

Happenings At Hope

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Worship & Study

Bible Class & Sunday School
9:30am

The Divine Service
10:30am

Skype Bible Study
Thursdays at 7pm

Ladies' & Men's Bible Studies
1st and 2nd Saturdays of the month
respectively, at 9am

Hope Lutheran Church

2930 W 9000 S
West Jordan, UT 84088
westjordanlutherans.org
Rev. Paul Webber
(Office) 801-569-1111
(Cell) 385-222-0808
westjordanlutherans@gmail.com



From the Pastor

Dear members and friends of Hope Lutheran Church. There certainly is a lot going on in our country right now, isn't there? There is so much shouting, and so many dissonant messages being sent out that it can be hard for one to figure out what is really going on. And that is only the Republican primary!

But in all seriousness, there really is a lot happening right now, and fast too. It seems that we have just barely gotten around to taking down our Christmas decorations, and Easter is only a few weeks away.

And as we celebrate Easter, we know that so many people in our country are already looking past that great Holiday, and the whole summer, thinking about what will happen in November, when will select the person who will lead the United States as President for the next 4 years.

In this issue you will find an article from the Rev. Paul Fries in which he reminds us that, even God has not told us for whom we have to vote, that we do vote according to our consciences, which have been shaped by God's Word. You will also find a slightly tweaked version of the article which I wrote for the current issue of *The Lutheran Sentinel*, in which I introduce and briefly explain the theme for this summer's ELS youth convention.

And finally, in our ongoing study of the various parts of the liturgy, we have come to the service of the word. The article in this issue explains the schedules of readings that we and other churches use, which determine what readings are used on the different Sundays in the church year. - Pastor Webber



Which Candidate Should I Support?

Political battles are being waged throughout our country. Who will be the party nominees? Who will be the next president? There are many issues deeply dividing our country that are concerning to all. Christians wonder which candidate they should support. God doesn't tell us.

As Christians, we are citizens of two kingdoms: the kingdom of the left (this world—in whichever city or country we live) and the kingdom of the right (the Christian Church). It's difficult to balance those two kingdoms in our lives since they often intersect and occasionally collide in opposition. What are we to do in a rage-filled political battle like the one currently being waged in the United States?

When it comes to politics, one concern of Christians should be to conduct ourselves in a manner that does not bring shame upon Christ and His Church. It is our thankful response to God to obey all of His commandments, to love our enemies, and to let our conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27). With those things in mind, we can enter into discussions respecting the views of others even when we strongly disagree with them.

As Christians, we cannot expect everyone to believe as we do. Our views on everything in life should be informed by our faith and seen through eyes focused on the cross. A different political view does not mean someone is not a Christian. They may have a very strong faith and yet support a candidate with some views inconsistent with

Christianity for a wide variety of reasons. God does not require a political candidate to be a Christian.

As a citizen of the United States, you have the privilege of speaking your mind about political issues and candidates. As a Christian, be careful of the manner in which you speak your mind. As in all things, we must be patient with others and try to understand their views. When it comes to issues that contradict God's teachings, we must stand firm in the truth of God's Word above all else.

As a Christian, you are a citizen of two kingdoms. But only one of those kingdoms is eternal. Jesus has earned your citizenship in His kingdom by His perfect life and innocent death. And we live our lives in love and thanks for His mercy.



Which candidate should you support? You must decide according to your conscience. But note what God does say about political leaders: It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes (Psalm 118:9).

-Rev. Paul Fries,
ELS Communications Director

For more information on the duties of government and citizen, read the passages under "Civil Government" in the Table of Duties in Luther's Small Catechism.

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

One of the many benefits of being a member of an ELS congregation is the chance to meet and become friends with people whom you might otherwise have never met. I remember that growing up in our Synod's Cape Cod, MA parish, there weren't too many other kids my age. Of course I knew, in sort of a theoretical way, that there really were other Lutheran teenagers out there. It's just that I hadn't seen too many of them with my own eyes.

When I was confirmed and was able to attend the LYA convention, it was as if my eyes were opened to a whole new world. Before me, no longer only in theory but in flesh and blood, were living, breathing, LUTHERANS; people my age who believed the same things that I believed. Now that I'm serving as the pastor of Hope Lutheran, which is yet another, far-flung, ELS parish, I can't encourage the young people in our congregation enough to also attend the LYA conventions. If nothing else, it reminds them that they aren't alone. Even if, in their everyday lives, they are surrounded by people who have a completely different faith and worldview, there really are other teens out there who believe in, and worship, God just like they do.

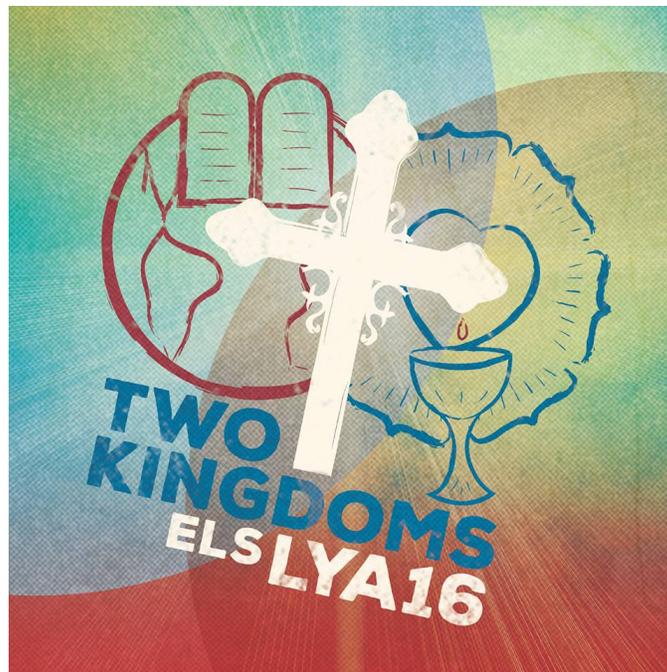
A large part of the LYA convention is fellowship, but that's not all it is. There are also opportunities for worship and study, both of which are centered on a specific theme every year. The theme for this coming year's convention is the doctrine of the two

kingdoms. When we, in this country, think about the two kingdoms, we probably automatically revert to the concept of the separation of church and state. And while this concept does have something to do with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, they are definitely not the same.

The kingdom of the left (the world) and the kingdom of the right (the church) have been instituted for different purposes. But, they have both been instituted by God. And, these kingdoms are ruled differently. But again, the same Triune God rules both the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of the Church. In the world, God rules through the law, and the threat of punishment if one breaks the law. In the Church, God rules by the Gospel, and all the blessings we are promised through faith in Christ. In the world, God has given power to our governing authorities, who even though they should mirror God's will in how they rule, often don't. In the Church, Christ is our king, and His will in the Word of God is the only standard for the Christian faith and life. And finally, in the kingdom of the world, God does not

promise any eternal blessings. You may live now in peace, but eventually you will die. But in the kingdom of the Church, God promises every eternal blessing. Along with the forgiveness of sins now, God has promised those who are His, through faith, eternal life in heaven.

As Christians, we are constantly living in both of these kingdoms. We don't cease being people who live in this world when we are in church, nor do we cease being God's people, through whom He "salts the earth," in our everyday lives. But this duality of



existence is not always easy for us to navigate. This is why it is important to study what it means to live in these two kingdoms. Hopefully a number of the youth of our congregation will be able to attend the LYA convention this summer.

Those who attend won't just have a good time (although they will!). Through the study and reception of God's Word, they will be equipped to live as God would have them in His two kingdoms.

-Pastor Webber



Studies in the Liturgy: The Lectionary

There are three basic sections of the Divine Service; the Service of Preparation, the Service of the Word, and the Service of the Lord's Supper. In our study of the different parts of the Divine Service, we have now made our way through the entire Service of Preparation. In the service of Preparation, God prepares us to receive His blessings in the Word and Supper. This preparation is simply our confessing our sins to God and receiving His forgiveness. In this way, He cleans us, so that we can come into His presence.

Now, in the service of the word, you have probably noticed by now that neither I nor any of your other pastors have just opened up the Bible to a random page and started reading to you. Things are much more organized and reliable than that.

In the normal order of service, there is always a reading from the Old Testament, a reading from one of the Epistles, a reading from one of the four Gospels, and there is

also usually a Psalm that is sung. This is not a practice that is unique to Hope Lutheran Church. This is the way in which the Christian Church has heard and proclaimed God's Word in its corporate worship for over fifteen-hundred years.

The practice of having regular readings from God's Word in the worship of the Church is taken directly from the worship practices of the Old Testament Church. Now of course, in the time before Christ, there weren't any readings from the Gospels or the Epistles. But, it would have been unheard of for the worship of God in Old Testament times to not have included readings from the prophets and the singing of Psalms.

There are a number of different "schedules" of readings (known more simply as lectionaries) that are commonly used in Lutheran Churches. One of these, the one that we use at Hope is the "Historic" lectionary, also known as the "one-year." The Historic Lectionary is, by far, the oldest lectionary. It is one that repeats itself every year.

The other lectionary that is used by many in our circles is known as the "three-

year” series. This is a schedule in which, over the course of 3 years, each of the 3 synoptic Gospels is prominently featured, with some additions from John included in each year. In both the Historic and 3-year lectionaries there are readings from the Old Testament, Epistles, and a Psalm appointed that align with the theme from the Gospel reading for the day.

The main benefit of using the Historic Lectionary is that it repeats itself every year. This means that it is easier to become familiar with the sections of Scripture that are read on various days in the Church year. However, the benefit of using the 3-year series is that you get a better sense of the “flow” of the various Gospels (because each the Evangelists do present the events of the life of Christ from a different perspective).

One should not think that it is “better” or “worse” to use the Historic or 3-year lectionaries. Neither of them is “more Lutheran.” There are benefits to both lectionaries, and both of them ensure that, over the course of a year (or three) you will be receiving a good, general, overview of the whole of God's revealed truth.

If you are ever curious about what these lectionaries look like, you can actually find them in the front section of the hymnal. The 3-year lectionary can found on pages 199-201, while the Historic lectionary is on pages 202-203.

-Pastor Webber

Parish News

Upcoming Events

March

- 12 – Men's Bible Study, 9am
- 24 – Maundy Thursday, 7pm
- 25 – Good Friday, 7pm
- 26 – Movie Night, *The Passion of the Christ*, 7pm
- 27 – Easter Pot-Luck, 12pm

April

- 2 – Ladies' Bible Study, 9am
- 9 – Men's Bible Study, 9am
- 10 - 2nd Quarter Congregational Forum, 12pm
- 16 – Youth Group Hike and Grill-out, afternoon and evening