

IMMANUEL MONTHLY

June 1, 2011

Immanuel Lutheran Church decorated for Easter Day services.



From Pastor's Desk The Three Feasts: Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity

By Rev. Jason M. Braaten

The three feasts of Ascension (40 days after Easter), Pentecost (50 days after Easter) which leads to Trinity (the Sunday after Pentecost), in their different ways celebrate and recognize the truth that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not just events of the past, but present day realities pointing the way to life, freedom, and hope for all humankind now.

The Ascension

The Ascension is usually described as marking the completion of Jesus' ministry on earth as he returned to Heaven. But it is far more than that. It marks the exact moment when Jesus, Son of God, commissioned his disciples to begin the gigantic task of converting the whole world. As recorded in St Mark's Gospel, Jesus said: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole

creation. The one who believes and is baptised will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned."

The Day of Pentecost

St Luke tells us that Pentecost occurred a short time after the Ascension, and marked the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, at his Ascension, to send the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

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The gift of the Holy Spirit electrified these fearful followers—who only weeks before had run away when Jesus was arrested, and were still hiding for fear of those who had been responsible for their Lord's death—and transformed them into men and women willing to lay down their lives for their faith, as many of them did.

The Holy Trinity

The feast of Holy Trinity, though logically linked with the other two, was established much later. Although its existence was clearly stated in the New Testament, and early recognized as a doctrine of the faith, it was only when the Arian heresy—which denied Jesus was God—was spreading in the fourth century, that the church fathers prepared propers with canticles, responses, a preface, and hymns, to be recited at the Divine Service. From these, the feast we now celebrate as Trinity Sunday gradually evolved.

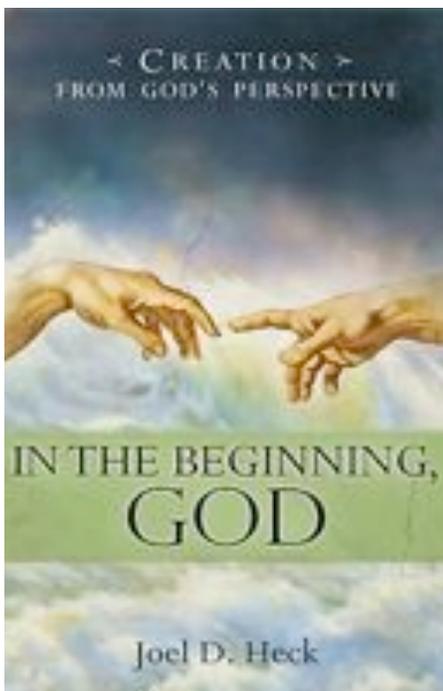
Together, these great feasts mark the promise that Jesus gave to his disciples, and its fulfillment in the Church on earth. As recorded by St Matthew, the very last words Jesus said to his Apostles before going up to Heaven, were: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Through these feasts three central but hidden realities are affirmed: Jesus Christ is Lord of all (Ascension), the Spirit of God has been poured out to create faith through Word and Sacrament (Pentecost), and that the Christian faith is always lived out in a triune community of one's faith toward God and fervent love toward one another, as the very nature of God is triune community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). However, in celebrating these feasts, as with the celebration of faith

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through the whole year, the important thing is not simply intellectual understanding, for faith is not just rational comprehension. It is also letting these spiritual realities take root in your hearts, minds, and spirits so that they are lived out here in time and there in eternity.



The Book of the Month Creation From God's Perspective

Dr. Heck presents a theological defense of young earth creationism through a straightforward reading of the first chapter of Genesis as narrative history. This book works well for topic study on creation and for Old Testament studies on the text of Genesis. Much has been written on the creation from the scientific view, but little has attempted to explain the text of Genesis 1. A failure to read Genesis 1 as narrative history almost always comes as a result of the reader bringing presuppositions on the assured results of science. The first chapter of Genesis must be taken as historical fact!

“This booklet sets forth the position of the Bible on the message of Genesis 1, particularly as it has to do with the creation/evolution debate.” (From the Introduction).

Dr. Joel D. Heck is Professor of Theology at Concordia University Texas. He holds a ThM in Old Testament from Trinity Evangelical Divinity and a ThD in Exegetical Theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

If you are interested in ordering a copy of this book for yourself, you may call the church office to place your order.

From the President Blessings, Gifts, and Challenges

By Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

At my request, *The Lutheran Witness* staff has put together this issue to inform the good folks of Synod about the financial realities that we face. The funding of this multi-billion-dollar institution called The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is complex, to say the least. It took me a good five to six years working at the International Center before I actually began to understand it. The first step in addressing a challenge is honesty about its existence and its probable causes. But this must be done with an eye on our blessings, which are truly extraordinary. We are in a definite predicament, but it's hardly all doom and gloom.

The Challenges

The Synod headquarters is in a financial crisis. It is, however, a very specific crisis—that is, a lack of undesignated/unrestricted dollars. Years of stopgap measures and overspending revenues have caught up to us. Throughout this current fiscal year, Synod headquarters has



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functioned with the equivalent of only eight days worth of unrestricted resources on hand, whereas a minimum of 30 days is where a nonprofit of our size should be functioning. On top of that, Synod had already borrowed some \$11.1 million from funds designated for other purposes . . . just to operate! The crisis involves the quickly shrinking pot of undesignated funding (\$19.3 million, down almost

\$10 million in the past decade), most of which comes from districts.

What got us here?

- The Synod has consistently spent every penny it receives and more.
- There has been a very significant yearly reduction in dollars given by congregations to districts and districts to Synod. These unrestricted funds are used to pay the bills

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for things you can't easily raise funds for—like keeping the lights on, maintaining a system for reconciliation and a hundred other things.

- LCMS World Mission had consistently overspent its revenues, such that year by year, millions of unrestricted dollars had to be pulled away from other areas of need. Fan into Flame, while bringing great blessings, has cost significantly more and raised significantly less than projected.
- There has been a very definite shift in the way people prefer to give. Donors (individuals, congregations and districts) want to give to very specific needs, so it's harder and harder to fund the basic operations (i.e., the “plumbing” it takes to get and keep a missionary in the field, or a program or service to the church, like maintaining Synod's roster and statistics, or accounting/auditing, or a Commission on Constitutional Matters, or a Concordia University System Board).
- Some 26 percent of the unrestricted dollars received go to service the \$20 million in historic debt of the Concordia University System, including interest and to subsidize educational operations.
- Theological disagreement and institutional distrust have affected congregational and district giving.

What's been done thus far?

- We have significantly reduced spending and eliminated (with great pain) close to \$2 million in staffing paid for by unrestricted dollars.
- We've taken action to cease overspending in LCMS World Mission.
- We have eliminated whole departments and areas of service and significantly consolidated staff for efficiency.
- We are launching the “Koinonia Project” to begin to deal with the theological issues that have caused us to distrust each other. We are attempting to lead in a way that does not divide.
- The new structure of the Synod is focused laser like on WITNESS, MERCY, and LIFE TOGETHER—the heart and soul of what it means to be the Church.

The Blessings

It's the devil's trick to make us think that somehow we are hurting financially or that we don't have the resources collectively to do what the Church needs to do for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. This is the Missouri Synod's worldwide moment, and together we have the resources to step forward with the Gospel and Luther's teaching on the worldwide platform awaiting our arrival.

- Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), with only 4 percent of the LCMS participating, manages \$2 billion in investor assets, which are used to provide affordable loans to congregations and other LCMS entities. Thankfully, Synod headquarters has not needed to draw on its line of credit with LCEF in over two years.
- Concordia Plan Services manages another \$3 billion in retirement and disability assets—kept healthy through the constant influx of young teachers and pastors.
- Concordia Publishing House (CPH) has the blessing of \$30 million in the bank—revenue due largely to a wildly successful new hymnal!
- The LCMS Foundation is doing well as it manages the various financial assets entrusted to it by congregations, organizations and individuals.
- Even as undesignated giving from districts has declined, folks from those same districts have exploded in providing designated funds for specific mission and mercy needs!
- Through the prudent management of resources, LCMS World Relief and Human Care is currently operating with a healthy reserve of over \$3 million, affording it flexibility to address critical needs during turbulent times. The Synod should strive to operate in the same way.

By the grace of God and for the sake of the mission of this church, it's time for us, together, to get our financial house in order. We are working hard at it here in St. Louis. Will you help? Will you assist your congregation and district in resolving this challenge? I know you can. I pray you will.

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Education Corner

The Gospel According to . . . who?

Witches and wizards, wands and potions, spells, curses and jinxes: How can the Harry Potter series be even remotely associated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Come to Immanuel Youth Group's July outing to find out.

On Sunday, July 24, we'll be heading to the movies for a matinee viewing of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2, the final installment of the series. Then we'll grab a bite to eat (probably pizza) and chat about the Christian themes and imagery throughout the books. (Exact time TBA).

A lot of people have reservations about the Harry Potter series, and that's understandable. After all, sorcery and magic are not to be taken lightly.

At the same time, every book, every movie and television program has a message. They teach a particular way of understanding ourselves and the world around us. They all, in one way or another, offer answers to the big questions in life: Why am I here? Does God exist? What does this mean for me?

The Harry Potter series helps us confront death and questions about death. It helps us understand how to face and deal with death. It

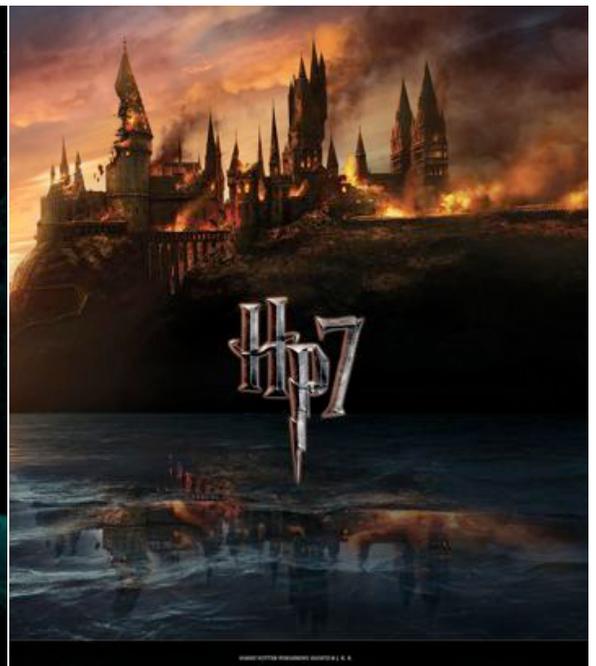
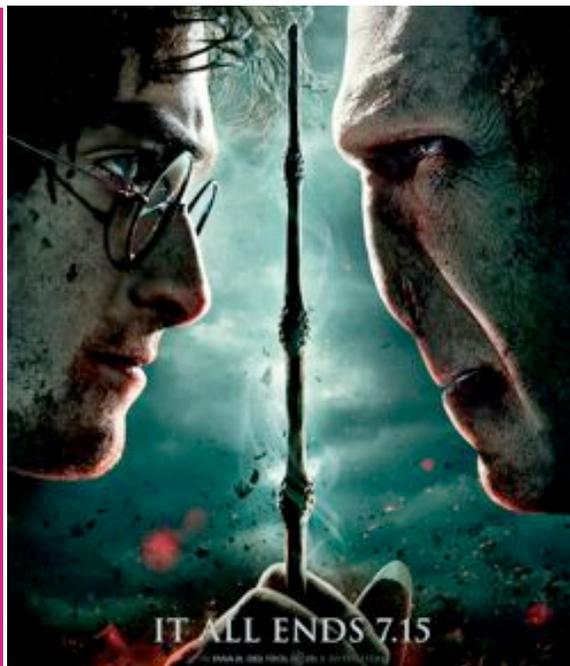
helps us articulate what we, as Lutherans, believe about death and Christ's power over it.

Fear of death leads to a lust for power, to a desperate striving for self-preservation—at all costs and by any means necessary—to hatred and envy and disregard for others. Ironically, the consequence of this fearful quest to avoid death is a soulless and loveless existence—a kind of living death.

Those who live by faith in the Resurrection live in love for others. They have something to live *for*. They are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of what is good and right, for others. They show mercy and forgiveness, even toward their mortal enemies. They are dying, but they live. And when death comes, they greet it as an old friend, as but a sleep. Death is not the last word.

That's what Harry Potter and his magic wand can teach us. So come, join the conversation and learn with us. Bring your thoughts and share your ideas. It'll be loads of fun. Meanwhile, watch for updates on the website. If you have any questions, talk to Pastor Braaten. You can also e-mail him at pastor.braaten@gmail.com

**HARRY
POTTER
AND THE
DEATHLY
HOLLOWES
YOUTH
GROUP
EVENT IS
SUNDAY,
JULY 24.**





“My most rewarding moments at work occur when people thank me and my sister for re-opening our store.”
 Devon Nau



In the News Flesor’s is in *The Lutheran Witness*

By Adriane Dorr

Devon (Flesor) Nau knows the difference between caramels and clusters, barks and brittles. And she ought to. Following in the footsteps of her grandfather and parents, Nau—along with her sister, Ann—is a third-generation owner of Flesor’s Candy Kitchen in Tuscola, Ill. Started in 1901, closed in 1975 and re-opened in 2004, the store is a vibrant tourist attraction for travelers along Highway 57 in central Illinois and a beloved eatery for locals. Nau, an active member of the nearby LCMS church, is known for her wry sense of humor, obvious work ethic and the joy she takes in being a kid in a candy shop . . . for a living.

The following is an edited Lutheran Witness (LW) interview with Nau (DN).

LW: How did you come to be a candy store entrepreneur?

DN: I was born into the candy business and, with my sister Ann, returned to it just over six years ago. Our Greek immigrant grandfather, Gus Flesor, opened our family’s original store in Tuscola, Ill., in 1901, and he and various family members ran the business for decades.

In the late 70s, my mother and father closed the doors. The building and contents were auctioned off, and then the downtown building sat—sad, empty, deteriorating—all those years.

My sister and I, back together in central Illinois, bought “our” old building and spent 18 months completely gutting and renovating it. We also located all of the original antique fixtures, bought them back from the antique dealer who had been storing them and put

them back where they belonged. We opened for business in the fall of 2004 and have been working non-stop since then.

LW: What was your occupation prior to opening Flesor’s?

DN: I taught for 16 years in the English Department at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill.

LW: How do you balance your vocation as wife and mother with running a unique and thriving business?

DN: Sometimes when I’m really, really tired—usually during the weeks before Christmas when I’m working outrageous hours at the store—I wonder if God is punishing me for all of the sins of my youth! But then I realize that what makes it all possible is the blessings I have received. All three of my children (Nicholas, 20; Alexis, 11; and Paul, 9) are brilliant and funny and healthy and self-directed. My husband, who is also my best friend, steps up at home when I’m overworked, and I do the same for him when he is swamped at work. Somehow we balance everything—if you don’t count my desperate need for a haircut or the perpetual tower of laundry.

LW: What is the most enjoyable part of your job?

DN: My most rewarding moments at work occur when people thank me and my sister for re-opening our store. I also am thrilled every time someone tells me that our candy is amazing or that a particular chocolate ice cream soda is the best someone has ever had!

LW: What are you involved in at church?

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Facts and Figures; Dates and Times

Greeters List

- 5 Jun Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- 12 Jun Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich – East
- 19 Jun Ruth Sims – West
Laverl Byers – East
- 26 Jun Becky Kappes – West
Tim & Teri Pollock – East
- 3 Jul Harold & Irene – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- 10 Jul Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich – East
- 17 Jul Ruth Sims – West
Laverl Byers – East
- 24 Jul Beck Kappes – West
Tim & Teri Pollock – East
- 31 Jul Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell - East

Coffee Committee

- Jun Ruth Sims
- Jul Harold & Irene Wattjes
- Aug Pastor & Lauren Braaten
- Sep Laverl Byers
- Oct Harold & Irene Wattjes
- Nov Jerry & Joyce Alexander
- Dec Pastor & Lauren Braaten

Altar Committee

- Jun Holly Wikoff and Sharon Allen
- Jul Delores Ford & Becky Kappes
- Aug Janice Arthur & Janet Stumeier
- Sep Wanda Long & Irene Wattjes
- Oct Theresa Fields & Sharon Allen
- Nov Ann Hilgendorf & Carol Munson
- Dec Ann Carroll, Holly Wikoff,
Sherrie Hoel & Tonia Timlin

Bi-Monthly Missions

- 5 Jun Camp CILCA
- 7 Aug EIU & UofI Campus Ministries
- 2 Oct LWML
- 4 Dec Christmas Bureau

Elder On Duty – Communion

- 5 Jun Jack Appleby
- 12 Jun Dave Slaughter
- 19 Jun Dave Slaughter
- 3 Jul Dave Slaughter
- 17 Jul Greg Nau
- 31 Jul Greg Nau
- 7 Aug Greg Nau
- 21 Aug Geof Danielson
- 4 Sep Geof Danielson
- 18 Sep Geof Danielson
- 2 Oct Jack Appleby
- 16 Oct Jack Appleby
- 30 Oct Jack Appleby

ATTENDANCE			OFFERINGS		
Date	Saturday	Sunday	General	Missions	Building
1 May	20	65	\$2,202.79	\$0.00	\$0.00
8 May	19	84	\$2,434.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
15 May	19	74	\$1,631.30	\$0.00	\$7.00
22 May	24	56	\$1,333.72	\$0.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	82	279	\$7,601.81	\$0.00	\$7.00
Total	361		\$7,601.81	\$0.00	\$7.00

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DN: My home church is Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tuscola. I sing in our little choir. What I enjoy most about each church service is the sermon, and soon I will be encouraging our new pastor to make his sermons a little longer. That should surprise him!

LW: How has your Lutheran faith played a role in your career?

DN: It emerges in surprising ways. It helps me be patient and nice to difficult customers. It helps me to remember that no matter how emotionally or physically difficult my work days might seem, I am still blessed. I am blessed by my Baptism, by what Christ has done for me. I am blessed by everything that God has put in my life and allowed me to do.

Plus, the Lutheran church shuns idolatry and celebrates family. We run a modest family business, and I have a strongly unified family at home. My church and my business and my family flow together in the stream that is my life.

LW: Who has been your biggest influence?

DN: I cannot point to one person on the planet for so many have shaped me: my parents, my siblings, my teachers, my friends, my husband. So many authors have also affected me profoundly.

LW: What's your favorite candy?

DN: Caramel. And I have personally made—over an open flame in a copper kettle—thousands of pounds of it

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The soda fountain at Flesor's Candy Kitchen.