

The Messenger

CELC

CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
DECEMBER 2018

A word from our Pastor, Jeff Steeber

“Are you the King of the Jews?” That’s a great question, asked by a man who history has labeled as being not-so-great, Pontius Pilate. What was Jesus’ answer to this amazingly pointed, and short-sighted, question? It’s not that simple to answer...because Jesus acts in a manner that is quite common for him...which means that his answer isn’t an easy one. Jesus’ answer is not an easy one for Pilate to understand...and it’s a potentially difficult one for Jesus’ followers...including us...to understand.

Today, I’m going to do my best to shed some light on it for all of us...but I’m going to answer it in a manner that is quite common for me...which means that I am going to tell a story that some people will think has nothing to do with the gospel story...and then I’m going to try to convince you why it has everything to do with our gospel story.

For a little over a month, I have been leading two different sessions of the same adult Christian Education class. We’ve been reading and discussing the book, “Who Stole My Church”, by Gordon MacDonald. In my estimation, the book is quite good...so even if you didn’t choose to join one of the class sessions, I would encourage you to borrow a copy of the book from someone who did get it and read it on your own time.

It is difficult for me to summarize all the various issues that are dealt with in the book, but to put it in the most general terms as possible, the book is about change, about congregational life, about relationships, and most importantly...about God. I’ve had a lot of fun leading the class sessions and being a part of the discussion that has taken place between me and the students. (continued on next page)

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This past Wednesday's class...not this past Wednesday but the Wednesday before, because we didn't have class the day before Thanksgiving...but in our most recent Wednesday class, we had one of the best discussions that I have ever been a part of, in all of the classes that I have taught over the last 14 years. The discussion originated with a simple question that was raised from an idea in the book. I asked the participants, "Do you think our congregation is in danger of becoming extinct?"

The immediate response from everyone in the room was a resounding, "No!" As far as they could tell, CELC is not in danger of becoming extinct...of closing its doors...at least not in their lifetimes. I then followed up with a second question, "If CELC is not in danger of closing today, or maybe even in your lifetime, when do you think it might be in danger of closing?" The first answer given was twenty years; however, the group quickly discerned that twenty years was too soon, and so the date of possible extinction was extended out to fifty to fifty-five years away. The class didn't take an official vote, but it seemed like everyone agreed with the newly proposed number.

I was starting to get excited by the conversation, and so I got out of my seat, and I wrote on the dry erase board. I wrote "CELC Not in Danger of Extinction" in the middle of the board, and I put an "X" under the heading. I then drew a line, out from the "X", towards the end of the board. Above the end of the line I wrote the heading, "CELC is Extinct, 50-55 Years", and I drew a little tombstone with R.I.P. on it to illustrate the gravity of the situation. We all chuckled at my poor artistic skills, and then as I pointed to the dry erase board I asked the students this, "So, we're saying that we are not in danger of extinction for at least fifty to fifty-five years?" The response from the class was, "Yes."

The discussion was going great, so I raised another question, "In your opinion, does any congregation...or would our congregation...would a congregation go directly from not being in danger of extinction, directly to being extinct?" I pointed to the dry erase board, and said, "Would we go from this point to this point without anything in between?" The students all agreed that we wouldn't just go from not being in danger of extinction...and then all of the sudden be extinct. "Does that mean that we need to add another section to the illustration? What could we call it? Let's call it 'The Path to Extinction,'" and I wrote the heading on the board.

Next, I asked the class to list some things that might be present in a congregation that was on the path to extinction. With zero coaching from me, the students listed off these things that they believe are present in a church that is on the path to extinction. The list read as follows: lethargy; apathy; lack of a unified vision; resistance to change; in-fighting between members; and dwindling membership or a lack of participation by many in the congregation.

I don't know if those who are in the class knew where I was going with my questions at that point in our discussion...and to be fair, I don't know if you all know where I'm going with my questions at this point of the sermon...but to me it was clear, almost as if God was guiding our words. I said to the class, "You all are doing great, and I completely agree with the different things you just listed. Now, here's what we are going to do. I'm going to read the list again, and I want you to say 'Yes' if you think that the listed issue is present here in our congregation." I read through the list, and I prepared myself to put a checkmark next to any issue that was present. Lethargy? Yes, check. Apathy? Yes, check. Lack of a unified vision? Yes, check. Resistance to change? Yes, check. In-fighting between members? Yes, check. Dwindling membership or a lack of participation by many in the congregation? Yes, check.

I stepped back from the board, and along with the people in the class, I just stared at the results for a few moments. Then I looked at the class, and I said, "So, what we've just discovered...through a list that you all came up with on your own, concerning danger signs for a congregation on the path to extinction...and then voted on by you all...is that all of these things are present in our congregation, to one degree or another." I don't think that they wanted to agree with what I had just stated...but they didn't have a choice...I was simply reading back their answers...and so they did agree with what I said. "Let me ask you again," I said, "Is our congregation in danger of extinction?" This time, they all agreed that we are. It might not come for fifty years...it might come sooner...it might come decades later...but we all agreed that starting at that very moment, our decisions and actions would either hasten the extinction of our congregation...or they would pump new life into our congregation.

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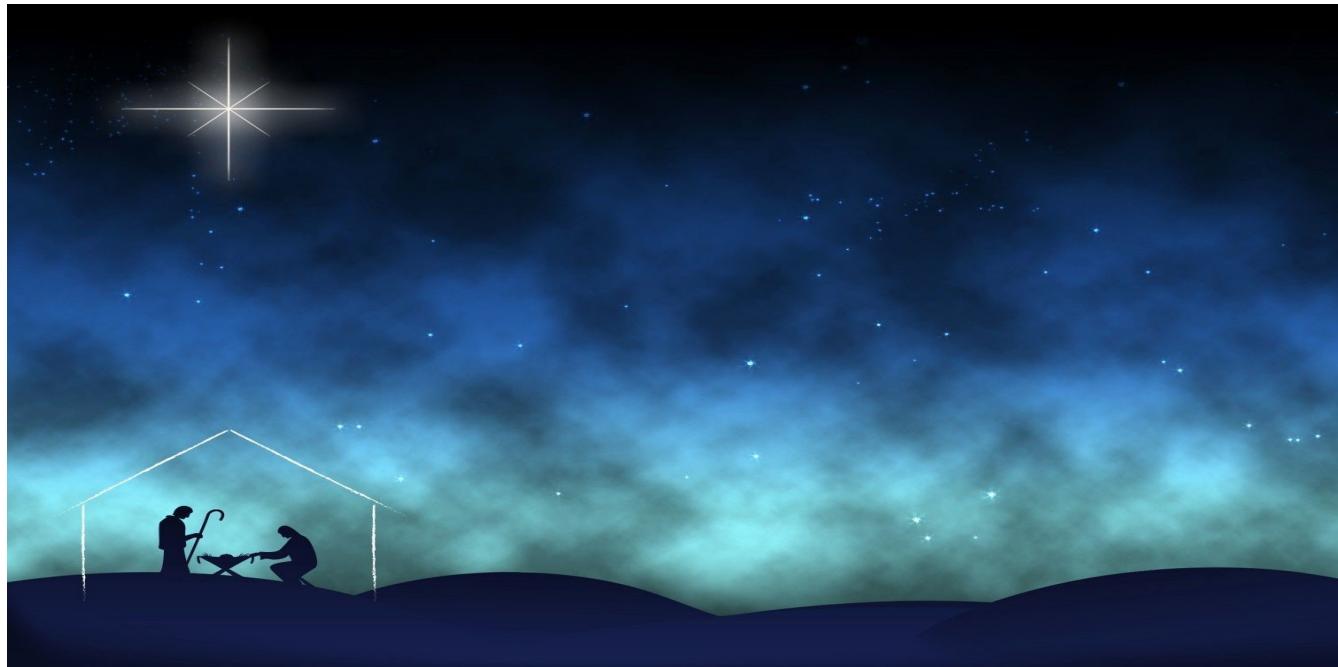
In our gospel reading, Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” and Jesus appears at first glance to dance around the answer. Jesus questions the origin of Pilate’s question. He answers about his kingdom, which is not from this world, but he doesn’t call himself a king. In fact, when Pilate doubles down on his question, “So you are a king?” Jesus tells Pilate that he is the one who is saying Jesus is a king...and that Jesus has come into the world to testify to the truth.

I used to think that when Jesus said that his kingdom was not from this world, that he was saying that his kingdom was in heaven. After my sermon preparation this week, I no longer think that. I do think that Jesus will be king in heaven, if we want to call him by that name, but I don’t think that God cares about such titles. Now I believe that Jesus is saying that his kingdom is not just in heaven...but right here...and right now. I believe that he was telling Pilate that his kingdom existed right there in Pilate’s presence...and that we are called to believe and trust that it still exists among us, at this very moment.

When Jesus says, “My kingdom is not from this world” he is not talking about when his kingdom will be...or where his kingdom will be...he’s saying what his kingdom will be. And as far as Jesus is concerned, his kingdom doesn’t look like anything we would call a kingdom. Jesus’ kingdom isn’t based on power, or oppression, or domination, or subjugation, or violence...that’s what kingdoms from our world look like. Jesus’ kingdom, it is based on vulnerability, servanthood, humility, empowering others, and peace...that’s what God’s kingdom looks like.

When it comes to our congregation, and whether or not we are on the path to extinction, I would say that the answer is “Yes” and “No.” Like all created things, our congregation had a beginning...and it will have an end. When will that end happen? I cannot tell you...but your guess is as good as mine. But there is no fighting the reality that one day our congregation will face extinction. And yet, the good news is this...that even though our physical congregation may not always exist like it does right now...when we remember that the reason we exist is to be God’s light in our community...when we remember that it is not our congregation, but God’s congregation...when we remember that it is not our mission, but God’s mission...then we can be comforted in the truth of Jesus...a truth that tells us that God’s mission, forgiveness, love, and grace...will never come to an end. Should we be scared that our congregation may be extinct one day? Sure, I think that’s normal. However, I think that we should be more scared of losing sight of why we exist right now. Amen.

In Christ’s peace,
Pastor Jeff Steeber +



Property Committee

- A **capital campaign** is running now through January 20 to determine if there is interest in updating the sanctuary flooring. As noted during the Congregation Meeting, we will be exploring if the congregation would like to update the sanctuary flooring when we move the pews. The most preferred option was tile plank and the cost is around \$10K. Please remember that this is an “above and beyond” campaign. (Donations should note “sanctuary flooring” in the memo line of your check). If funding meets the goal and will cover the cost, we will look to start deciding on color, pattern, etc. If funding is not in the black by the end of the campaign, we will go ahead and address the pew spacing and circle back to the tile upgrade at a future date (funds raised for the flooring will remain designated for this future endeavor). Please see Rob Nordman with any questions.

- Please join us 9 a.m. Saturday morning December 1 to help with our **annual Fall cleanup**. We look to pick up the leaf accumulation from the fence areas around the church.



Dates for Anchor Grades 7-12

December 9 4:30-6:00 p.m. Anchor meeting
December 15 7:00-11:00 p.m. Movie and game night at CELC, bring \$5 per person to cover pizza and drinks; a snack to share and a game to teach us all.

Dates for Harbor Grades 2-6

December 9 11:45-1:15 Harbor meeting
December 14 7:00-11:00 p.m. Movie and game night at CELC, bring \$5 per person to cover pizza and drinks; a snack to share and a game to teach us all.

For more information please contact Heather
330-635-4783, celcyouth1@gmail.com.



Advent Schedule

Sunday, December 2 at 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday, December 5 at 6:45 p.m.
Saturday, December 8 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 9 at 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday, December 12 at 6:45 p.m.
Saturday, December 15 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 16 at 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday, December 19 at 6:45 p.m.
Sunday, December 23 at 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Schedule

Monday, December 24 at 4:00 p.m. Family service
Monday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m. Traditional service
Tuesday, December 25 at 10:00 a.m.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Looking for volunteers to share their smile.
We are looking for volunteers to fill a variety of spaces. If you have a gift for welcoming people, would you be willing to be part of the welcoming team? Or, perhaps you and your family could be greeters or ushers. We are always looking for friendly smiles to welcome those who enter our doors. For more information, please contact Heather in the church office. There will be a little training involved to ensure you are comfortable with the task(s).

Christ Lutheran Preschool students with the candy our members and preschool families collected and donated to a homeless shelter in Lorain.



Fill the Baskets

Fill the baskets! Please help fill the baskets found in the gathering area. One basket will collect personal hygiene items, a second basket is for household cleaning products, and the third will collect family game night items. These baskets will be donated to CRS here in Avon Lake for local families this holiday. All donations must be given by Sunday, December 9. For more information or to make a monetary donation please contact the church office.



Spicy Ministry

If you are interested in helping provide spices for 2100 Lakeside, the Men's Shelter operated by Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, please make your check payable to Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church and mark "spice ministry" in the notation line. Anne and Dave Paine will be purchasing spices with the money thus donated and delivering them to the shelter. We will make our first delivery just after the New Year. Subsequent deliveries will be made at the beginning of each quarter during 2019. Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hanging of the Greens

Join us Saturday, December 1, to help 'spruce up' the church. Decorating for the holiday season will begin at 6:00 p.m. and all ages are welcome! It's an enjoyable time and the work goes quickly. Hope to see you there!



Sunday School Christmas Program

Please join us for the annual Sunday school Christmas program, on Sunday, December 16 at 4:00 p.m.



Redeemer Crisis Center

Food Pantry

Gather with us on Friday, December 14, to go to Redeemer Crisis Center Food Pantry. We will meet at CELC at 5:15 p.m. and caravan (unless you would like to meet us there). Pizza dinner is served at 6 p.m. and the actual packing starts at 7 p.m. We are usually done around 8:30 p.m. Please contact Ryan Smarsh if you are interested in attending.

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Congregation Council Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2018

Draft version. Minutes not officially approved until the following Congregation Council meeting.

Present: Pastor Jeff Steeber, Brenda Crout, Eric Klenz, Rob Nordman and Nadine Carlson

Absent: Kelly Pedersen, Dave Paine

Guest: Ryan Smarsh

Quorum was met.

The meeting was called to order by Pastor Steeber at 12:09 PM and opened with prayer.

Motion: Accept minutes of the September 16, 2018 Congregation Council Meeting

Motion by: Rob Nordman

Second by: Eric Klenz

Motion passed.

Guest Member

Ryan Smarsh was present to discuss the plans for the flooring in the sanctuary. He approached various groups of church members for their opinion of what flooring style they would prefer. The choices were carpet tiles, tile squares and tile planks. After voicing some concerns of maintenance and acoustic issues, the consensus was: 1) tile planks; 2) carpet tiles; and 3) tile squares.

President Dave Paine submitted his resignation to council. After some discussion, it was decided to accept his resignation with the understanding if he wished to return as president, he would be welcomed back.

Treasurer's Report

Summary of September's income:

Contributions:

E Giving	\$ 6,802.00
Regular	\$15,297.00

Total Contributions: \$22,099.00

Budget Monthly: \$18,049.00

Miscellaneous: \$ 82.00

Total Income: \$22,181.00

Expenses: \$19,927.00

Budget Monthly: \$20,230.00

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Property Report

Rob Nordman reported on the repair and maintenance items that were completed during the month of September. He also brought before council several items for discussion. Rob received some quotes for the flooring and agreed to update the congregation. He will also approach the congregation for funding to cover the cost. The decision was to move forward and replace the flooring during the time the pews were removed for spacing. There was some discussion regarding a staff member's request for changing their hours. It was decided to turn this item over to the Personnel Committee for review. It was decided the Family Promise storage area would be for the preschool, daycare and church ministries use. Rob will also be working on obtaining quotes for snow removal services.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Steeber submitted an informational report covering his pastoral duties for the month. We also continued Visioning with the assistance of *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger.

Finance Report

Discussion of the 2019 budget.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Motion by: Nadine Carlson

Second by: Brenda Crout

Motion passed.

Pastor Steeber adjourned the meeting at 2:27 PM and closed with the Lord's Prayer.
Date for the next council meeting will be announced later.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadine Carlson

Secretary

Benevolence Update

The votes have been counted for our Benevolence recipients. Our four organizations for 2019 are:

- Christ Lutheran Preschool Scholarships
- Haven Center
- Redeemer Crisis Center
- Second Harvest of Lorain



Poinsettia Orders

If you would like to order a red poinsettia plant for the holiday season please place your orders with Anna Circle by December 16. Each plant will be red, in a 6 ½ inch pot, and will cost \$8. You can find a flower order envelope in the back of the gathering area. If paying by check please make checks out to Anna Circle and write 'Poinsettia Order' on the memo line. You will be able to take your plant home Christmas Eve or Christmas day after each worship service.



December Birthdays

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
John S	2
Ron S	2
Amy L	5
Chip C	5
Claire M	6
Betty W	6
Ellard S	9
Jeff H	10
Carl M	10
Benjamin M	11
Leonard B	11
Rob N	12
Faye W	13
Sara C	15
Eric M	15

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
Sharon M	16
Sidney W	16
Thomas N	17
Norma Jean C	18
Emily H	19
Sharon D	20
Nick K	20
Allison M	21
Barb M	22
Lauren S	22
Jamie C	24
Dell-Ann L	27
Doris K	28
Laura K	30



Church calendar inserted

Worship assistants inserted

Welcome to Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

CELC Staff

Pastor: Jeff Steeber
Office Admin: Heather Nordman
Organist: Randi Smarsh
Custodian: Bill Higgins

Congregation Council

President: *To be filled*
Vice President: Kelly Pedersen
Secretary: Nadine Carlson
Treasurer: Brenda Crout
Property: Rob Nordman
Finance: Eric Klenz

Sunday School

September-April
Julie Pressnell

First Communion

Pastor Jeff Steeber

Confirmation Class

September-April
Pastor Jeff Steeber
Dan Ingraham

Vacation Bible School

Nadine Carlson
Brenda Crout
Stacy Jantz
Michelle Young

Youth Coordinator

Heather Nordman

Youth Mission Trip

Rob Nordman
Pastor Jeff Steeber

Worship & Music

Joe Guthman

Family Event Coordinator

To be filled

Music Ministry

Bell Choir: Joe Guthman
Sanctuary Choir: Bethany Pearce

Circles

Anna Circle: Jan Wunderle
Lydia/Naomi Circle: Sharon Davidson
Martha Circle: Anita Hlava

Men's Bible Study

Meets Saturday's at 6:30 a.m. at Johnny's Boat House

Prayer Chain

Arline Walters - Chair

Endowment Committee

Chuck Heindrichs - Chair

Nominating Committee

Pastor Jeff Steeber – Chair

Preschool Board

Laura Musat – Chair

CELC Preschool

Administrator: Teri Pienoski

Good Kids Childcare

Director: Julie Skaggs

If your name, church group or committee is missing from this list, please contact the church office at 440-933-6263 or email celc.mainoffice@gmail.com
Thank you!



CELC Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

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www.christlutheranavonlake.org



Worship

Saturday 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Sunday school for all ages

9:15 a.m.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

*“For unto you is born ...a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.”*

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Luke 2:11

