



The **St. John Eagle**

Celebrating more than 100 years, 1904 - 2008"

Member Congregation of the ELCA and LCMC



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St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

Ellsworth Road at King Street

Peabody, Massachusetts 01960

Church Tel: (978) 531-1731

Rev. Raymond H. Phyles Tel: (978) 531-2264

Internet: <http://www.stjohnpeabody.org>

From the Pastor's Pen Macintosh

We are all aware that there is more to the church of Jesus Christ than just our local congregation. As members of the larger church, we should, therefore, keep in touch from time to time with what is going on in the church regionally, nationally, and internationally. I have used this forum on occasion to keep you informed of some movements within the broader church and would like to do so again with this edition of the Pastor's Mac. And yet I hesitate to do so, for fear that some would tune it out for lack of interest.

Nevertheless, believing that we all should be more aware of issues being discussed beyond our local parish, I invite your interest in a particularly pertinent article that I came across recently that addresses, from a more international perspective, one of the most fundamental issues we members of the church need to be concerned about. The article "Did We Preach a False Gospel?" was written by Dr. Luther Scwabe, a retired pastor and theologian of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. What follows is an edited and abridged version of Dr. Schwabe's article.

"Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is receiving a 'faith transplant.' The new set of beliefs, which is now inserted into our church, is incompatible with the faith we held at the time of the merger in 1986 (the ELCA was formed through a similar merger in 1988) and that we still 'officially' hold today.

We cannot with integrity confess the faith of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds and, at the same time, allow and even promote the teachings of modern day 'progressive' theologians who deny Jesus' divinity and that He rose from the dead. One of those 'faiths' preaches a false gospel. On behalf of my generation of pastors I wrote a letter Sept. 6, 2007, and asked our bishops, 'Did we preach a false Gospel?' That question was never answered. I think I know why.

Is our church now accepting the new theology that contradicts our traditional Lutheran faith? Has our church succumbed to a left-brainish theology that not only cannot grasp that Jesus is indeed the Word of God but also that Scriptures are the true Word of God? Have we jumped on the bandwagon delighting to find faults in Scriptures? Was Jesus misguided in what He believed himself to be? We did not preach a false Gospel when we proclaimed the Bible is the Word of God. Our constitution does not

wrongly state, ‘This church confesses the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God’ (Article II).

Our ELCIC is in a dilemma. How can we maintain the structure of our church body while changing the heart if it? How do we manage a theological paradigm shift that contradicts what we previously have confessed to believe? How do we prevent the many faithful members of our ELCIC from becoming alarmed and very upset once they find out what is going on? How do we prevent a mass exodus of members and congregations?

It seems to me that our church has decided on a strategy of gradual change. The first step is to introduce a new policy. Such policy will be designed to lay the groundwork by incorporating the new revisionist theology. It will make every effort to find some statements (although out of context) in our Lutheran Confessions that open the door for new interpretations of Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The hoped-for outcome will be that the vast majority of our members and congregations will tolerate such changes.

Strategists in our church seem to hope that traditional, good Lutheran theology is not a priority in many congregations and that our people are willing to change anything. A sociological analysis of our congregations may reveal that the true glue that holds many of our congregations together is not theological but sociological. Many of our members go to church to feel good. They are happy to see their friends on Sunday. Our members are not that interested in traditional Lutheran theology as long as they have a pastor who has good social skills and is friendly. Most members will rather tolerate such a move toward revisionist theology than cause their congregation to be upset. Strategists are banking on our members’ tolerating such a move toward revisionist theology as long as it can be supported with some arguments, even if it leads to change away from the faith of generations before us.

There still remains one nagging problem that our church has to deal with. What are we to do with that pesky Article II on ‘Confession of Faith’ in our constitution? Will the gradual change being nurtured in the church lead eventually to requiring a new constitution and thus allowing our church to get rid of Article II? Please, let us not let that happen.”

Contrary to the implications of one American presidential candidate, not all change is good. Certainly, the kinds of change Dr. Schwabe has written about are taking place not only in Canada, but in other countries and in other denominations as well, and are clearly not conducive to the understanding and preservation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Schwabe issues a warning to local congregations against quietly acquiescing to the subtle changes happening at national and synodical levels in the larger church. Singly, any congregation can do little to counter such changes, except to continue to witness and serve in the received faith of Scripture, the creeds, and, for us Lutherans, the Augsburg Confession. May we at St. John not be diverted from this critical focus.

A Changing of the Guard

With this edition of *The Eagle*, Steve Gemma takes over from Rick Cormier in writing and editing our newsletter. We all extend our sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Rick for his faithful work on the newsletter for the past ten years. The newsletter is a big job, and Rick has done it very well. We also thank Steve for his willingness to take on the same big job. And, too, we sincerely appreciate Judy Othote’s many contributions in typing, collating, and mailing the newsletter, assisting Rick in the past and now Steve with this edition and many more to come.

Serving St. John with our Time and Talents

During September

Ushers

Ralph Comeau
Becky Comeau

Lay Assistant

9/7 Steve Gemma
9/14 Fred Faust
9/21 Angie Cornwell
9/28 Sue Reed

Custodial

9/7 Dancewicz
9/14 Reed
9/21 Phyles
9/28 Berg/Grayson/Othote

Lector

9/7 Susan Dancewicz
9/14 Fred Faust
9/21 Fred Faust
9/28 Phil/Sue Reed

Childcare

9/7 Kristin & Kira
9/14 Chip & Shannon
9/21 Heather Phyles
9/28 Rick & Cheryl

Coffee Hour

9/7 Shannon & Angie
9/14 Lydia
9/21 Mary & Bert
9/28 Carole & Linda

During October

Ushers

Fred Faust
Tom Knowlton

Lay Assistant

10/5 Linda Phyles
10/12 Steve Gemma
10/19 Fred Faust
10/26 Angie Cornwell

Custodial

10/5 Gemma
10/12 Valletti/Carson
10/19 Dancewicz
10/26 Reed

Lector

10/5 Phil/Sue Reed
10/12 Tom Knowlton
10/19 Tom Knowlton
10/26 Judy Othote

Childcare

10/5 Kristin & Kira
10/12 Chip & Shannon
10/19 Heather Phyles
10/26 Rick & Cheryl

Coffee Hour

10/5 Linda & Susan
10/12 Linda & Becky
10/19 Judy & Cheryl
10/26 Mary & Jack Plumb

During November

Ushers

Carole Grayson
Judy Othote

Lay Assistant

11/2 Sue Reed
11/9 Linda Phyles
11/16 Steve Gemma
11/23 Fred Faust
11/30 Angie Cornwell

Custodial

11/2 Phyles
11/9 Berg/Grayson/Othote
11/16 Gemma
11/23 Valletti/Carson
11/30 Dancewicz

Lector

11/2 Judy Othote
11/9 Linda Phyles
11/16 Linda Phyles
11/23 Susan Dancewicz
11/30 Susan Dancewicz

Childcare

11/2 Kristin & Kira
11/9 Chip & Shannon
11/16 Heather Phyles
11/23 Rick & Cheryl
11/30 Kristin & Kira

Coffee Hour

11/2 Shannon & Angie
11/9 Lydia
11/16 Mary & Bert
11/23 Linda & Susan
11/30 Judy & Cheryl

Please ask someone to fill in for you if you are unable to make it when you are scheduled. Phone numbers can be found in the church directory.

God and Church

Three of our young people, Timothy Caves, John Caves, and Thomas Winsor, will be beginning the “God and Church” program this fall. This program is sanctioned by a number of Protestant denominations, including Lutheran, and is officially recognized by the Boy Scouts of America, Camp Fire USA, Girl Scouts of the USA and the American Heritage Girls as the religious awards program for youth in our church and youth in those organizations.

The three participants will have the opportunity to work with the Pastor and Steve Gemma as they study the church's structures and objectives and participate in service projects that will give them a better understanding of the mission of the church. The program will lead Tim, John, and Thomas on a faith journey with three parts: meeting Jesus, worshiping God, and witnessing and ministering for Christ. They will create either a video or a photo album to share what they have learned on their faith journeys. We wish them godspeed as they begin this challenging program.

Your Vote is Important

We are in the final weeks of a very long presidential campaign. In addition to voting for our next president, we will also be able to vote for important offices at the federal, state, and local levels. As Christians, we are called to be faithful to the witness of our Lord, including in the voting booth. Therefore, we urge every eligible voter to vote, but you must be registered in order to be eligible.

If you are not registered, the last day to register before the primary election is Wednesday, August 27th, and the final date to register for the November general election is October 15th. Both elections are equally important, with the primary election determining which candidates will be on the ballot, and the general election electing them.

The issues, both federal and state, are especially critical in this election. Please be sure to study the candidates and the issues, then fulfill your civic duty and vote your conscience.

Thrivent

Thrivent is sponsoring **five** Thrivent Build Worldwide trips to Biloxi, MS this fall. These trips are similar to Habitat for Humanity. The dates are 9/22 - 9/27, 2 trips 9/29 - 10/4 and 2 trips 10/13 – 10/17. The cost for Thrivent members is \$249.00 and non-members \$349.00. This includes room and board but **does not** include airfare. The groups will be working on one of forty homes being built. For more information please see the bulletin board in the undercroft or speak with Rick Cormier.

St. John News and Notes

We ask for your prayer and concern for these members and friends of St. John:

Ellen Hepburn
Dorothy Fender

Sylvia Moynihan

David Fredrickson

We thank Tom Knowlton for installing the new hand rails at the top of the stairs leading up from the undercroft. The rails will help get over that last step coming into the nave. We also thank Linda Berg for the donation of a new vacuum cleaner for the church.

Following the service on June 22nd, a brief Special Congregational Meeting was held. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the expenditure of funds to for the painting of the exposed exterior wood surfaces of the church building. In addition, it was agreed that the blue offering envelopes would be used to receive funds to pay for this additional cost as well as the recent work done on the steeple. The painting work is scheduled to commence this fall.

Altar flowers are being supplied by Evans Florists. The price is \$30.00 per Sunday.

If you wish to contribute to relief efforts following the recent National disasters, please place your contribution in a clearly marked envelope on an offering plate. Thrivent Financial will match \$1.00 for every \$2.00 contributed.

Our volunteer lists need more volunteers! Please consider serving your church as lay assistant, lector, a cleaner, coffee hour host, usher, the list could go on and on! If you have any questions, suggestions or ideas in this regard, please speak with Pastor, Linda Phyles or Steve Gemma.

Please Recycle

In an effort to do our part to help with the environment, we ask those that do not take home their weekly church bulletins to recycle them in the recycle bin located downstairs. In addition to used bulletins, any clean paper at the church should be recycled. Every little bit helps toward a greener environment.

Past Happenings

Our annual Church Picnic was held Sunday, June 8th, at Camp Naumkeag in Salem. An informal worship service was held at 10:30 a.m. followed by wonderful food, fellowship and group games. Thank you to all who made this day enjoyable.

We would like to give a sincere thank you to Tom Knowlton and Steve Gemma for filling in for Pastor while he was away. A lot of preparation goes into providing the message. Thank you for your contributions to our ministry. Your leadership is genuinely appreciated.

We would also like to thank Angie Cornwell and Susan Danczewicz for their organ accompaniment while Margaret Knowlton was on vacation this summer. We appreciate the musical talent they bring to our ministry.

In Memory

Mary Danczewicz passed away peacefully at the Kaplan Family Hospice House in Danvers on Tuesday, August 26th. A funeral was held from the Bisbee-Porcella Funeral Home located in Saugus, on Saturday, August 30th followed by a funeral Mass in Blessed Sacrament Church also in Saugus. Donations in her memory may be made to the Hospice of the North Shore, 75 Sylvan St., Suite B-102, Danvers, MA 01923.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, September 7th, will be the start of Sunday School classes. Sunday School classes will be from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Please remember to bring your completed registration forms to the first class. We also remind our members and friends of the congregation to conclude the coffee hour accordingly so that classes can begin and end on time. Thank you for your consideration and understanding in this matter.

The next meals St. John will serve at Haven From Hunger are Tuesday, September 9th and Tuesday, November 11th. Please help supply the menu to be posted downstairs and/or server the meal as you are able.

Our Sunday School teachers will be installed on Sunday, September 14th. WELCA will be holding a meeting after that service. Please plan to attend.

The Chancel Choir will begin practicing on Saturday, September 20th, at 9:30 a.m. All new voices are welcome. The choir will be back to lend their musical leadership to our worship service on Sunday, September 28th.

The Annual Fall Kick-off will be held Saturday, September 27th, at 6:00 p.m. The evening will begin with a pot-luck supper followed by a fun program that will be announced. The Annual Fall Cleanup Day will also be held Saturday, September 27th at 10:30 a.m. The shrubbery needs to be trimmed and other areas cleaned. The more the hands, the lighter the work.

The Annual Fall Fair will be Saturday, November 1st from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Please bring all goods to be sold to the church no later than Sunday, October 26th. Please be aware, a \$10 deposit will be required for large items. Contributions will be taken for the fruit baskets.

Our new cross will be dedicated on All Saints Sunday, November 2nd during service. Please plan to attend.

Our Annual Advent Workshop will be held on Sunday, November 30th at 2:00 p.m.