

# RESURRECTION NEWS



**January 2024**

## Pastor's Letter

### January 2024

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

A few weeks ago, the Vatican published a document titled *Fiducia Supplicans*, which permits Roman Catholic priests to bless couples in an “irregular union” (i.e. a homosexual couple). The implications of this document are still being debated, so I don’t intend to offer a full response to the document here, but I do want to take this opportunity to reflect on what exactly a blessing is, Scripturally speaking.

In the Greek of the Bible, “to bless” is the word *eulogeō*. The prefix, *eu-*, means “good”, and the root, *logeō*, means “to speak.” At its most basic level, to *eulogeō*, or “to eulogize”, is “to speak a good word” of someone.

Humanly speaking, we bless by speaking a good word of someone on a regular basis. When a loved one dies, a eulogy may be written by the family, or people may gather to eulogize about the deceased to carry on his or her memory and to grieve together. As Christians, we also bless God regularly at the conclusion of the Divine Service and the service of Matins/Vespers in the *Benedicamus* (from the Latin *bene-*, meaning “good”, and *dicamus*, meaning “let us speak”). Liturgically, the proper response to the *Benedicamus* (“Bless we the Lord”/“Let us bless the Lord”) is “Thanks be to God.” After all, what better word could we speak of the Lord than to give thanks for the great things He has done for us (see Psalm 103)?

When God blesses us, it is both similar and different to a human blessing. God’s blessing involves His speech, as at the culmination of creation: *And God blessed [Adam & Eve], and God said unto them, “Be fruitful and multiply...”* (Genesis 1:28). But herein lies the difference between God’s blessing and a human blessing: While God’s blessing is speech, it is not mere speech. God’s speech is performative, which is to say that it accomplishes what God says. When God said, “*Let there be light*”, immediately there was light (Genesis 1:3). See all of Genesis 1 and most of the miracles of our Lord for further examples of this. God’s blessing is distinct from the blessings of all humans because His blessings alone bring good words into reality.

The all-important question in relation to the recent document published by the Vatican, then, is, into which category does the church’s blessing, spoken by its called minister, fall? Is the blessing spoken by the called ministers of Christ a mere human blessing—nothing more than a good word? Or is the Church’s blessing, spoken by its ministers, the very blessing of God? A couple of biblical examples are in order.

In Genesis 27, Jacob infamously deceived his aging father, Isaac, and steals the blessing intended for his brother, Esau. When the deception was complete, we are told: *And [Jacob] came near and kissed [Isaac]; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said... “Be master over your brethren, And let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!”* (Genesis 27:27, 29). When Esau returned and Jacob’s deception became known, we read: *Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, “Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed”* (Genesis 27:33). It is this last phrase which is particularly relevant for our question. When Isaac spoke the blessing over Jacob, passing to him the promise given to Abraham (see Genesis 12:3), he saw it as an irrevocable blessing—God’s blessing, even when spoken by a man, remains God’s blessing.

This is also the case when the Lord instructs the priest Aaron to speak the famous benediction (“The Lord bless you and keep you”, etc.) over God’s people. God says of this blessing: *“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them”* (Numbers 6:27). God’s blessing, even when spoken by a man, is God’s blessing, not a mere human blessing. Luther’s Small Catechism on the Office of the Keys is relevant here as well.

Therefore, the Church, particularly its called ministers, are not authorized to speak a blessing apart from God’s institution. What God has not blessed, indeed, what God calls sin, His Church is not authorized to bless, for it speaks on His behalf.

In Christ,  
Pastor Akers

## Notes from your Deaconess

Dear Brothers and Sisters of LCR,

Another month arrives with more changes, losses, and surprises.

Our Lord creates, fills, directs, and sustains all.

Even as we wander, wonder, and wish for clear answers, solutions, and concrete plans to follow, God upholds the universe, unseen but weaving things as he will.

He has opened for us his eternal kingdom by Jesus' incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection, and continues to offer this salvation and forgiveness by providing his word and sacraments through his shepherds and flock scattered through the world.

I intend to introduce books of the Apocrypha in the coming months through these notes. Those books have through most of Christian church history been considered profitable for believers to read. They date from the period of time between the Old Testament and Christ's birth, and most originally were written in Greek. "These ancient writings provide additional insight into the history and thought of the Jewish people during the centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ" (from the preface to the ESV *Apocrypha*).

I plan to hold Saturday women's Bible studies on January 6 (Epiphany) and 20. We'll continue our discussions of identity using St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians "Whose are we?" I can add you to my email list if you let me know. I send an email during the week prior to each meeting. I also can provide a Zoom link if you'd like to join that way instead of in person. We meet downstairs in classroom 104 at 8:30 a.m. for a time of fellowship, Bible study, and sharing of prayer concerns.

Under his mercy,  
Sharon M. Conover

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:15-17*

### **Thank You's**

Thank you for your wonderful gift of \$500 for your partnership in preparing our students for future ministry in service to the Gospel.

In Christ,

Vicki Biggs, Sr. VP Seminary Advancement  
Concordia Seminary

Thank you for your gracious contribution for sponsoring 3 Garuna Kids and 1 Garuna Teacher. Your support is greatly appreciated. May God richly bless you as together we continue to partner in service of our Savior in Southeast Asia.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev Jeffery Ehlers, Chairman  
Garuna Ministries

Thank you for your support to the Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry and joining with us in bringing comfort, love, and safety to those through this gift.

Sharing in the comfort of Christ,  
Rev. Chris Singer, President/CEO  
Lutheran Church Charities

We are so thankful for your generosity! Your support helps us reach those considering abortion with love and trust in the name of Jesus.

God bless you,  
Wendy Merrill  
RESOLVE Life Center

### **Sunday Morning Bible Class**

Sunday morning Bible Class meets weekly at 8:45 a.m. in Room 201. Each week, Pastor will lead a deeper study of the Epistle Reading to help us prepare for the Divine Service. We will also have time to discuss your questions from the Read the Bible in Two Years readings.

### **Thursday Bible Class**

Thursday Bible class continues to meet weekly at 10:30 a.m. in Room 201. We are studying 1 Corinthians.

### **Game Night**

The first Game night will be **Wednesday, January 17, from 5:30-7:00.** We will have the popcorn machine going and a few games to choose from but please feel free to bring your own drink, a snack to share, and a few games! For questions, please contact Josh Schiebel at (240) 839-8074 or Amber Akers.

### **Men's Breakfast**

The next men's breakfast is scheduled for **Saturday, January 20.** Breakfast will be served at 8 a.m. with a study to follow at 9 a.m.

### **LWML**

LWML will be holding their next meeting on January 25 at 9:30 a.m. We made \$1,967 at the Christmas fair. The monies from the fair will be divided up to different missions here in Maine and LCMS. I also want to thank all the people who put long hours into making the fair a success. Thank you also to the men and women who set up the tables and put them back.

Blessings to you all!

Becky Cote

## **January Stewardship**

|  | <u>January 7</u>           | <u>January 14</u>            | <u>January 21</u>               | <u>January 28</u>                 |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>Acolyte</u>                             | Callum Goldsmith           | Evan Farr                    | Hayley Farr                     | Matthew Akers                     |
| <u>Subdeacon</u>                           | Chris Batson               | Dan Callahan                 | Charlie MacPherson              | Brad Fitzpatrick                  |
| <u>Primary Usher</u><br><u>Add'l Usher</u> | John Ayotte<br>Rick Kubeck | Mo Cote<br>Glenn Carlson Jr. | Mike Hein<br>Jeff Sammons       | Steven Applebee<br>Mark Larsen    |
| <u>Greeters</u>                            | Wilson Family              | Gail Maestas &<br>Julie Kohl | Sharon Klipp &<br>James Breslin | Avis Grant &<br>Dorthy McAllister |
| <u>Altar Care</u>                          | Amber Akers                | Jo Scheibel                  | Sharon Conover                  | Amanda Goldsmith                  |
| <u>Flowers</u>                             | Charlie & Jen MacPherson   | Steve & Lydia Bendas         | Steve & Lydia Bendas            | Sharon Klipp                      |
| <u>Fellowship</u>                          | Board of Elders            | Open                         | Open                            | Open                              |

## Defending the Faith

### *Sometimes the Best Defense is a Good Defense.*

Continuing with our series on what other faiths believe, let's talk about ELCA – the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As the largest “Lutheran” body in America, they are a body that we are wise to try to understand.

ELCA was formed through a merger of three Lutheran churches in 1988. Those were The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in America. They claim 3.3 million members in 8,900 congregations.

ELCA claims to be Lutheran, but doesn't mention to Book of Concord in their “About” or “What We Believe” sections of their website, though it does get a mention in the subsection of “What do Lutherans Believe”. It's almost as though they don't include themselves in that group.

On Sacred Scripture, the prevailing view (and there will be exceptions) is that the Bible is not God's inerrant Word, but rather that it “contains” the Word of God. That means that some parts are God's Word and other parts are not. Who is to decide?

On the sacraments, ELCA correctly professes Christ's “true presence” in the elements of Communion. I could not find any details on their belief and practice of Baptism on their website. Nothing about it being a means of Grace, but quite a bit on “Living our Baptismal Covenant”, with a heavy emphasis on social and environmental justice.

That said, they do seem to hold a partially correct view of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Grace, Faith and the bodily resurrection of Jesus, though they bizarrely add social justice elements to God's identity.

However, they completely depart from orthodox Christianity by ordaining pastors and bishops who are women (1 Tim 2:12) and in thoroughly embracing the LGBT agenda - in spite of clear, consistent and unifocal condemnation of the same throughout the Bible. (Gen 1:27, Lev 18:22, 1 Cor 6:9-10, Rom 1: 26-27).

They not only perform same sex “weddings” but also ordain openly, unrepentant homosexual pastors. A California ELCA Synod has even elected an openly unrepentant homosexual bishop. That bishop replaced one who is transgender.

ELCA proudly celebrates “pride month”. Churches are often adorned with rainbow flags. Some even confess the “sparkle creed” (you'll have to look this garbage up) in place of the Apostles, Nicaean and Athanasian Creeds.

This is a radical, belligerent response in direct opposition to classical Christianity.

The Head Bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton, has a wildly twisted view of the Gospel. Here's what she has to say (from [www.exposingtheELCA.com](http://www.exposingtheELCA.com)):

*"Here's the gospel. Human beings are part of the creation. Human beings are connected to everything in the cosmos. Human beings are connected to God. We are not doomed to alienation. That God is more present than we are to ourselves gives us a path to reconnect with God, each other and all of creation. The judgment is that we do not even perceive that the One who created all things is intimately present. The promise is that the One who created all things is intimately present. We--all created things--are family."*

Like the best of lies, there are specks of truth in this one. Yes, we are part of the Creation. Yes, we are connected to God. No, we are not doomed to alienation (from Him, I presume is what she meant).

**However, that is absolutely NOT the Gospel.** That is rank heresy and a damnable lie.

The Gospel (Good News) is that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, died on the Cross to pay for the sins of all those who would accept His free gift of salvation. Like Him, we will rise on the Last Day and be with Him for all of eternity.

The “Judgement” is emphatically NOT that we fail to perceive that God is “intimately present”. The judgement is that we are all guilty of sin and need the constant forgiveness of Jesus (Rom 3:23). Without that forgiveness, we are rightfully damned for all of eternity.

Some ELCA churches refuse to use the revealed names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, substituting gender-neutral and in some cases, female terms instead. In one case, a San Francisco church ([herchurch.org](http://herchurch.org)) conducts a “goddess rosary” service with prayers by a “feminist theologian”. They held a “resurrecting the goddess” summit to discuss the “divine feminine”. This same “church” even has a “resident witch”.

In summary, ELCA is at the very least heterodox in many of their views and outright heretical in others. Those who say that ELCA is “Lutheran in name only” seem to have a pretty strong case – as do those who say that ELCA has outright abandoned classical Christianity.

As always, I'm open to comments and especially criticism at [charles.j.macpherson@gmail.com](mailto:charles.j.macpherson@gmail.com).

Defending the Faith

Charlie MacPherson, SDG



## Monthly Worship

January 7

The Epiphany of Our Lord

Psalm: 72

Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1-6

Epistle: Ephesians 3:2b-12

Holy Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

January 14

The Baptism of Our Lord

Psalm: 89

Old Testament: Isaiah 25:1; 26:11a; 28:5a;

35:1a,2b,10a; 41:18a,c; 52:13b;  
12:3-5

Epistle: Ephesians 1:13b-18

Holy Gospel: John 1:29-34

January 21

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Psalm: 84

Old Testament: Exodus 34:29-35

Epistle: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Holy Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

January 28

Septuagesima

Psalm: 18

Old Testament: Daniel 9:2-10

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:4

Holy Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

## BIBLE QUIZ

1. During the transfiguration, who appeared to Jesus and the three disciples?
  - A. Moses and Elijah
  - B. Abraham and David
  - C. Adam and Noah
  - D. Enoch and Solomon
2. What is it easier for a camel to go through than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?
  - A. The gates of Jerusalem
  - B. A thimble
  - C. An ear of corn
  - D. Eye of a needle
3. What specifically did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on?
  - A. Donkey
  - B. Elephant
  - C. Colt
  - D. Camel
4. How many mites (copper coins) did the poor widow give to the treasury?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 4
  - D. 3
5. Where did Jesus say that those in Judea should flee to when they saw the abomination of desolation set up?
  - A. The River Jordan
  - B. The mountains
  - C. Bethlehem
  - D. The coast
6. After the last supper, what did Jesus and his disciples do before going to the Mount of Olives?
  - A. Offered a sacrifice
  - B. Changed their shoes
  - C. Sung a hymn
  - D. Read the prophecy of Daniel



- 1/8 Candace Schorr
- 1/10 Joan Drageland
- 1/12 Cianan Morris
- 1/17 Caden Fitzpatrick  
Lee Anne Larsen
- 1/22 Steve Love



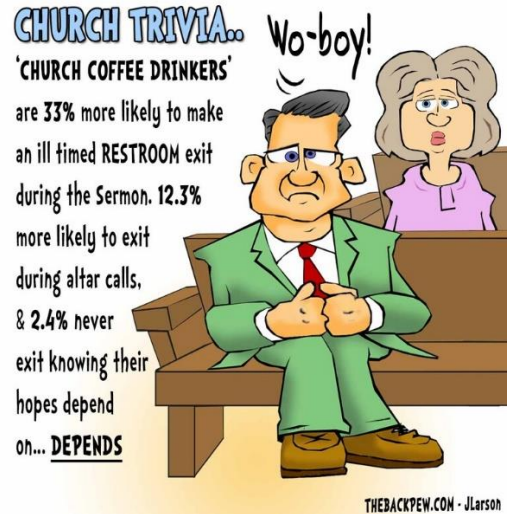
- 1/11 Elizabeth Akers  
Benjamin Schiebel
- 1/20 Joan Drageland
- 1/30 Maira Goldsmith
- 1/?? Yvonne Batson



- 1/14 Ken Zahner
- 1/21 Laverne Pelletier  
Wayne Pelletier

**BIBLE QUIZ ANSWERS**

- 1. A. (Mark 9:4)
- 2. D. (Mark 10:25)
- 3. C. (Mark 11:7)
- 4. B. (Mark 12:42)
- 5. B. (Mark 13:14)
- 6. C. (Mark 14:26)



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After the christening of his baby brother in church, little Johnny sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That priest said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!"

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A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally, she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?" "Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago." "Oh," she paused, "grandpa, did God make me too?" "Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago." Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

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A little boy was in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd (alternating between bride's side and groom's side). While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like claws and roar. So it went, step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR all the way down the aisle. As you can imagine, the crowd was near tears from laughing so hard by the time he reached the pulpit. The little boy, however, was getting more and more distressed from all the laughing, and was also near tears by the time he reached the pulpit. When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, 'I was being the Ring Bear.'