

The Messenger

*Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Mini-Summer July Edition*

July Birthdays

Elle D	3		
Sara H	3		
Benjamin P	4		
Giana G	5		
Joe Y	5		
Ryan S	6		
Zach J	6		
Debbie S	7		
Wayne S	10		
Patty K	10		
Eva D	13		
Liam V	13		
Carah M	15		
Celeste B	16		
Kelly P	16		
Meaghan P	17		
Jim S	17		
Cheryl W	18		
		Loren E	20
		Heather N	20
		Pat S	23
		Nancy E	27
		Gretchen V	29
		Carter W	29
		Brianna H	30
		Owen K	30
		Kimberly L	30



Happy
Birthday!

A Note from the Pastor

Joy is not a given. Joy is a choice. Joy is work. Joy is a celebration. Joy is not a denial of sin or a refusal to accept that pain exists in the world, but joy is knowing that sin will never be the final word.

When I was interviewing with the Call Committee here at CELC in the Fall of 2012, I was told that the congregation had lost a lot of its joy. People were still coming to worship, or participating in ministries, but joy was not permeating those things. “Do you think that you could bring joy back to our church, Pastor Steeber, if our congregation were to call you as our new pastor?” was the question that was ultimately posed to me during my final interview. My response was clear and direct, “Yes, I bring joy with me. I love joy. If I am not joyful, if ministry is not joyful, if a congregation is not radiating in the joy of God’s love and grace, then lives will have a much more difficult time being changed and transformed.”

I meant what I said in that interview. I still mean what I said in that interview. I think that initially I did a good job living out God’s joy in the presence of our congregation. I felt joy in our building and in our ministries. I experienced joy in the smiles, laughter, and hard work of our parishioners. It was an amazing feeling having to corral people into the church for the beginning of worship, because they were joyfully interacting with one another in the narthex before the service began. Everything was going great, until it wasn’t.

At some point in the last few years I lost my sense of joy that I believe is crucial to live out a successful ministry. One of the brilliant ways that sin and evil work in our lives is that they can be quite subtle at first. We may not realize that we are losing our joy, or whatever the sin may be, when it is happening because the loss is incremental in the beginning. Many times, it is not until sin has almost completely eroded what was once a glorious gift from God, into an almost unrecognizable spark of the gift, that we see how far we have fallen away from God. The fear and doubt that can set in during those times can become unbearable. We might start to believe that our abundant gift is gone forever. We might slip into a depression that lies to us, telling us that we will never feel whole again. When that happens, I truly believe that the Christ weeps for us.

I had lost my joy. I had failed to continue to deliver on my promise to the members of CELC to make joy a part of our ministry together. To be honest, I don’t know if I have all of my joy back yet. There are days when I feel like joy is just an illusion, and then there are days when I feel filled with joy by the Holy Spirit. Recently, I have been experiencing more of the latter, which is a great thing. I believe that I have also seen more joy in others at CELC in the past several months. Maybe I’m only seeing it because I am feeling it, or maybe it’s really there.

My experiences on our ASP mission trip and at our Vacation Bible School this year filled me with such tremendous joy that it is difficult for me to put my feelings into words. Both ministries encourage individuals to look for God in their daily activities. I am grateful for these ministries, because even as a pastor, I need to be reminded that God is present with me at all times.

I want to build upon the joy that I am currently feeling. I want to experience it and share it at home and at work. I want to live a life that is filled with joy rather than marked with stress. I want to make good on my promise that I made to the Call Committee almost six years ago. I want our people and our building to be filled with joy.

Joy is not a given. Joy is a choice. Joy is work. Joy is a celebration. Joy is not a denial of sin or a refusal to accept that pain exists in the world, but joy is knowing that sin will never be the final word. Joy comes from God, as it is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that Paul mentions in Galatians 5:22-23. Joy is possible. Joy is available to us. God makes it so.

In Christ’s Peace,
Pastor Jeff +