



NEWS OF PEACE
Peace Lutheran Church, Steeleville, IL
A Congregation of the Wartburg Parish
2017



Reflections from the Pastor

Death & Darkness – Easter 2017

Pastor Duncan's Easter Sermon – Based on Matthew 28:1-10

The audio of the sermon can be found at wartburgparish.com/media

It is still dark outside this morning. Though as I look at the windows I can see just a hint of light and I know that it will not be long before the sun will rise in the sky and light will flood through these windows. But inside we have our lights on and we are comfortable. The candles we have lit are for symbolic use since they have no practical use anymore. We do not need these candles to see! I think that we take light for granted and that we really don't take darkness seriously any more. After all we are dependent and comfortable with our electricity, our lamps and industrial lighting and so forth. The fact is that we can get up at any time of the night and turn on a lamp and essentially create day in order to do whatever we want at any time.

But, can you imagine a world where that is not the case. A world where there are no artificial electric lights and instead the world is lit only by fire? This is the world of antiquity: of the 1st century, the time of Jesus and actually continuing on for centuries afterwards. Sure, they had oil lamps, maybe some candles, maybe some torches soaked in oil, but the oil and the wax were expensive, and besides they didn't produce all that much light anyway. Most folks simply surrendered to the darkness when it came.

This is why darkness is such a potent symbol in the Gospels – *You are the light of the world!* Teaches Jesus; *Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven; No one would set a lamp under a bushel basket but on a lamp stand...* those from Matthew; and from John: *The light shines in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not.* The people to whom Jesus ministered and the disciples were well acquainted with darkness! And they also knew death!

Matthew begins his Gospel in darkness and death with his account of Jesus' birth. A teenage girl who is betrothed turns up pregnant – this has the smell of death already; Joseph resolves to "put her away quietly" – more death; the infant Jesus is visited by odd strangers from the east who unwittingly alert the dictator, death-dealer Herod to the birth of a potentially rival King and the holy family only barely has enough time to escape before Herod's troops swoop down on Bethlehem bringing murder and bloodshed and grief and intense sorrow - Bringing more darkness and death! And throughout the Gospel, Jesus constantly encounters darkness and death and wherever he goes he reaches out to bring life and light into these dark encounters. Jesus heals, Jesus feeds, Jesus loves, Jesus accepts the unacceptable, Jesus eats with the hated, Jesus cares for the stranger and the foreigner, Jesus offers forgiveness to the unforgivable. "THIS" Jesus tells his disciples, "this is what the Messiah does: the Messiah Loves, the Messiah forgives, the Messiah dies!"

Impossible say the disciples! Impossible & blasphemy say the Pharisees and the authorities. A loving Messiah, a forgiving Messiah, a Messiah that showers grace and peace upon all? This can't be! The Messiah is supposed to be on OUR side; the Messiah is supposed to hate what we hate, and despises whom we despise, and rejects who and what we reject, and applaud our violence against those who we judge deserving of violence and as being less than human!

"No!" says Jesus: the Messiah Loves, the Messiah forgives, the Messiah dies! The Messiah dies! Into this culture of darkness and death Jesus, God incarnate, enters into this very darkness and death himself. Jesus enters into the illness and the grief and the suffering which he encounters; and Jesus finally on the cross enters into death. And, that is that! Or so everyone thought! Darkness and the death have won the day! Jesus dies abandoned on the cross (except for a few women) and he is placed in a tomb and a stone is rolled in front of the entrance. And not only that, but the authorities post a guard, in order to make sure that death would have the last word. That is that!

But.... Early in the morning, when it is dark and the light is just beginning to dawn a group of women find their way to the tomb and according to Matthew they suddenly experience the ground shake and they see the stone rolling away from the tomb and they see a bright image which announces that death does NOT have the last word! "He is not here, for he has been raised!!! HE HAS BEEN RAISED! And then as they run back away from the tomb they encounter Jesus themselves! Jesus = Emmanuel = *God with us* is there even in the midst of death and darkness! But Jesus has now transformed the darkness into blazing light and death has given way to life! A world controlled by darkness and death is a hopeless world, a world of pain and struggle – but a world where light and life have overcome darkness and death is a world of hope, and love and grace and peace!

He is Risen! *He has Risen indeed!*

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He is Risen! *He has Risen indeed!*

And when we say that – when we proclaim and shout that from the hilltops and in the valleys we are proclaiming that we stand with the powers of light and life and that we know and assert that ultimately the powers of darkness and death will have no power and be finally completely overcome!

This is why we are all here today; this is why some of us assembled in the dark this morning for the Vigil! Even though it still appears as though the powers of darkness and death are winning the day in our own time. Today – Easter day 2017 - we proclaim that light and life will prevail in the end and darkness and death will be wholly defeated! But yet we look around and what do we see? Rampant hate; active racism and Anti-Semitism; death camps in Chechnya for gay men; gas attacks on innocent children in Syria; desperate refugees looking for a better life and finding the doors slammed in their faces; reckless destruction of our environment for the sake of profits; irrational bombings; both spontaneous and systemic violence; threats and intimidation; and a whole lot of fear! Fear of course is the most effective tool in the quiver of the darkness and those who would manipulate others and maintain a world ruled over by death use it to great effect!

But when we proclaim that Christ is risen we proclaim that fear has no power and that we refuse to be manipulated by fear! As the darkness is dispelled by the light we can begin to see the faces of all of those others who we are being taught to fear, all those others who are different than us in any number of ways; and low and behold the light allows us to look into their eyes and shows us that they are in fact our brothers and sisters - they are our neighbors whom we are to love as we love ourselves; and even our so-called enemies we can begin to recognize as brothers and sisters whom we are also called to love (Matthew 5!)? To proclaim resurrection is to say NO to fear; NO to hate; NO to judgment; NO to violence of any kind! To embrace resurrection is to accept God's love and to start seeing with the eyes of Jesus, and to start walking with the feet of Jesus, and to start reaching out with the arms and hands of Jesus and to start loving with the heart of Jesus!

When we proclaim that Jesus is Risen we proclaim that Love has won and will win in the end! And when we proclaim that Jesus is risen we affirm that there is always reason to hope. For no matter how dark the darkness, the light will disperse it completely; and no matter how dead death appears it is not stronger than our risen Lord!

Christ is Risen – He is Risen indeed!

Alleluia!



Worship throughout Easter

Holy Communion will be celebrated at both services for all of the season of Easter. We will return to the schedule of Communion on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month beginning at the end of June when we enter into the Sundays after Pentecost – the Green season.

God and Country – The annual *God and Country Service* will be held on Sunday, July 2 at 11:00am in the Steepleville Commons Park.

**Thank
You!**

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Holy Week and the Easter Breakfast. We could not do all we do without your help.

Sunday school would like to thank the Christian Ed. Committee for the chocolate crosses.

Thank you to Orville Rathert for making a new cross for the front of the church and Lynette Bollmann for decorating the cross for Easter. It is in memory of Robert Parker.



Altar Flowers

Flower Chart is looking good for the summer. There are openings on June 18/19, 24/25 and July 1/2 if you would like

to sign up. Thank you for the flowers previously. Remember you sign up on the chart and then put your \$30 in the offering or give it to the office and we do the rest.



Central/Southern Illinois

Synod Assembly – The

Central/Southern Illinois Synod will hold its annual assembly June 1-3 in Collinsville, Illinois.

The theme this year is Redeemed

for Reformation. The Southern Conference clergy and congregations will be serving as hosts this year. If you would like to participate and volunteer for one of the many volunteer positions please contact the office or speak to Pastor Duncan. The Church Council have appointed these delegates who will represent Peace at the assembly: Pastor Duncan, Julie Posth, Debbie Picker and Doug Ernsting.



Adult
Confirmation

NOTICE: There has been in interest expressed in an **Adult Confirmation Class**. If you are interested in joining the church or would like a refresher course, please contact the office. Time & dates are to be announced.



Morning Prayer continues every Wednesday morning at 9:00 AM in the chapel.



Wednesday Morning Bible study

We have been on break but will return on May 10 and continue into the summer. My original plan was to do a class on Wisdom literature, but as I began to study it I have decided against it. Instead we will focus on Paul's letter to the Romans. This is particularly appropriate for this year, because we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this year in 2017 and Luther was so dependent on the book of Romans for his theological insights. This class will bring in some discussion of Luther and for materials we will use a new curriculum recently published to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by Kerygma. All are welcome – please plan to join us for this fascinating and at times challenging letter of Paul's

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM – The Sunday morning bible study will be on break until July (for a variety of reasons). We will meet on July 9 and go from there. Our focus will be the 2nd half of Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians and a little bit with II Corinthians as well. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore this exceptionally important letter in the development of the faith.

We meet at 10:30AM in the library. The following is the schedule:

July 9	Bible Study	August 6	Bible Study
July 16	Bible Study	August 13	Bible Study
July 23	Bible Study	August 20	Bible Study



FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

The Christian Ed

Committee misses you in the summer! We've decided to have a Family

Fellowship time on the last weekend of June, July and August. We are still in the planning stages so watch your bulletins and Face Book for more info. It may be breakfast after Sunday Services or movies after Saturday Services, but it will be fun. Everyone is invited to have some fun and fellowship.



Letter Carriers Food Drive

Steeleville Post Office
will have their food drive

on Saturday, May 13th. Please leave non-perishable food by your mailbox and the carriers will pick it up. All the food donated will be donated to Peace Lutheran Food Pantry.

GET INVOLVED

Are you trying to get more involved in church? Do you have a bit of extra time you can give to the church's many ministries? We have a lot of things going and a lot of kids that need your thoughtfulness and time and support. I have two Programs that you may be interested in:



First is the food pantry. The community food pantry is always in need of new workers. The hours needed are 8:45am - 12:00pm Tuesdays. You only work about once every 5 weeks and always with other volunteers.



Wednesday All Stars is also in need of new helpers! We need someone who can help in Music/Art or teaching lessons. If you have a

talent, collection, travel pictures with cool stories, anything that interests the kids, please let me know. You can volunteer for one afternoon, the school year, or anytime in between. I truly believe it a very important ministry of our church and one of the best after school programs around. If you are interested or have any questions please call Julie Posth at church or 618-301-6561.



Women of the Church

WARTBURG PARISH WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Our next meeting is May 4th, at which time we will have election of officers. The service project will be collecting hygiene products (bar

soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and deodorant) for S.H.E.E.P.



Our Semi Annual Meeting will be coming up in June. This is the program meeting which all committees and organizations submit their reports. **Reports are due in the Office by Monday, May 22nd** (sooner if possible). If you have questions, please call the office (965-3119). The reports will not be mailed out. They will be available for you to pick up the Sunday before the meeting. Please attend this very important meeting. We need all our members, sharing in the work of our congregation.

If you would be interested in serving on the Church Council please contact Pastor or a member of the council.



Address changes:

Ralph Dunlap – address unknown
Terrin Krantz – address unknown
Dylan Linders – address unknown
JoAnn Mevert – 5021 Rockcastle Rd., Steeleville, IL 62288



Releases:

Delmar Knop



Death: Helen Wilson died on March 25, 2017 at the Sparta

Community Hospital. The funeral services were held on Wednesday, March 29th at the Wilson's Funeral Home in Steeleville with Debra Rathert, Lay Minister officiating. Burial was at Paradise Cemetery in Steeleville.



Funeral Planning Guide

Just a reminder that we have a Funeral guideline and funeral planning packet in the carenotes in the Narthex if you would like one to fill out. The checklist goes over the choice of venue (church or funeral home), the choice of lessons, the choice of memories to be shared, hymns to be sung, communion or no communion and so on. This checklist gives you the opportunity to make some of these choices yourself and can be a gift to your family as well. If you would like one to fill out or just look at please contact the office, we can send you one, you can discuss it with the Pastor and it will be kept in a file in the office.



First Communion

First communion was given in early April to the following: Cale Newby, Gabie Hood, Trevor Holliday and Avery Roberts. Blessings for each of them and their families.



LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday May 21st is the last day of Sunday School for the school year. We need to end this year with some fun.

So... Bring your towels, wear your suits, and get ready to get wet! We will have fun games and fun food, wet drinks and dry food, and lots of laughs!! So come on down to the park, directly after Worship service, and be prepared to get soaked. Parents and others welcome!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL ISN'T FAR AWAY

Plans for this year's Vacation Bible School **Hero Central** (June 19 – 23, 2017) **are well under way.** We thank those of you who have already volunteered to help in one way or another. However, a great deal of help is still needed: Helpers (youth entering 7th grade and up, adults, retirees, etc., are welcome), Kitchen Helpers, Recreation Helpers, and Craft Helpers. As always, we will need donations of snacks for the week. Remember: You don't have to be available to help all week. Any of the days throughout the week that you are available we can use the help. Just let us know what days work for you.

Please prayerfully consider assisting with any of the above and call Michelle Gremmels at 615-3535 to volunteer. We anticipate another full house of children and will need all the help we can get.

Watch the newsletters and bulletins for further information

Michelle Gremmels
VBS Director



*For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.
Luke 19:10 NRSV*



Wednesday All Stars

Wednesday All Stars is finished for the year. We had a wonderful year with a great group of kids.

Next year begins on Wednesday, September 13th. Look for registration forms later in the summer. Remember, all 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students are welcome.



GRADUATES: We would like to express our congratulations to our graduates from high school

and college on May 27/28 by acknowledging them and praying for them during our services and by naming them in the July/August Newsletter. If you are a 2017 graduate or a parent of a graduate, please call the church office (965-3119) and let us know who is graduating and from where so we can recognize them. Thank you very much.

ACOLYTES



ACOLYTE TRAINING

If you are in the 5th through 8th grade this fall and are not an acolyte now but would like to be trained to serve as an acolyte please contact the church office at 965-3119. We will be holding our acolyte training event in early June. Let us know if you can join us for this event.

Confirmation classes will conclude in May. Congratulations to Andrew Froemling, Connor Haertling, Gus Higgins, Harry Higgins, Kaylee Luehr, Maegan Mullholland, Gage Roberts, Addie Rubach and Alayna Sauerwein on their confirmation on June 4.

2017-2018 Confirmation: We have started planning for next year. If you expect or would like to participate we ask that you contact the office for a registration form, or go to the confirmation page on our website - wartburgparish.com - to register.