

# Happenings at Hope

May – June 2017 ~ Vol. 4, No. 3

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## ***Worship & Study***

Sunday School & Bible Class  
9:30am

The Divine Service  
Sunday 10:30am  
Wednesday 7pm

Ladies' Bible Study  
9am, the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of  
the month

## ***Hope Lutheran Church***

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## ***From the Pastor***

Greetings members and friends of Hope Lutheran Church. The last issue of our Church newsletter explained what it means to be a member of a synod; it allows us to carry out the great commission in much different and greater ways than our congregation could just on its own. Along with supporting the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in foreign lands, our synodical membership allows us to support that same work in our own country.

In this issue of *Happenings at Hope* you will find an article that explains what happens at the yearly convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This is the annual meeting of pastors and representatives from every congregation in our synod at which the previous year's work of the synod is reviewed, and the coming year's work is planned. You'll find a lot more specific information in the article.

In this issue you will also find an article that explains how we, as Confessional Lutherans, should view and participate in such things as the recently passed National Day of Prayer. And finally, as we continue in our ongoing study of the parts of the historic liturgy, this issue contains an article that explains the history and logic of the Preface to Holy Communion. This is the part of the service where, after the offering and the Prayer of the Church, the pastor turns to the congregation and chants "the Lord be with you," to which the congregation replies, "and with your spirit," and so on and so forth.

May the Gospel of our crucified and risen Lord fill your hearts with peace and joy this summer season.

- Pastor Webber

## Why Not Pray?



On Thursday, you may see and hear many reports of people gathering together for the National Day of Prayer. It is a day our government sets aside for people to pray for the country. The organization's website states, "The National Day of Prayer is an annual observance held on the first Thursday of May, inviting people of all faiths to pray for the nation."

The idea of asking the people of a nation to pray for that nation is not necessarily a bad idea—if those prayers are prayed by Christians to the only true God, the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But, while that may or may not have been the original idea behind this day, it is now often seen as a day to set aside our religious differences and come together. Often, public prayer events are held with Christians and people of many other faiths, all offering prayers to their "god." What may look like an answer to many of the world's problems, is instead an offense to God.

Prayers to all the different "gods" of the world serves no purpose. There is One God: The Triune God. Prayer is an act of worship, and joint prayer services involving Christians and non-Christians

elevate false gods to the same level as the only true God, violating the First Commandment (You shall have no other Gods – Exodus 20:3) And, we are warned clearly in the New Testament against this type of worship: Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV) We should treat all people with respect, but we should not accept false gods and false teachers as equally valid belief systems. It is our duty as Christians to point out error, to preach and teach all of God's Word, so that Word can work through the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Trinity) on the hearts of unbelievers and bring them to faith.

But, what about joint prayer services with other Christians? Let's look at what God's Word, the Bible, tells us. Why? Because Jesus Himself tells us the Bible is "truth." (John 17:17) And Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, also tells us "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." (John 8:31 ESV) Abiding in the Word means that we follow that Word, even when it is difficult or unpopular. We should only pray together with those who also believe God's Word—all of it. It is wrong to pray with others who deny such things as the inspiration of Scripture or the power of baptism, or the real presence in the Lord's Supper. It may seem harsh to others, but Scripture is clear: I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. (Romans 16:17 ESV) "Avoid them," not "pray with them."

Standing firmly on the teachings of Scripture is not always popular, and many  
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will allow their emotions or human reason to cloud the Word of God in this matter. But we cannot give up the truth or we risk losing the Gospel. The Word of God assures us He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14 ESV) and, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17 ESV)

Please do pray for our nation and its leaders. But do not compromise your faith, or cloud the beautiful message of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ with a false unity.

-Rev. Paul Fries, ELS Communications Director

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## *Studies in the Liturgy: The Preface to Holy Communion*

The service of Holy Communion begins with this sung dialogue:

*P: ♪ The Lord be with you.*

*C: ♪ **And with your spirit.***

*P: ♪ Lift up your hearts.*

*C: ♪ **We lift them up to the Lord.***

*P: ♪ Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

*C: ♪ **It is good and right so to do.***

This sung exchange is one of the oldest parts of the Christian liturgy. This dialogue is so old, in fact, that it may even have been used by the Apostles themselves. The service of the Word also began with the exchange of “The Lord be with you...and with your spirit.” Now so does the service of Holy Communion.

After this the pastor chants, “Lift up your hearts.” The significance of this is that we are going to be having the other-worldly experience of physically encountering our savior in His supper. The congregation replies “We lift them up to the Lord,” so as to agree that what they are about to experience is truly a foretaste of heaven.

The last statement made by pastor, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” is a repetition of the Church's ceaseless thanks to God for everything He has done for us through the person and work of Christ.

The congregation agrees, “It is good and right so to do,” uniting their thanks with that already voiced by their pastor.

At this point, the exchange of dialogue stops, and the pastor chants what is called the “Proper Preface.” The wording of the Proper Preface changes depending on the season of the Church Year. The Proper Preface, which is directed to God, reminds us of the theological implications of what God has done for us, not only through His Son but also through His prophets. For example, the Proper Preface for the season of Advent directs our attention to the ministry of John the Baptist: “Jesus Christ our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the Messiah, the very Lamb of God, and calling sinners to repentance, that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in Glory.”

Even though the middle of the Proper Preface changes from season to season, the beginning and the end always stay the same. It is always “good, right, and salutary” to give thanks to God.” And, no matter the day or season, our prayers are  
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# What Happens at Synod Convention?

Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod meets in convention every year at Bethany Lutheran College, in Mankato, MN. This annual gathering always takes place the week after Father's day. Throughout the years, there have been suggestions from pastors who don't live near Minnesota to move the convention to another week, so that they can spend Father's day with their families instead of waiting in an airport or sitting on a plane. But, so far, those suggestions haven't been acted on. So this year, pastors and representatives of the various ELS congregations from throughout the country will, again, be descending on Mankato the week of Father's day to do the work of the Synod.



This work can best be summed up by the Synod's Purpose, "The synod exists to carry out the command of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature, to contend for the faith, and to promote the development of Christian Life within its membership." To the end of accomplishing that goal, which of course cannot be accomplished only through our ministerial efforts but must rely entirely on the magisterial work of God through the Gospel, the Synod supports missions at home and abroad, operates Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, and has a number of standing boards, each of which has their own distinct purpose.

The first day of the convention, Monday, begins with an opening service in the college chapel. After that, all the pastors and delegates make the short walk across the green to the Sports and Fitness center to get to work. The convention is declared to be in session in the name of the Triune God by the Synod president, who then delivers his report to the convention. Monday morning is also when any special guests to the convention are recognized. Such guests would be the president or other representative of the Wisconsin Synod (WELS), observers from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Church of the Lutheran Confessions (CLC), foreign missionaries who aren't usually able to be in attendance at convention, and other people of note.

Monday afternoon is when the various floor committees meet. The floor committees are the groups of pastors and delegates who are assigned the task of reviewing the reports of the various standing committees of the Synod. These standing Committees are as follows:



**Trustees:** The trustees exercise the general management and control of all secular business and temporal affairs of the synod.

**Doctrine:** This committee exists to advise the president and synod on doctrinal matters, and in upholding the doctrine of Scripture and the confessional principles and practices of the synod.

**Worship:** This committee engages in an ongoing study of Lutheran Worship, to the end of developing a greater understanding of the Lutheran heritage in Christian worship among the members of the Synod, increasing their interest in that heritage; and informing the synod's pastors and congregations concerning the doctrine and practice of Lutheran worship and liturgy.

**Youth Outreach:** The purpose of this board is to promote the spiritual education and Christian fellowship of the youth of the synod, and to provide youth leadership training for the congregations. This board also plans the annual Lutheran Youth Association (LYA) Convention.

**Christian Service:** This board is the vehicle through which the Synod assists in the support of its retired pastors and teachers and their spouses.

**Communication:** This board advises and assists in all aspects of communication for the Synod. **Synod Review:** This committee reviews the synod's constitution and guidelines to determine that they are consistent with the law, with internal provisions, and with existing practice.

**Planning and Coordinating:** This committee exists to establish priorities for the work of the synod and recommend a budget to carry out the work of the Lord's Kingdom. Its membership is composed of the chairmen of the other boards and committees in order to coordinate the work and finances of the synod.

**Regents:** This board supervises Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, including the issuing of calls to pastors to teach at those schools.

The second day of Convention, Tuesday, begins with an opening devotion. After that, new member congregations and pastors are officially accepted into membership.



*"It would have been really awkward to go back to my congregation and explain to them why I wasn't accepted into membership, so thank you for doing the right thing."*

After this begins the reports of the various floor committees. These reports are presented, discussed, and voted on by the pastors and delegates. These discussions always have to carefully follow Roberts rules of order, so that the proceedings can be recorded for posterity. The acceptance and amending of these reports is the time when the  
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synod makes all its important decisions for the coming year. These reports sometimes go into Wednesday morning as well.

There are two chief events on the third day of the convention, Wednesday. First is the delivering of the convention essay. One thing that is going to be different about convention this year is that instead of one big essay, there are going to be three shorter ones delivered, on the topics of; "Scripture Alone," "Grace Alone," and "Faith Alone." This change is because this year is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation. The three "Solas" (only's) which these essays will highlight have been the markers of the Lutheran Church for centuries.

Assuming that all the necessary work has been done (sometimes Thursday morning needs to be used as well) the convention is closed in the name of the Triune God sometime late in the afternoon or early in the evening on Wednesday. Then, that night, there is the Convention Communion service in the college chapel. Along with being able to commune with each other, those in attendance are also able to hear the high school honor choir sing a number of songs during the service.

And that's it. That's what happens at Synod Convention. Of course this was a very brief overview of what takes place over the course of three or more days. If you want to see for yourself what goes on at Synod Convention, you're in luck. The ELS live streams all the proceedings through its website, [els.org](http://els.org).



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praises are united with those of the "angels, and all the company (ie, the saints) of heaven." In Christ, we are still one body with those who have departed this world in faith and entered into the joys of heaven. And when we receive Christ's true body and blood in the supper, we are being united, not only with Him, but also with all our brothers and sister in the faith who have gone before us into the other side of eternity.

All of the proper prefaces for the seasons of the Church year can be found on pages 74-75 in the front of the hymnal.

# Parish News

## **Upcoming Events**

May

6 – Yard Sale

21 – Golf Outing

June

3 – Youth Group Hike and Grill Out

4 – Mid-Year Congregational Forum

19-21 – ELS Convention in Mankato, MN