February 3

Fellowship: Choir

8:00 Service

Assisting Minister: John Jeffrey
Ushers: Ben & Jan Price
Communion: Carole & Elden Zang
Acolyte: Halee Coon

11:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Cher Baumann
Ushers: Charlie & Joan Chamberlain
Communion: Al & Irma Komoll
Acolyte: Aaron Hockenberger

February 10

Fellowship: Outreach Committee

8:00 Service

Assisting Minister: John Mocan
Ushers: Lis & Nick Bank
Communion: John & Mary Jeffrey
Acolyte: Evan Mocan

11:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Michelle Anderson
Ushers: Ellen & Jeff Fancher
Communion: Juanita Weber & Hannah Will
Acolyte: Emily Fancher

February 17

Fellowship: Stewardship Committee

8:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Carole Zang
Ushers: Ryan Brady & Gary Wertz
Communion: Charlie & Cher Baumann
Acolyte: McKenna Cudney

11:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Ellen Fancher
Ushers: John & Evan Mocan
Communion: Shannon Nemeth & Duce Olson
Acolyte: Cydnee Bence

February 24

Fellowship: Church Guild

8:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Tom Peterson
Ushers: Pat Cudney & Ken Williams
Communion: Michelle Anderson & Abby Cudney
Acolyte: Noah Weichert

11:00 Service

Assisting Minister: Becky MacGirr
Ushers: Steve MacGirr & David Romberg
Communion: Nancy Ackerman Will & Ellen Fancher
Acolyte: Michael MacGirr

If you are interested in helping with the Sunday morning worship experience, please see Tom or Sally Peterson. If you are unable to help on the day listed, please be sure to make arrangements for your spot.

Medical Outreach for Honduras

I am going on a medical brigade to Honduras this April 2008 with the company I work for in Chicago and a non-profit organization called Global Medical Brigades. There are about 23 of us going on the brigade to rural Honduras to provide basic medical care, perform public health assessments, and dental care for those who don't have any access to these things. I have had a strong interest in this kind of work over the past several years, and I finally am able to do it! We are in the process of collecting medication and supplies, which we will bring to Honduras. We are planning on doing 4 brigades on 4 days. From what I have heard, we can expect to see 400-500 people each day. We will not turn anyone away who needs help. If we are not able to provide adequate care, we will provide transportation to the local hospital. I am asking for any and all help. This trip will not be successful without it! We are collecting unopened, over-the-counter medication and supplies to distribute to those that we will be screening in Honduras. For a list of needed items, please see Pastor Justin or Anna. Thank you for your help! God bless.

Sarah Lindquist (Anna Grimm's sister)

Music Notes

I cannot believe how the season of Lent has come upon us! I hope everyone will take time in their busy lives to reflect what matters most. We will be holding Wednesday services again this year following a soup supper. The services will be what is called the Holden service, which is a quiet, prayerful service that helps center the journey that Jesus is about to take within our hearts. I urge everyone to attend these services. I believe that to truly experience the celebration of Easter, one must walk along the path of pending death & despair. I hope to see everyone there. Ash Wednesday is Feb. 6, and the Lenten services are the following Wednesdays up to the week before Easter.

On a musical note- You will notice that the Sunday morning services will be a bit different following Ash Wednesday. The church refrains from singing the words Alleluia. Several of our service hymns will be omitted for the season of Lent- but no worries- they will return on Easter Sunday. :)

Advent Lutheran Church

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Pastor Justin Grimm:
PastorJustin@charter.net
Phone: 231.632.0824

www.adventlakeann.org

Worship with Us

Advent Lutheran Church
19631 Maple
Lake Ann, MI 49650

8:00 & 11:00
Sunday mornings
and
9:30 AM
Education Hour

Church Staff

If you need Pastoral Care, are interested in helping out during the service, have an idea about a new program, interested in the choir, or want to help out with children and teen spiritual growth, please contact one of us.

Rev. Justin Grimm, Pastor

Cherie Hockenberger, Director of Music

Becky Douthitt, Administration Coordinator

Lis Bank, Children's Education Coordinator

Church Council

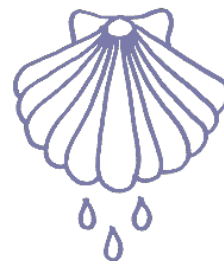
Church council meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 at the church. Meeting minutes are available upon request. Please see John Jeffrey or Michelle Anderson.

For a list of your Church Council members, please go to www.adventlakeann.org and click on Directory.

Pastoral Assistance

If you or a loved one is in need of pastoral assistance, don't hesitate to contact Pastor Justin.

Are you interested in learning about Baptism or Communion for you or a family member? Pastor Justin would love to talk with you! Call or email him to set up a meeting.



Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee will be sponsoring a food drive to support local families. Please bring your non-perishable items, including paper products to church on February 3 or 10. Thank you for your support!

ADVENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

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