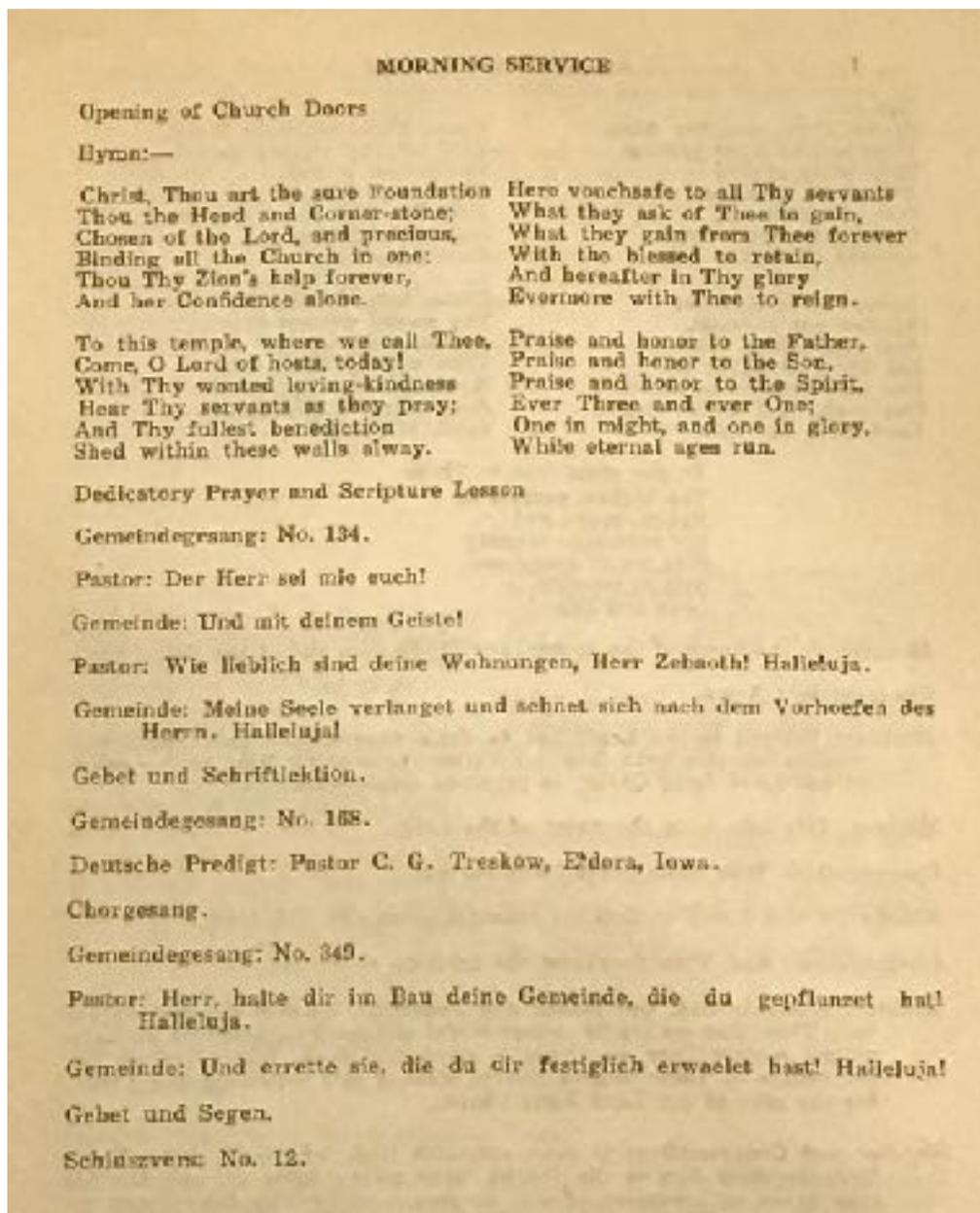


Let Us Go to the House of the Lord!

For this March/April Parish Messenger I will be combining the pastor's article and the St. John's history section into one. The following is a copy of the opening page of the Order of Dedication Services of St. John's Lutheran Church from November 10, 1929. This is the dedication of the newly constructed sanctuary which replaced the 24 x 36 ft. sanctuary St. John's purchased from Fenton Lutheran Church in 1915 for \$500.



There are a number of lessons we can learn about God and His Church from this worship folder excerpt.

First, you no doubt noticed a few strange words in this bulletin. That's German! *Gemeindegeseang* No. 134 is a hymn from the German hymnal (*gemeinde* = congregation; *gesang* = singing). The *Deutsche Predigt* (German preacher) for the service was Pastor Treskow, the first pastor of St. John's. The service concluded with a *Gebet und Segen* (prayer and blessing). We learn from this half-German, half-English service folder that our God is a God of all nations, languages, and people. God offers salvation to anyone who repents and believes in the gospel no matter what language they speak. Something else we learn from this mixed-language service folder is that the most important part of proclaiming the Word of God is that all who hear the Word are able to understand it and trust in it. The 1920s and 30s were an interesting time in rural Midwestern states because this was a time when many German grandparents still spoke almost exclusively German, many parents spoke both German and English fluently, and many children spoke almost exclusively English. In response to this reality Lutheran churches slowly began to convert their services from German to English, making sure to offer both language options if there was still a need to do so. This practice is a wonderful confession of faith that to be Lutheran is not to be German, but to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and His pure, unchanging Word.

The second lesson we can learn from this service folder is the fact that this is the *first page* of the folder. This dedication event consisted of a morning, afternoon, and evening service! Many of us, myself included, sometimes fall into an idolatry of time. We watch a two or three hour sporting event without batting an eye, but we consider a Divine Service that runs a bit over an hour to be the most severe form of torture! When we think of all-day church events we think of ancient Israel in the temple or Christians of a different culture such as the Christians in many African countries. Consider, though, that less than 100 years ago Lutherans were attending day-long events consisting of three worship services right here in Burt! This can be a lesson for us that however busy our lives might become, we always have time to sit at the feet of our eternal God who keeps constant vigil over us with His mercy and forgiveness.

Thirdly, consider this: someone took great care and likely quite a few hours to handwrite out a draft of this service, type it out on a typewriter, and perhaps run copies one at a time through a mimeograph machine; yet it took me all of 45 seconds to take a picture of this service on my smartphone, copy and paste it into a word document, and email it off to be included with the other Parish Messenger articles. On the one hand, technology gives us the opportunity to complete many of the tasks of the Church in an incredibly efficient manner. Technology also gives us new opportunities to proclaim the Word, such as through our service livestreams and text message devotions and prayers. On the other hand, as I read through this 1929 service folder I thought about how there are sometimes advantages to doing things "the old-fashioned" way. For example: reading Scripture out of a paper Bible or singing hymns from a paper hymnbook gives these words and praises of God a certain permanent feeling that a screen cannot replicate. Sending a hand-written note communicates a level of care that is difficult to express through email or text message. Worshipping in a building that was constructed specifically and primarily for church services signifies a level of importance in what we are doing more than worshipping in a gymnasium or auditorium typically can. Of

course reading Scripture from a smartphone, sending a caring message via text, and worshipping God in a concert hall are all good things and things that have benefitted the faith many, including myself, throughout their lives. However, this old, typed-out publication gives us a chance to consider how there are benefits for our faith in both how technology speeds things up, and also how the old-fashioned ways slow things down.

Lastly, we can learn from this service folder that the building dedicated in 1929 was not the first building the members of St. John's worshiped in, and it may not be the last building members of St. John's ever worship in. Our historical record at St. John's shows that we have always loved the house of God. Families have given great sums of money to build and furnish our church building. Individuals have spent hours over the years cleaning and restoring various areas of the exterior and interior of the building. The building is our confession of faith that we believe God dwells with us in His Word and Sacrament which we receive in our sanctuary. However, the hymns and prayers in this 1929 service folder confessed at the dedication of our building that although the stone and wood of the building are helpful to our faith, they are not the substance of our faith. Whether we are able to worship in this building for another hundred years, or a tornado or fire or some other disaster destroys the building next year, we know that all who have faith in Jesus Christ will dwell in the true and eternal house of the Lord forever.

These reflections on this service of dedication from 1929 are meant to inspire both thanksgiving to God for the past, and also hope and encouragement for the future. We continue to be in a state of change at St. John's: change due to the pandemic but also the natural generational changes caused by the passing of time. As we continue into the Easter season and the year ahead of us, now is not the time to long for the past or grumble about the future. Now is the time to follow in the footsteps of our fellow members at St. John's and seek out the very best ways to proclaim the eternal Word of God in the most faithful and effective ways possible. Now is the time to not hold onto what is the most comfortable and desirable way for us conduct our life together, but rather to continually assess how we can best serve the grace of God to every member at St. John's to their greatest spiritual benefit. God be with you as we continue to do just that!

Joy in Christ,

Pastor Thomas Cowell
St. John's Lutheran Church, Burt IA, LCMS
Lent, Anno Domini 2021

St. John's Easter Egg Hunt!

Join us Saturday, April 3 at 10:00 a.m. by the St. John's garages for our first ever Easter egg hunt! The event will consist of an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus' resurrection, participate in an Easter egg hunt with a special area for younger children, and enjoy refreshments afterward.

If you would like to donate a pan of bars or cookies for this event please contact a Board of Education member or Pastor.

Easter Breakfast

We're excited to be able to enjoy Easter breakfast together again this year! We'll serve a breakfast of rolls and drinks in the church basement following our 8:00 a.m. Easter Divine Service. Those who feel more comfortable taking their breakfast "to-go" will have the opportunity to do so a few minutes before everyone else heads down to sit down. Those staying to eat will have the opportunity to do so at tables spread throughout the basement.

If you would like to donate a pan of rolls for Easter breakfast please contact a Board of Education member or Pastor.



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 6 - Shannon Koestler
- 8 - Brant Karels
- 9 - Pam Madsen
- 9 - Janice Reimers
- 10 - Jill Cherland
- 16 - Kitty Bierstedt
- 18 - Jaelyn Rae Fox
- 18 - Jessica Parsons
- 19 - Amanda Heenan Heyes
- 21 - John Person
- 24 - Charles Christensen
- 25 - Amy Marlow
- 26 - Kelsey Crosser
- 26 - Lucas Parsons
- 31 - Amy Bierstedt



SPECIAL SENIORS

- Janice Reimers - March 9
- John Person - March 21
- Ruth Nerum - April 1
- Don Reimers - April 15
- Eugene Marlow - April 24

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 1 - Ruth Nerum
- 2 - Angie Thompson
- 4 - Caleb Christensen
- 5 - Kelly Fitzgerald
- 5 - Cameron Haase
- 6 - Jacob Christensen
- 7 - Christina Heyes
- 9 - Tony Hatten
- 11 - Michele Parsons
- 13 - Brenda Schutjer
- 15 - Don Reimers
- 16 - Shane Trunkhill
- 17 - Doris Blocker
- 17 - Cora Christensen
- 20 - Teresa Christensen
- 21 - Kuleen Smith
- 24 - Joshua Culbertson
- 24 - Justin Culbertson
- 24 - Eugene Marlow
- 26 - Vicki Briggs
- 28 - Aaron Bixby

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