

## **PASTOR'S PAGE**

### **Your Church Isn't Jesus - By Donovan Riley**

It's Sunday morning. What do we do? Coffee? Walk the dog? Sign into social media? Roll over and go back to sleep? We have so many excuses for not getting ready for church. Why bother when it's just going to be more of the same? The same pastor, people, songs, prayers, everything the same. And Jesus? Do we avoid church because it's a church, because it's full of sinners, or because we might run into the crucified God? Do we even know the difference?

How often do we conflate a negative experience at church with a negative experience with God? The pastor nagged at us in the sermon. The songs were uninspired. The prayers didn't address our struggles. And the people? A child behind us had a meltdown during the prayers because she wanted more goldfish crackers. A man in the second pew from the front nodded in and out of consciousness during the sermon. The two old ladies in front of us didn't seem to care that their constant chatter could be heard by half the congregation during worship.

Why go to church on Sunday morning? What's the point? God is obviously NOT in the building. Otherwise, it wouldn't be that way Sunday after Sunday. And the hurt is too much to endure again.

We're desperate for some gospel, but it doesn't seem that the pastor realizes or recognizes this. We want meaty prayers that call God to honor his promise to protect and preserve us because we need help. We need songs that preach and offer comfort to our troubled consciences. More than anything, we just want Jesus. No filler. No fluff. No flowery words. As the man once said: Sir, we would see Jesus because he alone is the living bread (John 12:21).

We've all been wounded by someone or some group at our local church. But that doesn't mean God has abandoned us. It means sinners are doing what sinners have always done; hurting each other in their futile attempts to be god in God's place.

We want to receive comfort and peace in the midst of our chaotic lives. We want someplace to go where we can have the weight of the week lifted off our shoulders. We want to be told that death isn't the inevitable, unavoidable end to all our life's struggles.

When we don't receive what we need, that doesn't mean we give up. What's the sinner's answer to an absence of the gospel, no gospel? Problem solved! Except it's not. Now it's gotten worse. We've chosen to shut ourselves away from the church, the sinners inside, and most of all, the crucified God.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were told by God to leave their family, friends, and everything that gave them a sense of place and purpose in the world. God told Abraham, for example, to leave his home, land, and gods and journey to the place that the true God had appointed for him. Where was that place? God would tell Abraham when he got there.

The Hebrews experienced the same when God led them out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Where were they going? The promised land. How would they know when they had arrived? When God said: Stop. Here is the land that I promised to your fathers.

Maybe your local church doesn't preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Maybe it's been years since you've heard an unconditional absolution. Maybe you've never tasted the body and blood of Jesus, never knowing what it's like to receive the graspable God. Maybe you've gotten to the point that you don't believe God's baptismal promise to you is valid. Are you a baptized child of God? Are forgiveness, new life, and eternal

salvation for you? The simple answer is: YES! The hard reality is that God may be sending you away from your local church into the wilderness, to lead you to another church, with a new pastor, new sinners to congregate with, and a new word to hear.

It's scary. It was scary for Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. It was scary for Israel. It's always scary when God leads us away from what's familiar into a strange and alien place. We don't know what we'll find at the next church. We may even have to attend worship at fifty or sixty churches before we hear the sweet sound of the gospel: "Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that means you! So hear this: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Now, come and receive his gifts of salvation; his body given into death for your sin; his blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sin."

We have so many excuses for not getting ready for church. But we also have to confess that it may be that our own hardened hearts and stiff necks prevent us from receiving the gospel and gifts of salvation. It may be the case, that God is driving us out of our comfort zone, even if that comfort is in avoiding our local church on Sunday morning.

But we're not looking for a church on Sunday morning. We're searching for the Church of Jesus Christ, which can be located where Christ Jesus locates himself: amongst sinners, delivering the Gospel for the forgiveness of sin, giving himself away in words, water, bread, and wine.

So don't lose hope. Don't avoid church on Sunday morning. Instead, pray that our heavenly Father would honor his promise to never abandon or forsake you. Ask him to satisfy your yearning for the gospel and gifts of salvation. Demand of him (because he commands us to do this) and say: Sir, I would have you show me Jesus! And he will because he has promised you that for Jesus' sake he will.

Donavon Riley is a Lutheran pastor, conference speaker, author, and contributing writer for 1517. He is also a co-host of Banned Books and Warrior Priest podcasts. He is the author of the book, "Crucifying Religion" and "The Withertongue Emails." He is also a contributing author to "The Sinner/Saint Devotional: 60 Days in the Psalms" and "Theology of the Cross".



## CHURH CANCELLATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the case of bad weather this winter, please check TODAY'S TMJ4 TV station for church cancellations. You can also go online to [tmj4.com](http://tmj4.com) or 620WTMJ on the radio. Any cancellations will also be announced on Facebook as well as our church website [www.bethanylutherankohler.org](http://www.bethanylutherankohler.org)

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

3 - Elsie Reinbacher  
Cindy Fisher  
5 - Richard Johnson  
7 - Peggy Keller  
14 - Thomas Yang



15 - Andrew Kraus  
16 - Colin Mengel  
17 - Steve Perry  
18 - Caleb Cox  
23 - David Prange  
Noah Fibiger

25 - Joe Wychesit  
28 - Madison Fibiger

## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

8 - James & Barbara Herzog  
15 - Ken & Liz Buesing



If we missed a member's birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office and let us know.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I walked into church on Sunday morning, there was Todd Matte, Bob Wuerzburger, and Lee Gumm, standing in a circle chatting. As I approached them and said, "Good morning, looks like we have..." and I paused to think of a catchy way to address them all as the past presidents, but before I could get the words out, one of them said "Mount Rushmore!". HA! Perfect. We all had a good laugh. I am honored to now become one of the next heads on Bethany's "Mount Rushmore", as I begin serving as your new president. I look forward to the challenges ahead and hope I can sufficiently fill the big shoes that have preceded me at this position. I'd like to personally thank Todd Matte for his leadership the past two years. He did a fantastic job and I think he even got the Robert's Rules of Order down before he left.

February is always an enjoyable time in our church year, as we begin Lent. Starting Ash Wednesday, February 22, we will begin our annual tradition of soup suppers before the Wednesday services. If you haven't attended them in the past, I would highly recommend joining us for some great soup, salad, and dessert. It is a great time to enjoy some fellowship with other members of the congregation as well. As always, a few extra hands are always appreciated, so if you can help in any way, please reach out to Gina and find out how you can get involved. Stay tuned for more information to come about that.

Again, I look forward to serving as your president and I just want you all to know that I welcome any feedback or ideas you may want to share with me on how we can move the church forward in carrying out the message of Christ.

Thank you,  
Andy Fibiger

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## LENT WORSHIP

Bethany will be participating in the Lenten Pulpit Exchange again this year. A different Pastor will be preaching at our midweek Lent service. Service time is 6:00pm. The schedule is as follows:

February 22 (Ash Wednesday) – Pastor Robert Steele

March 1 – Pastor Alan Kretschmar

March 8 – Pastor Jim Schulz

March 15 – Pastor Bryan Osladil

March 22 – Pastor Matt Shive

March 29 – Pastor Don Johnson



## LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

Join us prior to our midweek services for Lenten Soup Suppers each Wednesday beginning at 5pm starting with Ash Wednesday, February 22. We will have two soup choices, salad, rolls, and dessert. A free-will offering will be taken at each meal to help local organizations.



**Help is always appreciated:** Please sign up on the sheets in the lower narthex if you are able to help. High School students, this is a great way to earn volunteer hours! Also, bakers needed! If you can provide a dessert for soup suppers, sign up on the sheets. Thank you!



## VALENTINE BREAKFAST FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS

On Sunday, February 12, the Sunday School children will be enjoying a breakfast prepared by the Sunday School teachers while they create Valentine cards that will be given to Bethany's shut ins.

## NEW NAME FOR THE LOVE INC CALL CENTER

Thanks to the leadership and thoughtfulness of our outgoing Clearinghouse Coordinator, Pam Bennin, we are now referring to our call center as the **Connection Center**. Only the name has changed. Our primary goal is still to build relationships rooted in Christ with those who contact us. Share our phone number and ask people to reach out to us at (920) 783-6701, option 2.



## LOVE INC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are currently seeking additional people who have an empathetic heart to listen to stories, pray over situations, and connect people to community resources:

- **Intake Receptionist** as the first point of contact with those who call us
- **Intake Specialist** as the individual who listens to better understand the PERSON beyond the needs
- **Neighbor Liaison** as the follow up touch point person

Visit our website for more information or to submit your interest in volunteering with us--  
<https://www.loveincsheboygancounty.org/volunteer>. Call us at (920) 783-6701, option 3 or email us at [volunteer@loveincsheboygancounty.org](mailto:volunteer@loveincsheboygancounty.org).



## JANUARY/FEBRUARY CHARITY OF THE MONTH – Orphan Grain Train

During the months of January and February, all money collected from your "Designated Offerings" contribution envelopes will go **Orphan Grain Train**. Orphan Grain Train is a Christian volunteer network that shares personal and material resources with needy people in America and around the world. Grain Train volunteers gather donations of clothing, medical supplies, food, Christian literature, and other aid to meet real needs. For more information, visit their website at [www.ogt.org](http://www.ogt.org)

## THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2023

**Sunday, February 5**

**10:00 a.m.**

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Dave & Sue Prange
Acolyte:	Katelyn Regutis
Altar Guild:	Rachel Johnson, Julie Steele
Scripture Reader:	Steve Hazen
Door Locker:	Diane Marotz
Streaming:	Todd Matte

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**Sunday, February 12**

**10:00 a.m.**

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Jerry Sabrowsky, Derek MacKenzie
Acolyte:	Elanore Faucher
Altar Guild:	Barb & Karl Kaeppler
Scripture Reader:	Todd Matte
Door Locker:	Ryan Brooks
Streaming:	Noah Fibiger

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**Sunday, February 19**

**10:00 a.m.**

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Brian Faucher
Ushers:	Brian Faucher, Dan Fibiger
Acolyte:	Maggie Faucher
Altar Guild:	Gina & Madison Fibiger
Scripture Reader:	Kelly Paltzer
Door Locker:	Steve Marotz
Streaming:	Grace Matte

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**Wednesday, February 22**

**6:00 p.m.**

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Fibigers
Altar Guild:	Shirley & Ray Ottman
Streaming:	Madison Fibiger

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**Sunday, February 26**

**10:00 a.m.**

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Ken Thompson, Bob Kuehlman
Acolyte:	Aidan Brooks
Altar Guild:	Sue & Dave Prange
Scripture Reader:	Mary Ann Fibiger
Door Locker:	Dan Menzer
Streaming:	Thomas Yang

# FEBRUARY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			01 3:15pm Confirmation	02	03	04
05 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC	06 6:30pm Board of Elders	07 6:30pm Board of Education	08 3:15pm Confirmation	09	10	11
12 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship	13 6:15pm Board of Finance 7pm Church Council	14 	15 3:15pm Confirmation	16	17	18
19 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC	20	21	22 3:15pm Confirmation 5pm Soup Supper 6pm Ash Wednesday w/HC	23	24	25
26 8:30am Bible Study 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship	27	28		