



Pilgrims' Progress



The Monthly News of the People of Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Warwick, Rhode Island
November 2016

**December's Progress Deadline:
Tuesday, November 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 Our Pastor

Dear Fellow Pilgrims:

Has anyone ever asked you why you are a Christian? It is one of those questions we need to think about and should have an answer ready for the questioner.

I've been thinking about this off and on recently, and I would like to take a stab at giving an answer that seems to work for me. There are several dimensions to my answer: theological/philosophical, experiential, and simply the way things have gone.

Let me start with the last category first. I am a Christian because my family is a family of Christians. I remember going to Sunday School and worship as a child. It was something we did regularly. In fact, it was unusual for my sister and me to miss Sunday School. I have a bunch of attendance bars for my Sunday School pin to prove that. But I also remember being taken to church for the services and having things explained to me by family members. Worship was always something different for me. Yes, I had a hard time sitting on hard pews, and I was a squirmy kid, but I also remember being in a place that was beautiful in ways the rest of my week was not. There was art and statues and candles and stained glass to look at and learn from. I grew to love, but not understand, the mystery of worship.

There I was in the presence of something, someone entirely different from the rest of my life, and I felt richer for it.

I also learned Bible stories at home. There I felt free to ask my questions, even raising the possibility that some of these stories could not be true as far as I knew because miracles did not happen in life. (Since then I have changed my tune. I now know that miracles do happen in healing and food coming from "out of the blue," and those who deserve to be ignored get attention.) My family's retelling of the Bible stories in their own words was one of the ways these stories felt like they were my own.

But I am a Christian because I also have experienced the truth of what Christians teach and believe: a God who is able to redeem all things, even the struggle that life brings. Throughout life, like so many others, there were tragedies that arose for me: sudden deaths of people I loved dearly, trust in loved ones undermined, betrayal and rejection. And yet through all of these things I learned that God did not abandon me. In fact, God always sent someone to walk with me through my hurt or anger, and often I learned that the one who was my "companion" in struggles also had their own share of struggle. In their companionship I saw redemption. Like someone celebrating years of sobriety encouraging others to walk that path, I learned that there would be a new life beyond the intensity of the struggle. I also learned that because of what I went through I was able to understand others better, learn how vulnerable we all are, and stand with others when life seems to have let them down. I learned that finally, in the end, it is God who has the last word, not our experiences.

Finally, I am a Christian of the Lutheran flavor because our faith takes pain seriously, does not try to minimize how awful it is, and offers, not a reason for suffering, but a use for suffering. It is in our struggles that we not only learn God is present, but we also learn that God is a redeemer, making what we go through a place for discovering that the resurrection is true, the cross was not a place without God's presence, but in the cross God was at work redeeming us all. Just as I learned about the faithfulness of God in my own struggles, I now saw how God works through even what seems to be an evil event or situation to bring about new people in each of us. I now know (at least on my good days) that God never lets go of those claimed by God in the water of baptismal promises. So what about you? Why are you a Christian? I would be interested in hearing your story if you would like to share it. Maybe others would be, also.

In hope,



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.

We need your help! We're looking for volunteers to serve as Assisting Ministers, Communion Assistants, Ushers, and Greeters. If you are able to help with these important ministries, please sign up on the sheets posted on the bulletin board outside the office or contact the office at 739-2937.

Pastoral Acts:

First Communion:

- Skyler Joseph Puig – October 9

Marriage:

- Brandon T. Hebert & Lucyann Flynn Metz

Funerals:

- Donna E. Morales*
- Rey Lovelace III
- Frank Mosses
- Matthew Watkins*
- Evelyn Blomberg
- Arnold "Arnie" Dunn
- Harold L. Andrews, Sr.
- Jill Rogers

*Member of Pilgrim Lutheran Church

The next **Congregation Council meeting** will be held on Thursday, November 17, at 7:00 p.m.



**COMMUNITY
INTERFAITH
THANKSGIVING SERVICE**

Once again this year the people of St. Mark's Church, St. Timothy's Church, the West Bay Community Jewish Center, and Pilgrim Lutheran Church will gather for a time for giving thanks to God for the blessings we have received over the past year. The service will be held at St. Timothy's Church on Tuesday, November 22, at 7 PM. Watch the Sunday bulletin to learn about donations of food for local food banks and to learn about sharing a time of refreshments following the service.

Dear Friends,

With a chaotic and contentious election process under way, I thought it might be helpful for all of us to stop and think for a bit about why we have governments to begin with and what purpose they serve for our society. I would like to share how we as Lutheran Christians come to understand the role of government.

First surprise -- the role of government grows from the fourth commandment: *Honor your father and mother*. Here is what Luther says about that in his *Small Catechism*: *We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and **others in authority**, but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them*. You see, for us order in the world is God's primary concern. Life is valuable and God wants to make certain that all people flourish in God's creation. Our parents are the first line of defense against chaos. But *others in authority* include people beyond the family: work, school, church, government. That means supervisors, teachers, pastors, mayors, governors, presidents, police officers, firefighters, and the list can go on.

But order is not the only reason God gives this first commandment about human relationships. God also appoints caring to this office of parenting. For God authority is not carried out in power or coercion; this is holy work. Authority is administered not for destruction or hurt, but for the good of all, even those under the authority of others. Violence and anger, hatred, prejudice, or abuse has no place in our understanding of why parenting or governments exist.

So bad parents or bad government are held accountable to God for misusing the authority they have. In his *Large Catechism* Luther wrote this: *[God] does not want scoundrels or tyrants in this office or authority; nor does he assign them this honor (that is, power and right to govern) so they may receive homage*.

Everyone acts as if God gave us children for our pleasure and amusement, gave us servants merely to put them to work like cows or donkeys, and gave us subjects to treat as we please, as if it were no concern of

ours what they learn or how they live. No one is willing to see that this is the command of the divine Majesty, who will solemnly call us to account and punish us for its neglect. Nor is it recognized how very necessary it is to devote serious attention to the young. For if we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world.

As you go the polls on November 8 (and I hope you do!), remember what God is up to through our election process: bringing order and care for all people, just as parents would do for the children they love. Each of us must decide who we believe can fulfill this role best. But please remember this: it is not just about a candidate or a party, what we do is seek to fulfill God's purpose for the creation, for us, for our children, and for our neighbors.

~ Pastor Kohl

Fall Festival



On Saturday, November 19, from 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM Pilgrim Church will hold its annual fall festival. This is a

great time to shop and eat and to greet other members and friends. Invite your family and friends to stop by. You might find a bargain or learn something new. You **WILL** have great food. It is always a good time for all.

The Altar Guild will host a **Bake Sale** on Saturday, November 19th, during the **Fall Festival**. The funds we raise will help pay for new linens for the altar and support our Scholarship Fund. If you can **donate baked goods**, it would be greatly appreciated. They can be dropped off at the church on Friday, November 18, between 5 and 7pm. Contact Pam Himebaugh with questions: 935-3544.



2016/2017 Sunday School Schedule of Special Events (Revised):

- November 27 - Family Sunday*
- December 18 - Christmas Pageant at 9:30 service
- December 25 - Christmas Day (no Sunday School)*
- January 1 - Happy New Year! (no Sunday School)*
- February 19 - Family Sunday*
- April 16 - Easter*
- May 14 - Mother's Day*
- May 28 - Family Sunday*
- June 11 - Church Picnic

*Please bring your children to worship



If you're moving, please let us know. We'd like to keep in touch!

Organization for Justice & Peace

The Organization for Justice and Peace cordially invites the Warwick Community to join our monthly meeting in reading the book titled ***Unmindful Negligence***, authored by Karen Gustafson. The book discusses the effects of an "us vs. them" mindset that has thwarted so many promises of liberty and justice that is foundational to our Constitution. Thoughtful discussion throughout the book discusses such themes as the interplay of politics and religion, the effect of cooperative behavior through the ages, the struggle for civil, economic and educational justice throughout our land, as well as the effects of the Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, and Bush, Jr. presidential policies and congressional laws on supporting or thwarting these often conflicting issues in our American culture. The book may be obtained on Amazon.com and the Kindle publication or on any E site. The date for our **first meeting is Thursday, November 10**, at 7pm here at Pilgrim Lutheran Church. We look forward to thoughtful, contemplative discussions with the author.



The Season of Advent begins on November 27 this year. Advent is not Christmas, although in our stores you might think it is. Advent has been used by Christians through the centuries as a "little Lent," a

time of quiet reflection and prayer. Advent is four Sundays long. During this time we read about God working to fulfill the promises of a Messiah, an anointed one who comes to set all things right. We are a part of the work God is doing. Advent might be a time to consider those who know little about the comforts that most of us know. You might gather up items for the food ministry or the toiletry pantry. You might make a contribution to our nation and international disaster relief work (see www.elce.org). We get ready to welcome the God who shared life for us by sharing our lives as blessings to others. Have a blessed and quiet Advent.