

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
79 Brooklyn Street PO Box 606 Portville, NY 14770
(716)-933-6699

[e-mail; Bethellutheran@verizon.net](mailto:Bethellutheran@verizon.net)

Websites: (congregation) www.bethelportvilleny.org; (synod) www.upstatenysynod.org;
(ELCA) www.elca.org

Worship Service - Sundays at 9:00am; Sunday School at 10:30am

The Rev. Ivy Gauvin, Pastor

God's work. Our hands.

MAY 2014

Pastor's Ponderings

"Alleluia! Jesus is risen..." begins the Easter hymn of the same title. Our Lenten and Holy Week journey has brought us to Easter and the power of the resurrection. On Easter Sunday, the children helped us find the alleluias that had been hidden for Lent. Then, they helped us rejoice each time the word "alleluia" was sung or spoken by ringing bells that were handed out during the children's time. They did a great job.

The Easter season is with us for seven weeks, drawing to a close with the Feast of Pentecost. We all know that, but what I've been wondering is what our spiritual temperature is now that we are past the disciplines of Lent. Was there anything that especially added to the richness of our prayer and scripture reading time? How can we continue these practices in Easter and beyond?

We fall flat on our faces when we try and try as hard as we might to be good faithful Christians when it comes to conversation with God and scripture reading becoming an ingrained habit and pattern of our lives. Too often I have begun my day feeling so far behind, that I have rushed headlong into it and by the end of the day felt tired and like I had not accomplished very much. These words of Martin Luther are a challenge to us all, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Luther's usual habit was to spend an hour in prayer daily before beginning his day. We get it backwards, don't we, when we leave prayer as the last thing before falling asleep at night?

But there is hope for each of us. Jesus is risen and alive in our world and in our hearts. If the power of God could raise Jesus from death to life, isn't it just possible that God can empower us to nourish our relationship with God? I have found myself so encouraged by the experiences you all have shared at various time. Where is God at work in us and in our world? The only way we can know is to be quiet long enough to hear his voice of direction for us. Verse three of "Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!" sums up the life God has in mind for us:

Jesus the vine, we are the branches;
life in the Spirit the fruit of the tree;
heaven to earth, Christ to the people,
gift of the future now flowing to me.

May God's richest blessings be yours in this Easter season and throughout the year.

In Christ, our life,
Pastor Ivy

If you are interested in becoming a member of Bethel, please talk with Pastor Ivy.

You are in my prayers. Each week I will be focusing on a different member and their family. I will let you know when you are especially being prayed for. Pastor Ivy

Going on a trip? Let Pastor Ivy know so we can bless you on your way.



Thanksgiving, Trust and Transformation: the three T's of Stewardship By Glenn Taibl

I was talking about Stewardship and Tom O'Brien suggested it was time to replace the classic three "T's" of Time, Talent and Treasure with categories that would be more helpful in growing stewards. His suggestion was that we would be better served by three new "Stewardship T's" of Thanksgiving, Trust and Transformation. I have revisited the conversation with Tom many times and I believe we are well served by interpreting Time, Talent and Treasure through the lens of Thanksgiving, Trust and Transformation.

Thanksgiving for Time, Talent and Treasure begins with the acknowledgement that all three are God's gift and are not ours to possess. Thanksgiving begins with the notion that God is the subject of the active verbs and we are not. Thanksgiving invites us to take a good look at the time that has been given to us as we search for ways to use time wisely because it is such a precious, God-given gift. Thanksgiving changes the way we do the offering on Sunday as we offer up the time we've spent with our children and grandchildren or the talents we have used in pursuing the gifts of vocation. Thanksgiving can't wait to tell God what we've done with the treasure we have received and thanksgiving invites us to offer it all back to God as gift with a clear understanding of where it came from and what, in God's name, it is intended to do.

Trust is another rich faith-word that defines biblical stewardship. God has given time, talent and treasure as a Trust which we manage with Jesus Christ at the center. The Trust is something that God gives to us again and again and again. It involves all the material we will need to create

community; to heal what is broken and to bring hope where there is despair. We affirm, in faith, that God's promises are true and we can trust them. Trust may even change the way we receive the offering on Sunday. We can say, "Thank you for trusting us with these gifts of time, talent and treasure and we offer ourselves to you, O Lord, because your trust has given us eternal confidence to live in this world you so love."

Transformation is something that doesn't happen accidentally but because in Thanksgiving we have trusted God with our lives and it has changed everything. God has transformed the way we look at time, every precious day, and the way we look at the gifts we have received as talents with the affirmation that no one has been short-changed. Our relationship to our treasure is transformed because we now see it through God's eyes.

Transformation will change the way we do the offering on Sunday. We may honestly believe and trust as true the words of Paul in Romans 12: "Do not be conformed to the world but rather transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may know what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Thanksgiving, Trust and Transformation are three good words for Stewardship.

About the Author

Glenn Taibl served as a Parish Pastor for 31 years and as a Philanthropic Adviser at Luther Seminary for 9 years before joining the Center for Stewardship Leaders staff as Co-Director.

Raymond Noel Gauvin

The Truest Path Always Leads Through Mountains



Bethel Lutheran Church

March 2014 Financial Summary

Beginning Checkbook balance	\$1,532
Beginning Savings balance	\$110
General offering	\$7,940
Designated giving	\$167
Fund raisers- for Bethel	\$456
Total Income	\$8,653
Total Expenses	\$8,951
Net Income	-\$298
Ending checkbook balance	\$1,234
Ending Savings Balance	\$110

Bills due

2013 Synod Benevolence	\$864
Pastor Retirement/disability	\$1,328
IRS quarterly	\$156
Augsburg Fortress	\$75
Copier	\$62

Bills Due \$2,345

Thanks to your generous giving and the pancake breakfast fund raiser we were able to catch up on the bills due and did not have to take any additional funds out of savings in March!

Thank You.

We began the year with the bills paid in full, and have had to draw \$2,600 from the church improvement fun to meet expenses.

Year to date income is down \$2,143 from last year.

Based on our budget we need income of \$8134/month. March is the first month this year where we have met or exceeded the monthly budgeted income.

Peace

Doug Ploetz

Bethel Lutheran Treasurer

Pray First!

- For all service men and women, and their families, especially *Juan Fraustro, Andrew Wright, Casey McCarthy, Mike Copponi, Lee Walden, Josh Canaan, Zachary Russell and Kendra Linn*. For Christ to be made known in our companion synods - *Zimbabwe and Zambia*, and our partner synod - *Central/Southern Illinois Synod*. For the Franciscan community at *Mt. Irenaeus* and the *Burkhart Retreat Center for Life* - retreats in our local area. For our Bishops, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (ELCA) and Marie Jerge Upstate New York Synod), Assistants to the Bishop Dave Preisinger, Mary Johnson, and Dean Daniel Rumpfelt. For the mission congregations in our synod—*Organic Faith* in Amherst and *Todos los Hijos de Dios* in Amsterdam. For the pastors and congregations in our Southwestern Conference and for our congregation council leaders - President *Gary Murray*, Secretary *Jo Kile*, Treasurer *Doug Ploetz*, and members *Ruth Brewer, Rick Giberson, Linda Scott, Jerry Maerten and Bryan Hatch*. For our sister congregation, *Peace Lutheran* and their ministry in Slidell, LA for the ministry of *ELCMA* - Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia. For area ministries: *Genesis House, Portville Community Food Pantry, and Interfaith Caregivers*.



PLEASE SEE BULLETIN BOARD outside the sanctuary for a COMPLETE SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Council Member

Gary Murray
Ruth Brewer
Pastor Ivy
Jo Kile
Doug Ploetz
Jerry Maerten
Linda Scott
Bryan Hatch
Rick Giberson
Gary Murray

Committee Assignment

Council President
Vice President
Worship and Music
Stewardship
Treasurer
Outreach/Evangelism
Advertising
Education
Property
Fellowship

If you are new to our church or if you noticed that your anniversary or birthday never appeared, please let Nannette, June or Pastor Ivy know your information so we can start the new year off with an updated birthday and anniversary list. We sure don't want to miss wishing anyone a Happy Birthday. Thanks.

Notice: Deadline for newsletter articles is the third Sunday of each month. Please send them to me at my home e-mail at Junebug44@frontiernet.net or you can leave written ones in the top basket on the secretary's desk in the office. If you ave questions you can call me at 814-698-2648

May 5th-7th Pastor Ivy and Ray will be away at the ELCMA Assembly in OH. Pastor Marie Meeks will also be away at that time. While away, Pastor Marilyn Hale of the Presbyterian Church and Pastor Clara Wilder will be on call for any pastoral emergencies. Pastor Marilyn's number is 716-933-0503 or at church at 716-933-6426. Pastor Clara's number is 716-904-0204.



Choir practice is held Sunday mornings at 7:45am. All are welcome to join. **No audition necessary.**

We NEED people to sign up as worship servants. We are in need of Lectors, Prayer Leaders, Ushers, Communion assistants and Altar Guild for the summer months in particular. There are sign-up sheets on the table in Fellowship Hall. Please sign up for one or more of these positions as you feel led. Thank you.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY PROJECT - ALUMINUM CAN TAB COLLECTION

At our June 2013 Synod Assembly, the aluminum can tab collection project was very successful. At a recent meeting of the Synod Assembly Planning Team, it was decided that we would again conduct this collection at the 2014 Synod Assembly. This is a project that every congregation in the Synod can participate in. As we did last year, the collection point will be in the area of the registration table. The proceeds from the collection will benefit two (2) established, Synod supported charities, which have yet to be determined. The Synod Assembly Planning Team will make an announcement as to the charities chosen in the near future.



Start your collection project now and bring the collected tabs to Synod Assembly.



STOP, CARE, ACT FOR THE HUNGRY

The 2014 Synod Hunger Campaign invites our congregations to follow the example of the Good Samaritan.

STOP: Consider hunger needs at home, across the country and around the world. Use the ELCA Hunger Packets.

CARE: Raise awareness in your congregation of the needs of you local food banks and pantries. Learn about the many places our Hunger Dollars make a difference.

ACT: Each congregation in the Synod is challenged to raise at least \$400 for the Hunger Campaign and bring it to the assembly.



Women of the ELCA

Southwestern Conference

presents

“PRAISE GOD IN THE DANCE”

Spring Assembly Gathering

at

Zion Lutheran Church

45 Falconer Street, Frewsburg, New York 14738

Saturday, May 31, 2014

Program Presentation

The Rev. Rebecca Ehrlich

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Frewsburg

Registration & Fellowship – 9:00 AM

Brunch – 9:30 AM

Cost: \$5.00

RSVP Deadline: Friday, May 23, 2014

Call the Zion Church Office: 569-5495

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**COLLECTING BABY CARE KITS FOR LUTHERAN  
WORLD RELIEF**

**- ITEMS INCLUDE –**

2 lightweight cotton T-shirts (no Onesies<sup>®</sup>); 2 long or short-sleeved gowns or sleepers (no feet)

2 receiving blankets - medium weight; 1 sweater or sweatshirt with hood or include cap

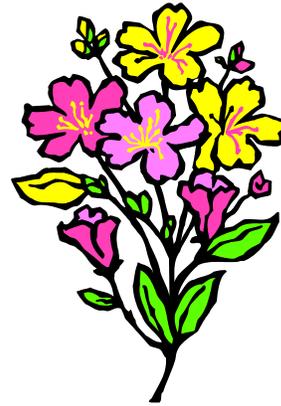
2 pairs of socks; one dark-colored hand towel; 2 bath-sized bars of gentle soap in original wrappers

4 cloth diapers (flat-fold preferred); 2 diaper pins or large safety pins

**\*\*\*Wrap items in one of the receiving blankets and secure with diaper pins\*\*\***



# May 2014



## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Acolyte.....*Kassie Lopes, Carley Keenan*  
.....*Dakota Brewer*.....

### Communion Assistants:

(4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>).....*Ariel Kile*  
(4<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>).....*June Murray*  
(11<sup>th</sup>).....*Nannette Giberson*  
(18<sup>th</sup>).....*Caroline Miller*  
.....*Marie Franquet*

### Lectors:

(4<sup>th</sup>).....*Bev Robinson*  
(11<sup>th</sup>).....*Doug Ploetz*  
(18<sup>th</sup>).....*Bev Robinson*  
(25<sup>th</sup>).....*Dawn Campbell*

### Prayer Leaders:

(4<sup>th</sup>).....*Caroline Miller*  
(11<sup>th</sup>).....*Judy Graves*  
(18<sup>th</sup>).....*Doug Ploetz*  
(25<sup>th</sup>).....*Connie Smith-Matteson*

Ushers.....*Bill Graves*

Altar Guild.....*Terri Ploetz*

Bread Bakers .....*Ron Kile*

### Happy Birthday to:

3—Bill Graves  
5—Jessianne Doty  
10—Abigail Benson  
12—Nathan Gabler  
15—Mariah Shepard  
16—Casey Baughman  
17—Sarah Linn, Rick Chapman  
18—Don Linn  
19—Erin Ploetz Hall  
23—Tom Ploetz  
24—Dakota Brewer  
25—Kellie Bush  
27—Parker Keenan  
30—Jon Giberson

### Happy Anniversary to:

5—Robert & Barbara MacPherson

**BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH CALENDAR - MAY 2014**

Sunday, May 4

***THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER***

7:45am-Choir rehearsal

9:00am- Worship with Fellowship following

10:30am- Sunday school and Confirmation class

11:00am- No Adult Bible Study today. Pastor filling in at Bethany

Monday, May 5

Pastor Ivy's Day Off

Wednesday, May 7

6:00pm - No Bible Study, Pastor in Ohio at ELCMA Assembly

Thursday, May 8

7:00pm- Council Meeting

Saturday, May 10

4:30pm - Women of the Church Banquet

Sunday, May 11

***FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER***

7:45am- Choir rehearsal

9:00am - Worship with Fellowship following

10:30am - Sunday school and Confirmation Class

11:00am -No Bible Study, Pastor filling in at Bethany

Monday, May 12

Pastor Ivy's Day Off

Tuesday, May 13

3:00pm - Worship and Music Committee

Wednesday, May 14

6:00pm - Bible Study

Sunday, May 18

***FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER***

7:45am-Choir rehearsal

9:00am- Worship with Fellowship following (Guest preacher  
Pastor Dan Rumfelt)

10:30am - Sunday school and Confirmation class

11:00am - Adult Bible Study

Monday, May 19

Pastor Ivy's Day Off

Tuesday, May 20

3:00pm - Christian Education Committee

Tuesday, May 20

6:00pm - Stewardship Committee meeting

Wednesday, May 21

6:00pm - Bible Study

Sunday, May 25

***SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER***

7:45am - Choir rehearsal

9:00am - Worship with Fellowship time following.

10:30am - Sunday school and Confirmation Class

11:00 am- Adult Bible study

Monday, May 26

Pastor Ivy's Day Off

Wednesday, May 28

6:00pm -Bible Study

Thursday, May 29

7:00pm - Ascension Day Service

# The Resume of Jesus Christ

Address: Ephesians 1:20

Phone: Romans 10:13

Website: The Bible

Keywords: Christ, Lord, Savior and Jesus

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## **Objective**

My name is Jesus -The Christ. Many call Me Lord! I've sent you My resume because I'm seeking the top management position in your heart. Please consider My accomplishments as set forth in My resume.

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## **Qualifications**

I founded the earth and established the heavens (See Proverbs 3:19).

I formed man from the dust of the ground

(See Genesis 2:7).

I breathed into man the breath of life

(See Genesis 2:7).

I redeemed man from the curse of the law

(See Galatians3:13).

The blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant comes upon your life through Me (See Galatians 3:14).

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## **Occupational Background**

I've only had one employer (See Luke 2:49 ).

I've never been tardy, absent, disobedient, slothful or disrespectful.

My employer has nothing but rave reviews for Me (See Matthew 3:15 -17).

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## **Skills Work Experiences**

Some of my skills and work experiences include: empowering the poor to be poor no more, healing the brokenhearted, setting the captives free, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and setting at liberty them that are bruised (See Luke 4:18).

I am a Wonderful Counselor (See Isaiah 9:6). People who listen to Me shall dwell safely and shall not fear evil

(See Proverbs 1:33).

Most importantly, I have the authority, ability and power to cleanse you of your sins

(See I John 1:7-9).

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## **Educational Background**

I encompass the entire breadth and length of knowledge, wisdom and understanding

(See Proverbs 2:6).

In Me, are hid all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (See Colossians 2:3).

My Word is so powerful; it has been described as being a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (See Psalms 119:105).

I can even tell you all of the secrets of your heart (See Psalms 44:21).

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## **Major Accomplishments**

I was an active participant in the greatest Summit Meeting of all times (See Genesis 1:26 ).

I laid down My life so that you may live

(See II Corinthians5:15 ).

I defeated the arch enemy of God and mankind and made a show of them openly

(See Colossians 2:15 ).

I've miraculously fed the poor, healed the sick and raised the dead!

There are many more major accomplishments, too many to mention here. You can read them on My website, which is located at: [www](http://www)

the BIBLE. You don't need an Internet connection or computer to access My website.

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### **References**

Believers and followers worldwide will testify to My divine healing, salvation, deliverance, miracles, restoration and supernatural guidance.

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### **In Summation**

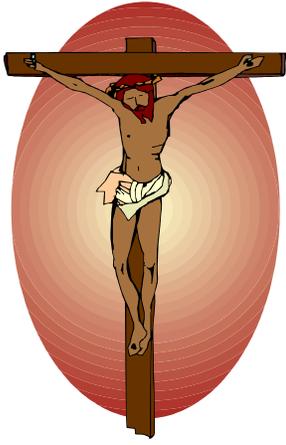
Now, that you've read My resume, I'm confident that I'm the only candidate uniquely qualified to fill this vital position in

Your heart. In summation, I will properly direct your paths (See Proverbs 3:5-6) and lead you into everlasting life (See John 6:47). When can I start? Time is of the essence (See Hebrews 3:15).



A very successful pancake breakfast thanks to the entire Bethel Family





## Journeying with Jesus' body

by [Jessica Bratt](#)

[Mark 15:40-47](#)

I looked around the room. I was in the company of a few hundred other clergy, chaplains, hospice workers, funeral directors and mortuary school students -- all gathered to hear Tom Long and Thomas Lynch speak on [“The Good Death, Good Grief, Good Funerals.”](#)

Long, a theologian, and Lynch, a writer and undertaker, invited us to reflect with them on the shifts taking place in how Americans handle their dead. Not death -- the dead. Because, as they explained, the human species deals with the idea of death by dealing with the thing itself: the dead person. What we do with one who has died speaks volumes about how we understand death in our culture.

Throughout history, humans have recognized that the body of one who dies can no longer remain among the living. It must be moved in some way and to some resting place. This basic reality is a constant across all societies, and how it unfolds in any particular place or time is never perfunctory.

The basic metaphor, Lynch and Long suggested, is that a community accompanies a sacred person on a journey from the land of the living to the great

mystery. We process the death by processing with the body from one place to another; in moving it, we are moved. (Picture, for instance, the processional of a presidential casket in Washington, D.C.)

This metaphor is in jeopardy, they contend, for a number of reasons: the breakdown of community, at least as it was understood in past centuries; the transience of our lives and scattered nature of our roots; the gradual erosion of our culture's adherence to larger narratives, religious or otherwise sacred.

Honoring the dead seems to have less and less to do with their place within a community or narrative of shared beliefs and values and more to do with their individual hobbies and interests. “We used to bury Lutherans and Catholics,” Lynch noted. “Now we bury bowlers and golfers.” Call it secularism or whatever you want, but the growing absence of living by a sacred narrative, in a group and a story that transcends one's own, can leave people at a loss to interpret the death of their loved ones.

It makes me think of the phone call I had recently from the mother whose infant died several months ago. I was the chaplain who performed the baptism. Her husband was Christian, and she herself had absolutely no religious background, but she was starting to think she wanted to have herself and her other children baptized, because she wanted to make sure they would all be together someday. “Do you know someone who could do that for me?” she asked.

I was struck by whatever was stirring deeply within her, but also compelled to have a bigger conversation about community, sacrament and so on, because her longings are about the here and now, not just about the hereafter.

There is no quick fix for healing anyone's grief, but it was heart-wrenching to listen to someone who was aching for some language, some larger framework, some bigger story through which her grief might have meaning. Some of her child's ashes are contained in a pendant on a necklace she wears, but her sorrow was uncontained when she asked me, “Will I see my child again?”

As our culture begins to divest itself of sacred narratives, Long said, we start doubting that the

dead are really going anywhere, and we put our energy into venerating the next-best sacred story -- the biography of the deceased.

On top of this, our cultural aversion to aging and death leads us to favor practices that focus less on the death that has occurred and more on the task of helping the bereaved move on. More interested in therapeutic healing than in redemption or salvation, we work hard to celebrate the deceased's life but leave little space to sit communally with the darkness of grief and loss.

The ages-old metaphor of moving the dead from one place and realm to another seems to be taking a back seat to the emerging metaphor in which we busy ourselves with moving as swiftly as possible from sorrow to stability. Perhaps, Lynch says, this is why bodies and remains are increasingly unwelcome at their own funerals; they impede the mourners' trajectory toward stability.

The "sacred community theater," as Long called it, in which we enact cultural scripts to move the dead in stages from the land of the living to their final resting place, is losing traction as we forgo the social customs that provide a script for the bereaved and that teach us why we do what we do when someone has died. The schedules and demands of the living do not yield to the dead as they used to. But it's time, Lynch says, that we think about our obligations to the dead beyond just memorializing them.

What is at stake in addressing all this? What does it matter to society that we figure this out? It matters because a society that cares honorably and tenderly for the bodies of the dead is a society that can care honorably and tenderly for the bodies of the living.

When Long suggested this, I immediately thought of the funeral director who was sitting next to me, who volunteers his time and resources to help [The Lazarus Program](#), a ministry of St. Anthony Shrine in downtown Boston committed to giving the homeless and destitute a dignified burial and resting place. Yes indeed, that ministry to the dead does speak volumes to a society that can be all too cavalier about what happens to the living bodies of the most vulnerable.

I thought, too, of my own gut reactions when I've heard staff at hospitals where I have worked call a chaplain because there's an "expired patient." It troubles me that the standard practice of our health care system leaves so little room to grapple with death.

It's avoided either because we don't have time for it or because it's such an affront to the hubris of modern Western medicine. And though I can certainly empathize with the need to have emotional boundaries if one's work with the very ill is to be sustainable, at the same time I can't help but think that a healthier relationship to death could only enhance our capacity to carry out our service to the living with proper humility and gravitas.

Long and Lynch pointed out that we don't go as far with our bodies as we used to. We're less likely to even have them at the service, less likely to stay at the cemetery until the casket is lowered -- let alone pick up a shovel ourselves -- and almost entirely unlikely to actually go to a crematorium and witness the remains enter a final purification by fire.

I remember vividly an extreme example of this -- a woman I met in an emergency room whose husband, not yet dead two hours, had decided decades earlier to donate his body to the local medical school. "All right," I explained, "ask the funeral home to bring his body there after whatever arrangements you have." "No, no," she said, "we're not doing a viewing or a service or anything. No funeral home. Just have the medical school take him from here." She motioned to the bag of clothes he had come in wearing, stating flatly that she'd be leaving those behind, too.

"We don't really know how to deal with death, you know. You're supposed to teach us how to do this," she laughed nervously. "I bet you hear that all the time." Her quick goodbye was not the norm, of course, but the impulse behind it probably wasn't that foreign from what a lot of people enact when they, in one way or another, move swiftly to distance themselves from the physical realities of death, in the hopes that the "getting over it" process will also be swifter.

I think about the funeral director I worked with this past weekend when I conducted services for a very young child. "These situations are always the

hardest for me,” he said. Understandably. For me, too. But then he went on to say that another one of the hardest parts of his work is when people want a cremation and nothing else -- no viewing, no service, no opportunity for people to come and say goodbye and simply be together in their loss.

It’s hard for him, he said, because he’s found that people tend to experience a sort of buyer’s remorse, wishing they had marked the death with something communal, something meaningful. “They can get stuck in their grief without it,” he said. “It’s hard for me to convince them on the front end, because people will think I’m just trying to sell them my services. But there’s a reason we do those things. People need that.”

All this leads me to consider how, undoubtedly, Christians are moved throughout Holy Week by moving with Christ through his final days. Isn’t that why we are drawn toward passion plays, stations of the cross, and the like?

We enact the story of the one who is approaching death, seeking to understand his death by mining the meaning in donkeys and palm branches, washing one another’s feet, breaking bread and sharing the cup, solemnly surveying the wondrous, horrific cross and waiting for the dawn of Easter morning to make sense of all of it.

Journeying with Jesus’ body, we see him inviting his followers to deal with death by dealing with the dead one. After all, Jesus eventually engages the questioning Thomas not with a dialogue on atonement theory but with a simple order: “Put your hands in my flesh.”

Consider too the significance of how and where we follow Christ’s body when all is said and done, whether we “go the distance” -- not theologically but viscerally. Most of our hymns, for instance, focus on the theological significance of the crucifixion and resurrection. One popular hymn that stands out starkly is “Were You There.” In simple and repetitive language, we witness the scenes that simply cause us to “tremble, tremble, tremble.”

Were you there  
... when they crucified my Lord?  
... when they nailed him to the tree?

... when they laid him in the tomb?  
... when God raised him from the tomb?

The hymn is an African-American spiritual dating from at least the Civil War era, yet another song that gave spiritual voice to a people’s unspeakable pain and yearning for freedom and justice. The verses are a holy procession with Christ’s body -- words like “tree” no doubt summoning images of lynchings that its first hearers knew all too well. The two other verses in the oral tradition likewise evoke raw depictions of the violence and darkness of death: “Were you there when they pierced him in the side? Were you there when the sun refused to shine?”

It is no coincidence, I believe, that such a hymn arose out of the people in American history who understood most fully the horror of bodies beaten and bloodied, the unjust betrayal of the innocent with a sum of coins, and society’s skewed measure of a living body’s worth and a dead body’s worthlessness.

In the Gospel accounts, it is the women, Mary Magdalene and Jesus’ mother Mary, who do go the distance, staying with Jesus’ body long after the others have fled in the night, denied before daybreak or despaired at the cross. Is it any wonder, then, that the risen Christ first appears to these ones, to the long-suffering women who exposed themselves most fully to death’s objective presence, to the bitter reality of life without their beloved. It is they who will soonest behold death’s defeat and the triumph of new life.

Contemporary Christianity hasn’t done all that much to mine the meaning of Holy Saturday, perhaps because it doesn’t really have any “events” to enact, or perhaps because we don’t have a sense of what there is for believers to “get” out of it, as we “get” atonement from Good Friday, and “get” the promise of resurrection and life eternal from Easter.

Maybe we fear it would just be too depressing to really give Holy Saturday its due. Just revisiting the crucifixion itself leaves us sufficiently eager for Easter morning’s new verdict on death. And commercial culture would rather we skip over death and go right to new life altogether, plying us with eggs and chicks and bunnies and flowers before the

snow has even melted enough to reveal the barrenness of the wintry terrain.

But there is a blessing to be gained, I think, in immersing ourselves in the reality of Holy Saturday -- that prolonged hyphen between the “already” and the “not yet.” It can affirm some of our life’s most wrenching experiences, the seasons that can feel interminable when we’re in their throes, waiting for the clutches of death to release their chokehold, dwelling in the shadows of what truly feels like a meaningless void.

It can shape us into deeper solidarity with so many in the world for whom much of life is experienced as a Holy Saturday, who wait for some light to appear in the midst of despair-inducing circumstances. It puts us more deeply in touch with the sheer urgency of our need for resurrection. Can we really comprehend or appreciate resurrection if we cannot stomach the full reality of death?

In the darkness of Saturday, we experience what fundamentally feels like God-forsakenness, while at the same time we wait in eager hope.

Saturday lends a sacredness to that bitter tension we are all too familiar with, to the agonizing waiting for some new creation when it truly feels like “it is finished.” It is the time during which God is at work on our wounds, transforming them like Christ’s from the mark of death’s claim into the scars that testify to death’s defeat and life’s triumph. It seems to me that many today are hungering for a narrative that gives Saturday its due before Easter arrives.

The narrative of Holy Week has something to offer to those who wander, having lost their way on the procession from life to death, too frightened to face the reality of death for fear that their intense grief may be purposeless or, worse yet, endless.

This Easter, may we proclaim anew, in word and in deed, that our lives are hidden with God in the one who was dead and buried and who has risen. The one who has gone before us on that fateful departure from the land of the living has blazed a new trail -- for our sake -- to new life in, with and through the living God.





You may or may not start your day with exercise, or a hot cup of coffee, but here are seven things you can wrap your faith around as you begin your day...

**Love greeted you when you opened your eyes.**

*To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning.*

[Psalm 92:2 \(NKJV\)](#)

**Your day belongs to the Lord.**

*My times are in Your hand. [Psalm 31:15 NKJV](#)*

**Your theme song for the day is "Rejoice".**

*This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. [Psalm 118:24 NKJV](#)*

**Today is a fresh start in His mercies.**

*The reason I can {still} find hope is that I keep this one thing in mind: the Lord's mercy...His compassion is never limited. It is new every morning. His faithfulness is great. [Ecclesiastes 3:21-23 GW](#)*

**You're the best dressed person in town.**

*He has dressed me in the clothes of salvation. He has wrapped me in the robe of righteousness.*

[Isaiah 61:10 GW](#)

**This is the day to live free from the cares of tomorrow.**

*So don't ever worry about tomorrow. [Matthew 6:34 GW](#)*

**Carry hope in your heart all through the day.**

*Be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off. [Proverbs 23:17-18 NKJV](#)*

**P.S. At the end of the day, His faithfulness will be there to tuck you in at night.**

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High...And **Your faithfulness every night.** Psalm 92:1-2 NKJV*

# EASTER AT BETHEL –

WONDERFUL SERVICE AND A GREAT BREAKFAST FOLLOWING.





# HYMN HISTORY

## The Old Rugged Cross

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

George Beverly Shea recalls seeing George Bennard, author of this hymn, many times at Winona Lake Bible Conference in Indiana. “Though a preacher—a good one—he would sometimes sing,” wrote Mr. Shea. “His voice was not trained or out of the ordinary, but he had great feeling and expression and could really put over any hymn. I remember how moved I was the first time I heard him sing his own ‘The Old Rugged Cross....’ What a distinguished looking man---slight of build, short, with glasses, the most memorable thing about him was his long, white hair.”

George Bennard was born in Youngstown, Ohio, shortly after the end of the Civil War. His father, a coal miner, moved the family to Iowa, and there George came to Christ through the ministry of the Salvation Army. He felt impressed to train for the ministry, but his plans were disrupted when his father’s death left him responsible for his mother and sisters. He was sixteen years old. Instead of theological school, he worked by day and devoted his spare time to books.

Eventually George’s obligations lessened, and he was able to move to Chicago, marry, and begin in ministry with the Salvation Army. Later he was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal Church and became a traveling evangelist.

On one occasion, after a difficult season of ministry, George realized he needed to better understand the power of the Cross of Christ. He later said, “I was praying for a full understanding of the Cross. . . I read and studied and prayed. . . The Christ of the Cross became more than a symbol. . . It was like seeing John 3:16 leave the printed page, take form, and act out the meaning of redemption. While watching this scene with my mind’s eye, the theme of the song came to me.

It took several months for the words to formulate in his mind. As he preached through the Midwest, George would carry the words with him, working on them, polishing them, and sometimes singing them in his meetings. It always struck a chord with his audiences.

At least, his hymn finished, George went to the home of his friends, Rev. and Mr. L. O. Boswick, and sang it for them. After the last note, he looked at them and asked, “Will it do?”

The Boswicks were so moved that they helped pay the fees to have it printed, and it soon began appearing in hymnbooks across America.

*Taken from “Then Sings My Soul” by Robert J. Morgan*





## SPAGHETTI DINNER



It's been a really busy time here at Bethel with the Pancake Breakfast, the Easter Season and most recently the Spaghetti dinner. My thanks to everyone who helped in any way to make the spaghetti dinner possible. It is a lot of work but rewarding when we can take the opportunity to use the time to fellowship together and be successful in helping further the work of Gods church.

We had a ton of bake goods donated to sell, thanks to all the wonderful Bethel Bakers. We made \$311.75 on the bake sale. All the salad dressings, the rolls and the cold drinks were donated for the dinner so our only expense was the rest of the food and the plates etc. We took in \$657.00 and our expenses were \$258.28 leaving a profit of \$398.72 for the dinner. The total for the night was \$710.47. This was not quite as much as I had hoped but then again every little bit helps. Thanks again to all the volunteers who so graciously helped pull this together. Below are just a few pictures showing how the evening went.

Gary



Awaiting instructions.

Why am I out here all alone??



Our Leader speaks!!



Look at all these goodies!!!



Where are all the hungry people?



This stuff is pretty good!!



Bake sales are fun!!!



I'm rather bored at the moment.



Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!!



Wow!! Look at that plate, who could eat all that??



And even more decisions.



Oh Yeh, now we know!!!



Is our money really safe??



Once again, we will be singing your favorite hymns in the months of June, July and August. Just fill out this form and return it to Pastor Ivy.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



Sometimes we all forget that things that we consider bad, happen for a better reason!!

This made my day.

Me: *God, can I ask you a question?*

**God:** *Sure.*

Me: *Promise you won't get mad.*

**God:** *I promise.*

Me: *Why did you let so much stuff happen to me today?*

**God:** *What do you mean?*

Me: *Well, I woke up late.*

**God:** *Yes.*

Me: *My car took forever to start.*

**God:** *Okay.*

Me: *At lunch they made my sandwich wrong and I had to wait.*

**God:** *Huummm.*

Me: *On the way home, my phone went dead, just as I picked up a call.*

**God:** *All right.*

Me: *And on top of it all, when I got home I just wanted to soak my feet in my new foot massager and relax, but it wouldn't work!!! Nothing went right today! Why did you do that?*

**God:** *Let me see, the Death Angel was at your bed this morning and I had to send one of the other angels to battle him for your life. I let you sleep through that.*

Me: *(humbled): OH...*

**God:** *I didn't let your car start because there was a drunk driver on your route that would have hit you if you were on the road.*

Me: (ashamed)

**God:** *The first person who made your sandwich today was sick and I didn't want you to catch what they have, I knew you couldn't afford to miss work.*

Me: (embarrassed): Ok...

**God:** *Your phone went dead because the person that was calling was going to give false information, I didn't even let you talk to them so you would be covered.*

Me: (softly) I see God.

**God:** *Oh and that foot massager, it had a shortage that was going to throw out all of the power in your house tonight. I didn't think you wanted to be in the dark.*

Me: I'm sorry God.

**God:** *Don't be sorry, just learn to trust me.....in all things, the good and the bad.*

Me: I will trust you.

**God:** *And don't doubt that my plan for your day is always better than your plan.*

Me: I won't God. And let me just tell you God, thank you for everything today.

**God:** *You're welcome child. It was just another day being your God, and I love looking after my children.*