

From the Pastor: On the Materiality of God

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

(John 1:1-3, 14)

In the prologue to his Gospel, St. John reminds us that all things were made through the eternal Word – Jesus Christ. The Second person of the Trinity was with God the Father from eternity, and then, in time, He participated in the creation of the World—the things visible and invisible, the heavens and earth. Hence we confess in the Nicene Creed: “And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, *by Whom all things were made.*” The “*by Whom all things were made*” is referring to Jesus, not the Father. St. Paul teaches the same in Colossians 1 – “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

The eternal Word (Logos) spoke things into existence out of nothing. The material stuff He created was called “good,” even “very good.” But St. John would also have us know that the eternal Word became part of creation. The Creator became a creature. With the conception and birth of Jesus, God became something that He wasn’t before – a physical, material being. The pre-incarnate Christ takes upon Himself humanness precisely to save humanity. The fact that God created material stuff and then humbled Himself to become material stuff in human form, did not sit well with some in the early days of Christianity.

Heresies have a tendency to repeat themselves, albeit in new packaging and with different jargon. That is why we study history. To know and understand where we are and where we are going, we need to first know where we’ve been. Gnosticism was a second-century heresy that the Church was forced to deal with. Unfortunately, it was never entirely stomped out and continues to rear its ugly head in various ways throughout the ages. The following brief article written by Dr. Gene Edward Veith explains well Gnosticism in the modern context and in light of our celebration of Christmas.

Have a *Material* Christmas

The American Religion, a book by the eminent scholar Harold Bloom, is not about Christianity. America's true religion, according to Bloom, is Gnosticism.

Gnosticism is a Greco-Oriental religion that tried to attach itself to Christianity in the first centuries after Christ. Gnostics reject the physical, objective realm of matter. Only the "spiritual" is worthwhile. Salvation comes from neither faith nor works but from knowledge. Gnostics cultivate an inner spirituality that has nothing to do with matter, objective truth, or the body.

The early church condemned the Gnostics as heretics. After all, since the Gnostics believe the material world is intrinsically evil with no spiritual significance, they rejected the creation, the incarnation, the redemption, the church and the Sacraments. They were also notoriously open to sexual immorality, since what they do with their bodies also has no spiritual significance.

Bloom says that every religion that had its origins in America is essentially Gnostic. He sees elements of Gnosticism in the New Age Movement, Mormonism, and even American Evangelicalism with its highly interior piety and its indifference to Sacraments, denominations, and objective doctrines.

Bloom, who considers himself a Gnostic, thinks this is a good thing. In fact, overt Gnosticism has come in vogue. Feminists like it since Gnostics believe the body does not matter, so there is no significant difference between men and women. The bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, with its combination of occultism, feminism, and anti-Christian polemics is distinctly Gnostic, going so far as to exalt the ancient heretical Gnostic writings over the books of the Bible.

According to the Gnostic approach to Scripture, the God of the Old Testament is evil, since, after all, He is responsible for making this evil material world. The serpent offered Adam and Eve knowledge ("gnosis") so that what Christians understand as the fall into sin is actually salvation. This blasphemously topsyturvy theology, which insists that God is bad and Satan is good, is copied directly by Philip Pullman in his popular fantasy series *His Dark Materials*.

As for Jesus, the Gnostics consider Him an enlightened spirit being. But they deny that Jesus came in the flesh.

The Apostle John was taking on the Gnostics when he referred to a great test of who has the Holy Spirit. This is determined not by some inner experience, much less speaking in tongues, but by confession: "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4:2-3).

St Paul was dealing with Gnostics when he dealt with the two sides of the Gnostic coin, both immorality and asceticism. He told the Corinthians that misusing their bodies for sexual



immorality is spiritually significant (1 Corinthians 6:12-20), and he told Timothy to teach that “everything created by God is good” (1 Timothy 4:4).

Gnostics then and now cannot get their minds around the astounding revelations of the Christian faith: that this real, tangible world we live in is the gift of a loving God; that God became flesh in Christ Jesus, who was born into this world as a baby to suffer and die on the cross and rise physically from the

dead. Furthermore, our Christian Gnostics cannot get their minds around the fact that Christ uses the physical waters of Baptism to bring sinners to Himself, and that He still comes to us in His Body and Blood in physical bread and wine.

Christmas is all about the non-Gnostic, objective truth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Some people complain that Christmas has become too materialistic. If by that they mean its meaning is obscured by greed and commercialism, perhaps they have a point. But the gifts and decorations and celebrations remind us that Christianity is indeed a faith that—contrary to the Gnostic—is grounded in materiality. So have yourself a material Christmas.

Our thanks to Dr. Veith for reminding us of the danger of over-spiritualizing the Christian faith at the expense of the material realities that God would have us embrace. Let us not be scandalized by those material realities but hold fast to our fleshly Lord who has come not only to secure our salvation, but also to restore all creation.

Why lies He in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; For sinners here, the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the son of Mary!
(LSB #370 stanza 2)

In the bond of faith,
Pastor Menet

Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Scripture Alone, and to God Alone be the Glory!

OUR WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Divine Service with Communion at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School and Adult Bible Study 10:20-11:30 a.m.

Wednesday: Wed. School & Adult Large Catechism Class 6-7 p.m.

Vespers 7-7:30 p.m.

Thursday: Adult Bible Study 10-11:30 a.m.

<p>Pastor Menet's email address: pdm52@mchsi.com Church Office: faithluth@aol.com Web site: www.faithupontherock.com</p>
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Do you have information that you would like to share with the congregation? Please bring it or e-mail it to the office by **January 24, faithluth@aol.com**, to be included in the February newsletter.

Cancellations due to bad weather can be found on www.KWWL.com. Click on weather, then cancellations. Wednesday night classes are cancelled if schools close.

Pastor Menet does make hospital visits a priority. However, the hospital will not call us to let us know when one of our members is admitted. If you know ahead of time that you are going to be hospitalized, please let Pastor know. If you are admitted suddenly, call or have a friend or relative call Pastor or the church office, 236-1771.

Financial Stewardship	As of December 22	YTD
Total Undesignated Received	\$12,273.30	\$121,933.07
Required to Meet Budget	\$15,813.08	\$189,757.00
Status	(\$3,539.78)	(\$67,823.93)

Thank you

Thank you to all of our church officers, deacons, trustees, acolytes, crucifers, Altar Guild ladies, teachers, organists, greeters, ushers, cleaners, tellers, mowers, and of course, Pastor Menet for your faithful service to your brothers and sisters in the faith. Your work does not go unnoticed or unappreciated!

A special thank-you to Merle Hinz and Gene Johnson for cleaning up the church yard.

Many thanks to Deb Smith for planning the Children's Christmas service and teaching the children the songs, all the teachers and helpers that made it possible, the children for all their hard work memorizing lines and parts, and to everyone who provided donations for the Christmas treat bags and helped fill and distribute them

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints...

Colossians 1:3-4

NO NEW ADDRESSES THIS MONTH

Please email faithluth@aol.com or call 236-1771 with any changes in your phone or address.



News & Events

Words can't express our gratitude for the outpouring of love for Rich and our family during his illness. The cards, texts, food, words of encouragement, prayers, and visits from Pastor Menet have meant the world to us. As Rich continues his battle, we trust in God to keep him in His care. Thank you again for your love and support.

Rich & Peggy Carlson and family

I will always have HOPE.

Psalm 71:14

Thank you all for the generous Christmas gift! My first year serving as secretary has been a joy, and Lord willing, I look forward to serving

the congregation here at Faith for years to come.

Katie Dalluge

There will be a Voters' Meeting after the service on January 19.

With all the gifts you got for Christmas, maybe you need to get rid of some stuff. Clean your closets and cupboards and donate your unwanted items to Stuff Etc. in Waterloo. Faith Lutheran's account number is 15308. They will sell your items for you and give the money to the church, which will then be set aside in our Valley Lutheran tuition fund to help our members pay Valley tuition.

Your 2020 offering envelopes are now in your mailboxes. Please do not use 2019 envelopes in 2020 as some envelope numbers have changed. There are no mortgage envelopes this year. If you would like to give directly to the mortgage fund, please specify on the memo line of your checks.

LWML News: Women of Faith hosted the Union Carolers on December 10. They put on a wonderful show of Christmas songs. We enjoyed a variety of treats and snacks after and collected socks to give to the homeless. Women of Faith does not meet in January. On February 11 at 6:30 p.m. Pastor Salemink, (Executive Director of Lutherans for Life) will be speaking at Faith on Science, Scripture and Sex. This is open to the congregation, and we urge everyone to put this on their calendar to attend.

College Hill Lutheran Church would like to invite your student to their High School Campus Ministry Weekend on January 18-19. Join high school students from across Iowa as they learn Lutheran theology, participate in friendship building activities, and learn about being and remaining Lutheran on an increasingly secular campus. Lodging will be provided at the church with separate rooms for men and women. All food is provided. Cost is \$15. RSVP to Samuel Kleiss at stkleiss@alumni.uni.edu by January 13. A complete schedule of events is posted on the door to the parish hall, or visit www.college-hill.org/connectionsretreat. See Katie for health and release forms.

Sunday School Schedule:

January 5, 12, 19, & 26: Lessons TBD. Watch your Sunday bulletins. There **will** be Sunday School on the day of the Voters' Meeting (Jan. 19).

Wednesday Classes

Classes for children and adults will resume for the new year on Wednesday, January 8. Plan to join us in studying the faith we confess and believe. Start the year being in the Word and strengthening your faith. Pre-confirmation will continue to study the Apostles' Creed and move to the other Lutheran-confessed creeds before shifting to Baptism. Keep feeding your faith with the Word—good spiritual food!

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalm 119:89 ESV

Words of Thanks~~

A BIG THANKS to the many people who helped with all our Christmas activities, services, decorating, prayers, love, and kindness showed during this special time of the year. You are all a blessing to our family at Faith.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

Ideas?

We are looking for ideas for future family activities. These fun nights have been a great success and much enjoyed by our Faith family. Please contact Pam Woolery or Vickey Smith with any possible future activities so we can keep enjoying some time together.

Thanks be to God for all your unending love and prayers shown for Zoe Jones and her family during the past year. A year of answered prayers and progress for Zoe. She continues to experience great results from her recent surgery. All of you praying us through this has made more difference than you will ever know. "Thank you", two simple words with such meaning to all of you from us. Please continue to keep Zoe in your daily prayers for comfort and improved quality of life. Each day is a challenge and together we make a difference for her and the family. Bless you!

Zoe's family & Papa Mike & Grama Vickey Smith

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

Ephesians 1:16

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

January Anniversaries

3 Kenny & Kie Maas (50)

- 6 Jason & Lindsay Toenges (13)
- 19 Chuck & Pam Klima (46)
- 26 Victor & Mama Marsh (4)



January Birthdays

- 3 Kaylee Stitchman
- 5 Matt Dalluge
- 8 Kenny Maas
- 9 Jeff Elbert
- 10 Yamah (Lucky) Marsh, Judy Rath-Bly
- 14 Matthew Negus
- 17 Emily Dalluge, Owen Dalluge
- 21 Betty Boyken
- 22 Jeff Bowers
- 23 Grace McBride
- 29 Karen Helm
- 31 Bobby Hinz



January Baptismal Birthdays

- 1 Lezlie Bowers, Kevin Frost
- 7 Sam Chilcote



Faith Life Team Updates

The Faith Lutheran Life Team exists to equip our church to be Gospel-motivated voices for every human life.

From Iowa Right to Life:

In 2017, the Iowa Legislature led the way for two **major** pro-life victories. One, a 20-week abortion ban included specific prohibition of the sale of fetal body parts, as well as a mandatory 72-hour waiting period between the initial consultation and abortion procedure. As soon as this bill was signed by Governor Reynolds, Planned Parenthood filed a lawsuit that challenged only the included waiting period.

The case made it all the way up to the Iowa Supreme Court, and in June 2018, we got our decision. Within that ruling the Court leapt beyond the limitations of their control and turned Iowa from the most pro-life state in the nation to among the least. The Court declared that there was an unwritten “fundamental right” to abortion found within the Iowa Constitution. The Iowa Supreme Court seized for itself the

power to amend the Iowa Constitution without a vote of 'We the People' or even our elected representatives. Then it used its newly declared power to add a new 'right' to Iowa's Constitution. This 'right' is even more radical than Roe v. Wade, opening the door to abortion in Iowa at any time, for any reason, right up until birth. **This activist decision means that every pro-life law ever passed or that could be passed in Iowa is at risk of being declared unconstitutional.**

Then, we went from bad to worse when the groundbreaking and historic 2018 Heartbeat Bill also got quashed by an unelected and activist judge. On January 22, 2019, the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, Judge Michael Huppert in the Polk County District Court issued a summary judgement that the heartbeat law was unconstitutional directly based on the 72-hour ruling. This ruling set a precedent. This ruling makes the possibility of having **any and every piece** of pro-life legislation thrown out, without a way to move forward.

Iowa is now in the same situation with the 72-hour ruling as the nation is with Roe. We are stuck behind an adverse Supreme Court decision, waiting for something to change and for it to be overruled. However, this is not our only option. Iowa Right to Life, with the help of our friends in the legislature, are working on an **amendment to the Constitution that would put the power to change our laws on abortion back where it is supposed to be - in the hands of the people of Iowa.**

The amendment, simple but effective, takes control back from activist judges plaguing courtrooms across Des Moines and does not immediately change abortion laws or restrictions in Iowa but would serve as the check and balance where the State Supreme Court failed to recognize one. It sends a roaring message to the court that we will not allow them to legislate from the bench, we will not allow them to rewrite Iowa's Constitution, and we will NOT allow them to make Iowa yet another state that does not value all life.

This is not radical. This kind of "neutrality" amendment simply restores the legislature's authority to regulate abortion, something that should have been beyond the reach of the Court, to begin with.

"To defend the dignity of all human life, and to protect mothers and unborn children from efforts to expand abortion even to the day of birth, we the people of Iowa declare: Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to recognize, grant, or secure a right to abortion or require the public funding of it."

Thank you to everyone who participated in 40 Days for Life. We know how much of a sacrifice even an hour can be. But we can do so much more, and we have a more ambitious project in mind.

The Cedar Falls Planned Parenthood is only open 27 hours a week. That means **if we had 27 people committed to a single hour of prayer, once a week, 52 weeks a year,** we could be sure no abortion-minded woman falls through the cracks. If we can get enough people,

Kie and I will look into getting sidewalk counseling training for everyone. We'll see about signs and provide materials for you to give to anyone who may approach you just as we did during 40 Days for Life.

Please let Katie or Kie know if you are willing to be involved. Let's get that clinic closed once and for all.

The next Life Team meeting will be Monday, January 20 at 6 p.m.

Mark your calendars! Pastor Salemink, executive director of Lutherans For Life, will be returning on Tuesday, February 11 at 6:30 p.m. to give his originally intended presentation on Science, Scripture, and Sex.

Our missionary families:

Rev. David Preus and family in the



Dominican Republic: Rev. David and Jennifer Preus serve the Lord as career missionaries through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the Dominican Republic. In this role, David plants new churches in this country. He forms and develops groups of believers into mature, self-sustaining and self-replicating

congregations through Word and Sacrament ministry. He also helps with theological education as needed and works with local deaconesses in

their mercy care ministries throughout the country. lcms.org/Preus

Rev. Micah Wildauer and family in Togo

Pastor Wildauer teaches at The Lutheran Center for Theological Studies (CLET) which serves as a regional seminary for the French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa.

For further updates of our family and life in West Africa, check out Robin's blog at



www.wildauersgototogo.blogspot.com

Valley Lutheran School

4520 Rownd St., Cedar Falls

www.vlscrusaders.org

Phone: (319)266-4565 Fax (319)266-4054



By the grace of God, Valley Lutheran School strives to inspire students by strengthening faith in Christ, pursuing academic excellence and preparing hearts for service.

2019-20 SCHOOL THEME:

SHINE LIKE STARS

“that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world”
Philippians 2:15

For up to the minute events at Valley go to www.iowastarconference.org and click on Valley Lutheran or download Rschooltoday-Activity Scheduler from the play store on your phone.

The new Box Tops for Education program is now underway! If you would like help learning how to use the app, talk to Katie.

