

PenPALS

NEWSLETTER

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-Rev. Jonathan Manor

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LENT – HOLY WEEK – EASTER

As we conclude the Lenten season and head into Holy Week and Easter, we remember once again, "He [Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." *1 Peter 2:24*

A most blessed Holy Week and Easter to all of you from us in the PALS office.

-Rev. Jonathan Manor, PALS Director



WORDS OF THE SAVIOR



SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; YET WE ESTEEMED HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN BY GOD, AND AFFLICTED. BUT HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS; HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; UPON HIM WAS THE CHASTISEMENT THAT BROUGHT US PEACE, AND WITH HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED. ISAIAH 53:4-5

I share with you again this year, reflections on the Words of the Savior. I pray that they will be a blessing to you as we journey together into Holy Week.

In just a few days, we will stand once again before the cross of Christ on Good Friday, contemplating all that is happening there. We will look to the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. We won't boast, except in this death of Christ. We will see from his head and his hands and his feet, the sorrow and the love, mingled together, flowing down.

Here is the Lamb of God – going forth – uncomplaining – to bear the punishment, shame, depravation, and hell – all the things that came with our debt of sin. He does it all for love of you and me. As we stand before his cross, we ponder the words which Jesus spoke, and what they mean for you and me.

“Father, forgive them” – Luke 23:34

It's here that we are privileged to see the heart of our Savior. A heart full of love and compassion – a heart overflowing with forgiveness. He prays not for deliverance – not for justice – not for revenge...but that these be forgiven: the soldiers who nailed him to the tree – the

crowds who demanded his death – you and me who by our sins made all this necessary. “Father, forgive them.” That is his prayer for them...that is his prayer for you and me. Repent – believe in him – and your sins are forgiven.

“Today you will be with me in paradise” – Luke 23:43

A sinner – unknown, except that he too was being crucified – pleads “Jesus, remember me.” Remember me in your eternal kingdom. Do not exclude me because of my crimes. Do not turn me away because of my sins. Hearing the thief’s repentant cry, Jesus immediately absolves this man of his guilt, forgives him of his sin, and accepts him as one of his own. Jesus unlocks heaven for him, not in the future, but right now. “Today you will be with me in paradise.” So it is with us – in repentance and faith, confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior, we too are, and will be in his everlasting kingdom.

“Behold, your mother” – John 19:27

Reframing family to be our brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus now places the care of his mother Mary in the hands of his beloved disciple John. “Behold, your mother!” Even in the hour of his death he fulfills the law – keeps the commandment – Honor your father and your mother. He takes care of his mother and her needs before he leaves her.

So it is for us as well...Jesus will never forget us. Through his Word and sacraments, he is constantly guiding and directing and nurturing us. He hasn’t dumped us into the world to fend for ourselves alone. He hasn’t forgotten us. He comes to us again each day with his gifts and with his Spirit.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” – Mark 15:34

Darkness covers the earth. Why darkness? Some say nature suffered with Jesus. Others say the sun could not bear to watch the suffering. But it is more – this darkness signifies judgment. God’s judgment on Jesus as our substitute. Here Jesus was made sin for us – was made a curse. The sin and curse of this world now lie on the Son. Deserted by friends, enemies, rulers...and justice. He now hangs alone...even deserted by his Father, as He turned away from the one who had become sin for us.

“I thirst” – John 19:28

Our Lord has fulfilled the scriptures. The terrible hours of suffering, darkness, pain, hell, and desertion by the Father have achieved the goal. He has accomplished it all. Nothing more is needed. Now Jesus could lie down and be prepared for death. But his mouth becomes dry...dirt and blood become paste in his throat. “I thirst,” he says, as he prepares for his last bold statement.

"It is finished" – John 19:30

At last, the cup of God's wrath has been drained– the price has been paid. "It...Is...Finished" The spotless Lamb of God has made his full atoning sacrifice for the world. This is the God-man who paid the price in full with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. The benefits of his atonement are yours through confession, repentance, and faith in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." – Luke 23:46

The saddest and yet the most important hours the earth has ever seen, come to their end. Darkness has covered the land – there's an earthquake – stones split – the temple curtain is torn in two – even graves are broken open and many of the faithful are risen to life. All of this, as the Son of God takes his final earthly breathes...for now.

For us, these are glorious hours, because in them, the work of redemption is completed – we have been redeemed – bought back at the price of Jesus' life – salvation has been won for us. The Son of God is no longer forsaken by his Father. He utters the very last words from the cross, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And he breathed his last.

The Lamb of God died... because he was willing to. The Lord of life gave up his life – to win forgiveness and eternal life for you. He laid down his soul into the Father's hands, knowing that everything has now been accomplished.

God bless your journey from the palm-lined streets to the upper room,
from the cross of Calvary to the empty tomb!

Yours in our crucified and risen, Lord and Savior Jesus,

Jonathan

Rev. Jonathan Manor, Director of PALS and
Continuing Education



PALS FACILITATORS' CONFERENCE



Our 2024 PALS Facilitators' Conference is coming soon. What a wonderful opportunity to gather together to learn, share, and build each other up. We look forward to bringing our facilitators to St. Louis on June 25th and 26th as we gather under our conference theme "Mutually Encouraged in Christ."

Facilitators, watch for the registration information email the first week of April. Please return those forms no later than Monday, May 13th. Please let us know if you have any questions – see you soon!

PALS GATHERINGS

"PALS provides a retreat for my family. And my ministry is really helped by having the conversation, encouragement, and support."

-PALS participant

"God has placed us in a family of faithful brothers in the faith and PALS does a very good job at coordinating and facilitating beneficial discussions for ministry."

-PALS participant

Nebraska District

Pastor Rick and Cheryl Kanoy led their group through a winter PALS meeting last month in their home, and at **St. Paul's** and **Good Shepherd Lutheran Churches** in **Arlington**, and **Fremont, Nebraska**. The group truly enjoyed time in discussion together, and the opportunity for childcare.

"I really appreciate the babysitters being provided so my wife and I can fully enjoy and participate in the discussion." "PALS is a great way to network with other pastors' families. It's so beneficial to talk with women who understand what you go through as a pastor's wife." -PALS participants.

Texas District

Pastor Steve Wagner met with his PALS pastors for a day of study, discussion, and prayer. PALS pastor **Rev. Drew Thompson** led an opening devotion focusing on portions of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. The group talked through navigating the week after Easter and discussed a portion of Ordering Your Private World by Gordon MacDonald.



Reflecting on the day one pastor shared “...very helpful to meet with fellow brothers in Christ to encourage one another in ministry.”

Missouri District

One of our Missouri District PALS groups met this winter for a day of fellowship and study led by PALS facilitators, **Pastor Jacob and Michelle May**. Families enjoyed lunch in Sikeston, active play in a gymnasium, as well as time for study and discussion.

One participant shared, “*It is always good to be in conversation together as pastors and wives as well as separate to support one another on a more individualized basis.*”

I AM A CHURCH WORK RECRUITER!

Did you know that, when current LCMS church workers are asked who most influenced them to consider full-time church work, they said it was their pastor? Other influential adults include LCMS commissioned workers, parents, and laity. In 2024, *Set Apart to Serve* is sending out the message that *all of us* are church work recruiters in our congregations and schools.

Please help your congregation develop a culture of church work formation and recruitment. For more information, go to <https://resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve>.

