

Monday, October 26 *Jo Stouter*

*"Oh Master, from the mountainside
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain; Among
these restless throngs abide;
Oh, Tread the city's streets again."
~Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life, by
Frank M. North.*



Christ the King Lutheran Church invites others to join us with bells, banners and broadcasts.

The bells are a local way to let everyone know something is happening, something special. Announcing the service is about to start is a joy of church life. Proclaiming the petitions of the Lord's Prayer is a tradition of CTK—I ponder each petition with the chime. Bells strike forty times for the forty days of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Of course there is the stunning pain of bells rung for each year of a person's physical life on earth during the funeral service. Bells announce and give meaning locally to so much we do at church.

The beautiful Texas limestone expanses of our exterior church walls are draped with banners to inform others of who we are. Pedestrians, passengers, and drivers are invited to participate in the major liturgical seasons of the church and our services. Who does not look forward to the banners of Lent, Easter and Christmas? I love how this is made accessible to the hundreds of people who go past the church daily.

Finally, internet broadcasts bring these messages and services of the Lutheran church beyond Rice Village to the world. The most meaningful words of God are brought to the minds and hearts of all to live out in their lives. We have such talented members and ministers who think broadly about ways to bring the message to the world. This latest way of using the internet helps take down the walls and brings God's Word to all in message, music and prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the congregation, help us to continue your ministry beyond our Village to the city of Houston and the world. Amen.

Tuesday, October 27 *Scott Swanson*

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. ~John 13:34-35

I joined Christ the King Church in 1978. It's a peaceful place where the noise of life goes away so that you can hear what Love sounds like.

"If we could spread love as quickly as we spread hate and negativity, what an amazing world we would live in." If we truly love one another we will give away the very best of ourselves to others. I have failed more than succeeded over the last 73 years at "loving one another." Loving people can be difficult at times. Feelings of intense or passionate dislike for someone are usually subjective. We never seem to have meaningful communications with people we hate or dislike. What would this world be like if we did?

A very long time ago I was in great despair. I went to church and sat in silence in the darkened and empty nave, staring at the altar. After a very long time a powerful voice passed through me and knocked me to the floor proclaiming, "I love you, I love you, I love you." That memory still moves me. I will never forget that day. I know that I am not alone. Christ is with me.

As I receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at the communion rail, He strengthens me. It is through His love for me that my capacity to love others is increased. In communion I am not alone, Christ is with me.

Loving God, increase our love for one another. Through Christ, Amen.



Wednesday, October 28

Leonard Teich

For me, Paul's letter to the Romans, specifically the eighth chapter, contains a whole world of ideas, or "truths" if you prefer. Romans 8 starts with a proclamation of human freedom, ends with an ironclad guarantee from God, and in between it explains how the Holy Spirit redeems the human race and the entire rest of creation. All in one chapter. But the Apostle can do that to you. Here's how it begins: (All quotations are from the NRSV)

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.
~Romans 8:2



Freedom is one of Paul's chief messages in all his letters, but here you have it straight out - once you're in Christ, you're free! And you can't be snatched from freedom again. Ever. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints, according to the will of God. ~Romans 8:26-27

Wherever else the Holy Spirit abides, it most assuredly lies in each human being in the deepest part of the Soul. When we have run out of words in the face of the Holy, the Spirit intercedes for us and expresses our deepest awe and longing with "sighs too deep for words". Paul himself could be called a mystic because he penetrated so deeply into the Mystery and nowhere does he get further into the Mystery than in this passage. He has been there, at that point when he is face to face with the inexpressible but yet he wants to communicate his longing. He has discovered that at that point the Spirit takes over and goes all the way into the "Ground of Being" as Meister Eckhart put it. Then Paul invites us in. Am I ready? I hope so! Paul has discovered how it is that one can go so far into the mystery that one can be within Christ and in that sense be one with God and in fact one with all creation. For God and his creation are inseparable. And we, as Christians, are the stewards of that creation. So Paul writes further:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ~Romans 8:19-23

So the creation waits on the children of God. That's us! Now that we know how to free ourselves or redeem ourselves as it were, once we have done so, we can turn to freeing the rest of creation. It appears to me that the Spirit has been moving among us for at least the last 50 years in the environmental movement, if one goes back to Earth Day, 1970. Or 180 years if one goes back to John

75th Anniversary Devotions

Muir, or 800 years if one goes back to Francis of Assisi. In any case Paul says the creation is a definite Christian calling and it's high time we got to work on it. And as Lutherans I believe we have a special calling and maybe even a special competence. So CTK's creation care ministry comes straight from the Apostle. Quite a provenance!

Finally at the end of chapter 8, Paul makes us an iron clad guarantee:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~Romans 8:38-39

In other words, once we are in Christ, we're free men and women and nothing on this earth can undo that. If there's a more solid guarantee anywhere I'm not aware of it. **Amen.**

Thursday, October 29

Susan Teich

Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle. ~Numbers 10:2-3



Five bells cast in Aarle-Rixtell, The Netherlands, by the Royal Bellfounders Petit & Frutsen, ring out from the bell tower. Weighing between 220 pounds and 1,852 pounds, they were installed between 1986 and 2005. Their voices are heard throughout the neighborhood – calling us to Sunday services, marking the Lord’s Prayer during worship, tolling out the departed’s age at a funeral, and singing in the New Year on December 31st at midnight.

So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing to the Lord, accompanied by loud instruments. ~2 Chronicles 30:21

Our great Saxon organ, was built in a former schoolhouse in Georgetown, Massachusetts, by Fritz Noack. Most of its metal pipes came from the workshop of Günter Lau, near Dresden. It was built in the style of Zacharias Hildebrandt, who was known to Johann Sebastian Bach and whose organs Bach admired. It has filled our Nave with Bach’s own music and that of many others since its dedication on September 24, 1995.

Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. ~2 Samuel 6:5

The dainty portative organ, by tradition made to be portable, serves as a continuo instrument, supplying chordal accompaniment. Its Gothic inspired case and its handmade pipes, of either lead-tin alloy or seasoned wood, were made in Staunton, Virginia, by Taylor and Boody. It added its gentle voice to the Nave at its dedication on April 29, 2007.

Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. ~1 Samuel 18:6

The Blüthner piano in our Nave gives out a Blüthner’s characteristically clear and crystalline tone. Only Blüthners use so-called aliquot stringing, the use of extra unstruck strings in the piano to enrich its tone. The Blüthner factory opened in 1853 in Leipzig with Julius Blüthner’s motto, “God will lead me!”

But now bring me a musician. Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. ~2 Kings 3:15

A Bösendorfer piano adds its signature tone, dark and rich, to the Parish Hall. Bösendorfer pianos have been built in Vienna since Ignaz Bösendorfer began production in 1828. Ours, a Model 225, has 92 keys

75th Anniversary Devotions

instead of a piano's standard 88, a Bösendorfer feature. The extra keys are all at the bass end of the keyboard.

And all the people went up after him; and the people played the flutes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth seemed to split with their sound. ~1 Kings 1:40

Petrof pianos come from the Czech Republic, near Prague, and are known for their romantic tone, their sounding boards of spruce, and their largely hand construction. The Petrof company was founded in 1864 in the city of Hradec Králové by Antonín Petrof. Our Petrof is played in the Choir Room.

The Lord will save me, and we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our lives, in the house of the Lord. ~Isaiah 38:20

A harpsichord made by Jan Kalsbeek in the Dutch Hanseatic town of Zutphen was inaugurated at Christ the King on October 17, 2010. It adds to our worship a tone that in Kalsbeek's words is "slender, but very intense." He modeled it on two harpsichords made by Michael Mietke, found today in Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin. One 1719 recipient of a Mietke harpsichord was Johann Sebastian Bach.

*Then David and the Israelites played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.
~1 Chronicles 13:8*

Two Yamaha pianos, an upright in the Adult Classroom and a grand in the Rehearsal Room, accompany us with their warm and wide tone. Yamaha was established in 1887 as a piano and reed organ manufacturer by Torakusu Yamaha in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture. Now a multinational conglomerate, Yamaha's original purpose as a musical instrument manufacturer is reflected in its logo—a trio of interlocking tuning forks.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
~Colossians 3:16*

Our Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnals, dedicated on November 19, 2006, give us the notes and words to sing in worship service. Each hymnal was funded by someone in our congregation, and bears a bookplate honoring a person or persons chosen by the donor. As we hold the hymnals in song, we use the greatest of our many instruments at Christ the King – our human voices.

Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted. ~Isaiah 49:13

Friday, October 30

Lee and Sarah Thweatt

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ~Philippians 1:6



As Sarah and I reflect on CTK's 75th year, we are of course mindful of what just a few of those years have meant personally to our family. Like so many others, important milestones in our family's life have unfolded in and around the physical space of CTK. Our youngest child, John, was baptized at CTK, and we felt the presence of God through the church a few years later as he battled cancer as a toddler. All three of our children were confirmed in the church at CTK. After many years attending as visiting worshippers, Sarah's mother and father joined the church when they moved to Houston as permanent residents. Sarah's father is now interred in the CTK columbarium, to be followed, in time, by her mother. In future years (hopefully many years from now!), it is planned that the columbarium will also house our ashes, too. Perhaps there will be a wedding or some other life event celebrated and experienced by our family at CTK. So much has started for us in this place, ended in it, and will continue in it, too.

And as much as CTK has been where we have been in the physical sense, much more important are the moments of spiritual sense we have felt there. For these moments, the ones felt during the singing of Silent Night on Christmas Eve, or after a particularly moving sermon or choral performance, or watching another family's baptismal moment, or communing with military veterans, or even just hearing the bells ring on a Sunday morning as a call to worship, the years thus far are not enough. But we are thankful to have the chance for more of them, and to hear and hope that for the next 75 years, the Lord continues to bless and keep our church, that the Lord's face shines upon our church with grace and mercy, and that the Lord looks upon our church with favor, and gives it peace.

Saturday, October 31

Susan Myres Uri

75 Years - 900 Months - 3900 Sundays - 27,394 Days – what a wonderfully engaging legacy is contained in those years. I just realized that I have been a member for half of that length of time and it has entirely defined my adulthood thus far. As I did in our 65th devotional book I leaned on my love of the hymn/poem of “I Was There To Hear Your Borning Cry” written by John Ylvisaker. This year of all years it is more poignantly fitting. The last time I focused on how it applied to me and my family. But I realized that it equally applies from our congregation’s perspective.



*I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized to see your life unfold.
I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well;
In a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.*

Our baptism 75 years ago, the era of our congregation communing in what is now the parish hall. We grow and add many families with young children.

*When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer you on;
You were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong.
If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.*

Our hearts are joined with members and leaders who bless us with their time, toil and talent, laboring together to build the mission and work of our congregation both within and without.

*In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.
When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been, with just one more surprise.*

Fully engaged in services in our current nave through the present time, we commune with help from the internet. We engage in difficult but exciting conversations and decisions about our next phases.

All blended together over and over with the refrain,

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold. ELW 732

What wonderful comfort now, more than ever, as we struggle to deal with the tsunamis that bombard us including: political turmoil and polarization; racial injustice; a deadly pandemic and financial insecurity. As we care for our world, our country, our neighbors, our families and ourselves, let us rejoice knowing God is with us along the entire path. He's got us covered from beginning to end.

Sunday, November 1

Donna Vass and Tom Bouldin

*To be your presence is our mission here,
to show compassion's face and list'ning ear,
to be your heart of mercy ever near,
Alleluia!*

*To be your presence is our mission bold,
to feed the poor and shelter homeless cold,
to be your hands of justice, right uphold,
Alleluia!*

*To be your presence is our mission blest,
to speak for all the broken and oppressed,
to be your voice of hope, your love expressed,
Alleluia!*

*We are your heart, O Christ, your hands and voice,
to serve your people is our call and choice,
and in this mission we, the church, rejoice,
Alleluia! ELW 546*



We are in the middle of a pandemic and feeling very isolated; cut off from our church and the world. If someone had asked us on January 1, 2020, what the year would hold, it wouldn't have been this. It's been tough on many levels. But this hymn reminds us that our mission still holds. To be compassionate. To feed the poor. To be God's hands of justice. To speak for all the broken and oppressed. To be God's voice of hope, God's love expressed. To serve God's people. Alleluia! Even if we can't be physically present for others, we can still lift our voices. We can speak up and speak out. We can sign petitions. We can write or call our elected officials. We can vote. We can donate. We are not powerless. We are God's presence here on earth, after all!

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.