



Pilgrims' Progress



The Monthly News of the People of Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Warwick, Rhode Island
May 2015

OUR STAFF

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The Rev. Dennis Kohl

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June Pilgrims' Progress Deadline: Friday, May 15th!

Please e-mail submissions to
parishasst@pilgrimlutheranri.org
or place in her mailbox in the church
office. Many thanks.

The Progress deadline is the 15th of every month.



From the Pastor

Dear Friends and fellow Pilgrims:

Have you ever been intimidated by the Bible? Has anyone ever used the Bible to try to frighten you? Has anyone used the Bible to make you believe that you are not good enough for God or for the Christian community? All these are misuses of the Bible.

You see, the Bible was given to us by God through the community of the church to be a source of truth and comfort, not a source of fear or to trouble our faith. The Bible has had a long history of being held over peoples' heads demanding more than we can do, but that is not why the Bible is holy. It is holy because in its pages we meet our neighbors and ourselves. It is in some ways like a mirror that helps us to understand ourselves as individuals and as the human family.

Martin Luther, in his introductions to both the Old Testament and the New Testament, wrote of the Bible as the manger and swaddling clothes in which the Lord Jesus is laid. In other words, the Bible is the place we encounter Jesus as the true revelation of who God is.

The Bible is not God. Some traditions within the family of Christians place their trust and faith in the Bible. I don't mean to be too harsh, but that is a form of idolatry. It is like putting the cart before the horse. As Luther also wrote: *It is for Christ's sake that we believe in the Scriptures, but it is not for the Scriptures' sake that we believe in Christ.* In other words, Jesus stands as the Lord of the

Bible as well as the Lord of the Church. For us, Jesus takes precedence over the Bible.

It is from this understanding that we as Lutheran Christians get a basic way of interpreting the Bible: it is about Jesus, not rules, not laws, not simple good advice. Jesus is the one who makes all the difference in the Bible for us. I don't mean to use Luther too much, but his advice to preachers has been helpful to me more than once: *when the text gives you a hard nut to crack, always use the rock of Christ to open that nut.* We read the Bible looking for Law and Gospel, demands and promises. If we get them confused we do not understand God correctly.

I'll grant you there can be dangers in reading the Bible. One of our members at the Monday Bible Study shared with us advice she got from her father, an Episcopal priest: *always read the Bible with others.* Because the Bible is a series of books passed down by human communities (both Jewish and Christian) under the influence of the Holy Spirit, it makes sense that in the community of Christians that same Spirit is guiding us.

In June I will be offering a series of opportunities to learn about the Bible. Both Monday evenings at 7 and Wednesday afternoons at 1, I invite you to learn with me about the Bible: How did we get it? What is it? Where did it happen? When did the events happen? How can we interpret it? You do not need to have any experience of Bible study or be someone who has learned about the Bible to be part of our conversation. The truth is that the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of all of us. We all have something to bring to our life together. We will not be reading the Bible; we will be looking at the background, the "back story," of the Bible.

The basic "text" we will be using is *The Lutheran Study Bible* from Augsburg Fortress. Prices for this book run from \$25 for

paperback to \$50 for large print. If you would like to see one, or get one for yourself, please let me know.

My hope is that the Bible can be a friend for you, speaking words of promise when things are tough, words of challenge when you take things for granted, and words of correction when your life goes off course. My hope is that you will be able to find the Christ child in the manger of the Bible, and finding him there come to know the deep love that God has for you and the whole human family.

With hope,

Pastoral Acts

Baptism: Carole Lynn Laurent

Funerals: Dr. William W. Ferris
Claudine Mallette
Dale Ann Peck
Pamela Jean (Quinlan) Wilkinson
Lynn V. Moniz
Britta Wood
Edward M. Smith
Susan R. Mullen

Hospitalized or Needing a Pastoral Visit?

Please have a family member call us at 401-739-2937 to speak to Pastor Kohl, or to leave information with the office or on the church's voicemail. Be sure to leave your name, the name of the person who needs a visit, which hospital and room number if possible, and a contact telephone number.

Sunday mornings are busy times here at Pilgrim, and it's possible that verbal requests may not be remembered. If you think of a need, please fill out one of the pew cards and place it in the offering plate, or leave a note for Pastor Kohl in his mailbox in the office.

**Altar Guild
Diane Fish Memorial Scholarship
Announcement**

The Altar Guild is currently accepting applications for the Altar Guild Scholarship in memory of Diane Fish. This scholarship is designed to assist the youth of our congregation with college expenses. All members of Pilgrim Lutheran Church who are currently high school seniors, and will attend college in the fall, are eligible. Applications are located on the Altar Guild bulletin board, to the right of the Pastor's office.

Completed applications should be mailed to the church **or hand placed in the Altar Guild mailbox** in the church office. **Mailed applications must be received by Friday, May 22, 2015** and **hand delivered applications must be deposited into the Altar Guild mailbox by 11am on Sunday, May 24th, 2015.**

Deadlines are firm and no exceptions will be made. If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Cardillo at 738-4254.

The following financial information for 1/1/15 to 3/31/15:

General fund expenses:	\$62,401
Donations/pledges & misc.	
56,617	
Income for the General Fund	_____
Deficit	(\$
5,784)	

Please consider additional donations to the General Fund so that we can cover our expenses. Thank you.

The Financial Committee

A Bell for Hiroshima



On Christmas Eve I received a call from the American Consul General in Japan, Allen Greenberg, inquiring about a bell sent from Pilgrim Church to the congregation that was formed in Hiroshima.

The story goes back to 1962 when Pastor Bloomquist in a children's sermon told the story of a friend of his who was beginning a congregation near Hiroshima. One of the young folks, Ricky Lundin, was listening and thought that a bell for this church would be a good gift. Ricky was very interested in the ships from World War II which were being decommissioned. Ricky wrote to President Kennedy asking for a bell from one of these ships. Pilgrim Church received notice that the Navy would be sending a bell to our church. This bell was sent off to Japan and now hangs in the Saijo Lutheran church.

The new ambassador to Japan from the US is Caroline Kennedy. The children of the church invited her to come and hear the bell which her father made possible for them to have. It has become known as the "Bell of Love" and has become a symbol of the church and the school there.

On Good Friday I received another call from the Consulate in Japan. Mr. Greenberg told me that they were able to find some of the documentation missing from the transaction with the White House in

regard to the bell. These letters were found in the Kennedy Library in Boston.

An article about the bell can be found at:

http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/mediacenter/article.php?story=201312100942310_en

I do not know whether Caroline Kennedy was able to visit the bell and the children at the church. But it's great to know that children from Pilgrim Church could bring joy to our sisters and brothers at Saijo Lutheran Church in Hiroshima Prefecture.

Pastor Kohl

CONFIRMATION CLASSES



It is with sad hearts that we come to the end of another year of confirmation classes. Our program is unique because it is shared by three congregations: Bethany in Cranston, St. Paul in Warwick, and Pilgrim. There have been about 25 students in the program this year from these three communities of faith. This year we looked at the Bible briefly.

It has taken the support and cooperation of many people to bring this program together. We are grateful for families that prepared suppers for the kids and staff. We are grateful for people who have joined us and shared their stories with our students. We are grateful for the commitment of other adults in helping to shape the faith and lives of our younger members. They are Tammy McLaughlin (our

fearless leader and coordinator), and Allie and Matt Merrill, Fred Linden, Brandon Jackson, and Matt Sangster. Our pastors have been involved as the teachers for each class: Pastor Maria Hammons (Bethany), Pastor Dennis Kohl (Pilgrim), and Pastor Dana Reardon (St. Paul).

This is one of the ministries we share that gives life to all involved. It's been a year of learning, good food, and serving others. It's been a year of sharing Christian community with teenagers and adults. It is something that makes Jesus happy.

October 31, 2017 will be the 500th



anniversary of Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses on the public bulletin board, the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, pictured here. That day marked the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation. We

will plan to celebrate that event as we continue to work for what Luther had hoped would happen: the church of Jesus Christ would be one and the Gospel of God would reign with most authority in the church.

In October of 2016, Pastor Kohl is planning a ten day pilgrimage to some of the important Luther sites in Germany. The pilgrimage will be led by professional tour managers and guides. The exact date cannot be set yet. As more information becomes available, he will have that available.