



March 2020

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

65 Walnut Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 1N9
Tel: 204-775-6477

Email: stpetersoffice@mymts.net

Website: www.stpeterslutheran.ca.

Pastor: Rev. Bjoern Meinhardt ~ 204-792-3346

Cross Arithmetic

On Ash Wednesday the season of Lent has begun – the season during which we follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. We know the story, we know that Jesus suffered there and died on a cross outside the city wall of Jerusalem.

The Romans used crucifixion as a form of capital punishment. This makes the cross a very difficult theological concept. Paul stated that it was “a stumbling block to Jews” (1 Corinthians 1). According to Old Testament Law, the person who was hanged on a piece of wood was accursed (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). Paul also noted that the cross was “folly to Gentiles,” for in the pagan beliefs of antiquity, a god could not die.

Still, the cross is at the heart of the church's theology. Paul made clear that “to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18), and through his proclamation he made sure that we know about “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

As I read Paul's epistles, there are two views about the cross that stand out for me.

First of all, there was already division in the Early Church. There were apparently different factions in Corinth. There were those who followed Paul. Others followed Apollos or Cephas. Another group followed Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:12).

This observation prompted Paul to ask a – rhetorical – question: “*Is Christ divided?*” A question that begs the answer, 'No, of course not.' While there is division in the church, Paul stressed that Christ cannot be divided. For Jesus' death on the cross meant to unite us with God, to restore our relationship with God that was marred through our sin. What Jesus did on the cross, no human could have accomplished. Not Paul, not Luther, nor anybody else.

Just as Christ is one and indivisible, the Church is one in her faith in Christ. True, there are a number of churches ... church bodies ... denominations. But the unity of the church is not an organizational unity. It ought to be a unity in faith. Ephesians 4 says it as follows: There is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”

Despite the differing theologies between churches, there is one thing we uphold: to preach Christ as our crucified (and let me add: risen) Lord. While there are many churches, Christ himself cannot be divided.

Secondly, the cross resembles *a minus sign*, which is crossed through by a larger beam.

The horizontal beam, that looks like a minus sign (-), represents the relationship between people. Before God, we are sinful people. We tend to do what God does not want us to do. In the eyes of God, our lives are a big “minus”; our lives are filled with a lot of negative baggage.

Then, there is the second, the larger vertical beam (|), which comes from above. This beam

stands for the relationship between God and us people. It is important to note that this beam comes from above. It means that God has come to us. This also means that we do not need to try to become like God. We can stay human because God became a human person in Jesus!

Where the horizontal and the vertical beams intersect, they capture Jesus' coming to us, who "cancelled the record of debt that stood against us ... [by] nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). With Jesus coming into our world from above, the minus sign (our sin) has been cancelled! In the end, the cross takes on the shape of a plus sign – although an uneven plus sign (†).

As we ponder this cross arithmetic, we notice that Jesus cannot be divided. He wants to unite us with God. We also learn that on the cross our sins have been cancelled. In the cross, we truly experience the power of God. Because of the cross, we can count on Christ!

Yours in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord,
Bjoern E. Meinhardt, Pastor



Kreuz-Arithmetik

Am Aschermittwoch hat die Passionszeit angefangen, in der wir Jesus auf dem Weg nach Jerusalem folgen. Wir kennen die Erzählung. Wir wissen, dass Jesus litt und außerhalb der Stadtmauer von Jerusalem an einem Kreuz starb.

Für die Römer war das Kreuz eine Form der Todesstrafe, was dazu führt, dass das Kreuz ein sehr kompliziertes theologisches Konzept umfasst. Paulus wies darauf hin, dass das Kreuz für die Juden „ein Ärgernis“ war (1. Korinther 1). Denn nach dem alttestamentlichen Gesetz war derjenige verflucht, der am Holz hing (5. Mose 21,22-23). Für die Heiden war das Kreuz „eine Torheit“, denn der Glaube der Heiden in der Antike hielt fest, dass ein Gott nicht sterben könne.

Dennoch ist das Kreuz das Herz der kirchlichen Theologie. Für Paulus war es „eine Gotteskraft“ (1. Korinther 1,18); und in seiner Verkündigung verwies er stets auf „Jesus Christus, den Gekreuzigten“ (1. Korinther 2,2).

Beim Lesen der Briefe des Paulus fallen mir zwei Dinge auf, was er über das Kreuz schreibt.

Erst einmal gilt es festzuhalten, dass es schon in der frühen Kirche Uneinigkeit, Spaltungen gab. Es hat den Anschein, dass es verschiedene Fraktionen in Korinth gab. Die einen folgten Paulus.

Andere folgten Apollos oder Kephas. Wieder andere folgten Christus (s. 1. Korinther 1,12).

Diese Beobachtung veranlasste Paulus, die – rhetorische – Frage zu stellen: „*Ist Christus etwa zerteilt?*“ was nach der Antwort verlangt: 'Nein, natürlich nicht.' Auch wenn es Abspaltungen in der Kirche gab, wies Paulus darauf hin, dass Christus nicht zerteilt werden kann. Denn Jesu Tod am Kreuz bedeutet Einheit mit Gott, die Wiederherstellung unserer Beziehung mit Gott, die durch unsere Sünde zerbrochen wurde. Was Jesus am Kreuz tat, kann kein Mensch bewirken. Weder Paulus, noch Luther, noch sonst irgendetwas.

So wie Christus eins und unteilbar ist, so ist die Kirche eins (einig) in ihrem Glauben an Christus. Ja, es gibt eine Reihe von Kirchen, Kirchengemeinschaften, Denominationen. Aber die Einheit der Kirche besteht nicht in ihrer organisatorischen Einheit. Sie sollte stets eine Einheit im Glauben sein. Epheser 4 drückt das so aus: Da ist „ein Herr, ein Glaube, eine Taufe, ein Gott und Vater aller“.

Trotz unterschiedlicher Theologien in den Kirchen müssen wir an einer Sache festhalten: Christus als unseren gekreuzigten (und ich füge an: auferstandenen) Herrn zu verkündigen. Obwohl es mehrere Kirchen gibt, kann Christus selbst nicht zerteilt werden.

Als Zweites erkennen wir, dass das Kreuz einem *Minuszeichen* gleicht, das von einem weiteren, größeren Balken durchkreuzt wird.

Der horizontale Balken, der wie ein Minuszeichen (-) aussieht, steht für die Beziehung unter Menschen. Vor Gott sind wir alle sündenbehaftete Menschen. Wir neigen dazu, zu tun, was Gott nicht von uns möchte. In den Augen Gottes gleichen unsere Leben einem großen Minus, unsere Leben sind beladen mit allerhand negativem Ballast.

Dann ist da noch der zweite, größere vertikale Balken (|), der von oben herabkommt. Dieser Balken steht für die Beziehung zwischen Gott und uns Menschen. Es ist wichtig, festzuhalten, dass dieser Balken von oben kommt. Das heißt, dass Gott zu uns gekommen ist. Das heißt auch, dass wir nicht versuchen müssen, wie Gott sein zu wollen. Wir dürfen Mensch bleiben, weil Gott in Jesus Mensch geworden ist!

Wo sich der horizontale und der vertikale Balken treffen, wird angezeigt, dass Jesus zu uns gekommen ist, um den Schuldbrief zu tilgen, der mit seinen Forderungen gegen uns war, um ihn an das Kreuz zu heften (s. Kolosser 2,14). Mit Jesus, der von oben in unsere Welt gekommen ist, wird das Minuszeichen (unsere Sünde) aufgehoben! Am Ende sieht das Kreuz dann wie ein Pluszeichen aus – wenn auch ein etwas ungleichmäßiges (†).

Während wir uns diese Kreuz-Arithmetik ansehen, erkennen wir, dass Christus nicht zerteilt werden kann. Er möchte uns mit Gott vereinen. Wir lernen auch, dass am Kreuz unsere Sünde aufgehoben wurde. Im Kreuz erkennen wir wahrhaft eine Gotteskraft. Wegen des Kreuzes können wir auf Christus zählen!

Im Namen unseres Herrn Jesus Christus, euer
Björn E. Meinhardt, Pfarrer



We would like to extend a warm welcome to the Steineker family (Rita, Andreas and their daughter Dana) who officially became members of the St. Peter's Congregation on Sunday, February 9th.

Beautiful Musical Services during Lent

Submitted by Linda Lurvey

We are planning to have our congregation use the quiet and beautiful candlelight **"Holden Evening Prayer service"** during the season of Lent on Wednesday evenings, **March 4th and 18th at 7:00 p.m.** The music is absolutely beautiful, and it is a very meaningful time of musical meditation. The service time is short - approximately 30 minutes.

The **St. Peter's Singers** will be helping the congregation to sing this musical evening prayer. If you are interested in practising with us, welcome to join us after the English services on February 16th and March 1st @ 12 noon. The whole congregation is invited to sing along so our job is to help lead the singing from our pews.

On another note, **St. Peter's Singers** will also be starting to practise for **Good Friday & Easter Sunday** after the English Services during Lent. Please join us as you are able. Lift your heart and voice! Welcome!

Thank you

Submitted by Barb Schott

A big thank you to Linda Lurvey for filling in at the joint service on February 23rd, as well as for organizing the choir for the beautiful "Holden Evening Prayer" (written by Marty Haugen).



Submitted by Jerry Roehr

Below we would like to show you two more pictures of the construction of the St. Peter's Hall, the inside of the completed greenhouse and two other news items.



St. Peter's Hall construction.

Diese beiden Bilder zeigen den Fortschritt bei dem Bau der St. Peter's Halle



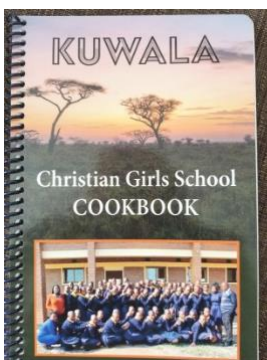
The Greenhouse.

Dieses Bild zeigt das fertige Gewächshaus von innen.



As announced in the last Newsletter, we have now ordered 61 hygiene kits (\$1,500) from the organization "Days for Girls" directly from Malawi. The kits will be delivered to the school by an instructor who will also explain how to use it.

61 dieser Hygiene Päckchen (\$1,500) sind in Malawi bestellt worden und sollen mit persönlicher Anweisung von der Organisation `Days for Girls` bei der Schule abgeliefert werden.



This cook book with contributions from St. Peter's, Joy Lutheran Church and Kuwala is now available from Gudrun in our church office (or from Jerry Roehr). It also contains interesting information about Malawi. The cost of the book is \$ 20.00.

Dieses Kochbuch ist jetzt von Gudrun in unserem Kirchenbüro (oder Jerry Roehr) erhältlich. Die Rezepte sind von St. Peter's, der Joy Kirche und Kuwala. Es enthält weiterhin interessante Informationen über das Land Malawi. Der Preis ist \$ 20.00 pro Kochbuch.

Renewed Mission of St. Peter's

*A presentation by Jerry Roehr
at
St. Peter's annual meeting, February 23, 2020.*

Sixteen years ago, council members and others discussed the present and future of our St. Peter's congregation. Eventually the congregation adopted a Mission Statement which is still in effect today and reads:

It is the mission of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church to build, support and serve a changing community through God's Grace.

That was in 2004. Has our community changed? Has our congregation changed? Have we changed? Has our Mission changed? Indeed, what is our Mission in a world which is no longer dominated by Christianity? What is our congregation's place in this 2020 world and beyond?

Individuals may have an answer. Many may have the same answer. On the other hand, everyone may have a different answer. What is that answer? What is the plan for the future of St. Peter's? More importantly, what will God have in store for us?

In this year's annual meeting agenda, we see an item called: "Renewed Mission of St. Peter's". Who has the answer to that? Will our ministry be the same? Will it require different leaders? Will it mean different forms of worship? Who will the leaders be in two, five or ten years?

We cannot look at the past to determine the future; we must look to the future to determine the future. For this reason, the Church Council will establish a working group consisting of all members of council and other interested persons to address the past, present and future of our congregation.

We will do this by starting with a complete blank sheet of paper. In the coming months, at some half day meetings, we will develop a future, or strategic plan with the working title as stated in our agenda "Renewed Mission of St. Peter's", or as Pastor Lurvey quoted, in our Mission meeting quoted Romans 1/16: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ".

We will invite interested persons to join the council to fill that blank piece of paper with ideas; to explore what might be possible and/or to find out what may be impossible.

Trusting that God will provide divine guidance, our council at the March meeting, will receive instructions as to how to proceed and will schedule their first half day planning session thereafter.

NALC Conferences

Prepared by Jerry Roehr and Barbara Schott

The North America Lutheran Church provides three opportunities for every congregation and other interested persons to participate at theological conferences. The conferences provide an opportunity to learn and grow our faith, as well as to network. In addition, and in conjunction with the two conferences, are sessions to receive reports and make decisions about the “business” of the wider NALC Church.

The first of these conferences is:

April 21 – 24, 2020: Canadian Rockies Theological Conference, Canmore, Alberta. Conference Registration is \$350.00 Cdn. Air fare/travelling expenses and hotel costs are additional expenses.

The theme for this year’s conference is: Non-Religious Christianity in a World of Religious Non-Christians. An introduction to the conference states:

“People in society have become less religious, and we have wondered what we are to do about it. However, in our quest to make the gospel relevant to people’s lives we have too often come up with all sorts of thinly disguised self-improvement programs which simply become another law and condemn us, but with no word of grace to accompany it. Our mission remains the same: to be a community where the love of God in Jesus Christ is proclaimed to all. A community of people who know they don’t measure up, but also know that they are loved. Our speakers will explore this kind of Christian community.”

Following the theological conference, members of the Canadian NALC congregations gather in Calgary to hear reports from the Canada Section of NALC and discuss the business of the Canadian Mission District. The Canada Section was incorporated to comply with provision in the Canadian and US Income Tax Law to manage the business of the (now one) Canadian Mission District or any future Mission Districts in Canada.

St. Peter’s has a budget for conferences to cover some of the expenses of attending. If you are interested in attending The Rocky Mountain Conference in Canmore, Alberta and the Convocation/Business meeting in Calgary that follows, please contact the Church office: 204-775-6477 or contact Barbara Schott at b.schott@shaw.ca or at 204-257-3531. Additional information is also available on the NALC website: <https://thenalc.org/event/canadian-rockies-theological-conference/>

There will be information on the next conference, which takes place **August 3 - 7, 2020**, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, “Luther Week” in our next newsletter. This event is the main gathering of all congregations within the NALC, both USA and Canada divisions.

Installation of new council members

Submitted by Barbara Schott

The installation of new council members will take place on **Sunday, March 8th**, at the close of the 9:15 service as well as the start of the 11:00 am service.

Thank you to outgoing members of council for your service:
Debbie Heckert, Kara Heckert, Siegi Kitzmann and Max Schreckenbach

We welcome new council members Brigitte Albrecht, Georg Schreckenbach, Jake Wiens and thank you for willingness to serve; we thank Martin Bunge and Jerry Roehr for renewing their terms.

Condolences

Our condolences go out to Michael and Robert Zacharias on the death of their mother, Helen Zacharias, on January 29, 2020.

The St. Peter's Congregation

Bible Study on Acts

Submitted by Pastor Bjoern Meinhardt

You are invited to join us for Bible study on Saturday, March 14 and 28. We start at 10:30 and meet at the church.

In this study we will learn, talk about and discuss how the early church grew and spread through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For your preparation you may want to read through the Acts chapters 6-10.

Any submissions to the April 2020 edition of the St. Peter's Newsletter should be made 10 days prior to the first Sunday in April. So, submissions for the April Newsletter should be made by noon Thursday March 26, 2020. Submissions should be sent to Ortrud Oellermann and Kirsten Koch at stpetersnews@gmail.com