Pastor’s Pen
360° View

After his death, he (Jesus) presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. – Acts 1:3

There are times when I am on the net with my phone. All of a sudden, an image appears that seems to be moving. Perhaps it is a video. But no, it is not behaving like a normal video. It seems that when I move my phone, the image changes in a corresponding sort of way. I find out that in some way I am able to control the view by the way I turn the phone. I can view the room, or landscape, or whatever surroundings with a kind of 360° view.

The first day of April was Easter. We celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. Since then, the members of First Lutheran have spent time together weekly looking at the event through the eyes of many eyewitnesses that saw him alive after his very public death.

We’ve looked at the event through the eyes of women going to take care of his body. We viewed it from the disciples gathered in the upper room behind locked doors. We peeked into the room again when it was a week later.

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Community Events

5/5: Spring Walking Tour Series: Woodlawn
5/5: Mudbugs & Music, Cahaba Brewing Company
5/8: Taste of Five Points, Vulcan Park & Museum
5/19: Do Dah Day, Caldwell & Rhodes Parks
5/24-6/3: The Sunshine Boys, Virginia Samford Theatre
5/30: Rickwood Classic, Rickwood Field
Saturdays through 12/8: The Market at Pepper Place
and a disciple that was not there the first time was present for his appearance this second time. We looked in at an event on a beach. Some of the disciples had been fishing. Jesus prepared a breakfast over a charcoal fire for the disciples. Peter was present. He was still feeling guilt for betraying Jesus in a courtyard as he was gathered with others around a charcoal fire a few days earlier. In these instances, Jesus comforted those that saw him with words of peace, hope, forgiveness and grace. Luke tells us at the beginning of his account of the Acts of the Apostles that many saw him alive.

As we consider these views of those that were eyewitnesses, we begin to get a powerful picture for ourselves. As we examine the rest of the Scriptures we see that the Word is brought together in the message of Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. We are able to see that all of Scripture is pointing to the cross and the resurrection. These eyewitness accounts strengthen our confidence in our own, individual connection with Jesus. They also help us to understand our connection with other believers. Yes, even those believers that were recorded as being eyewitnesses of Jesus alive after His death on a cross.

Join me in rejoicing for the opportunity to again review these accounts. The Holy Spirit works through the Word to bring us to a stronger faith, to remind us that our sin is forgiven and we have a promise of everlasting life.

God Be Praised!
Pastor Tommy

Facilities & Properties Ministry
The Good Shepherd

“I am the good shepherd.” - John 10:14

The above statement is comforting for those who know our Lord Jesus Christ and brings to mind a vision of the sort of person he is, what he does and how he feels about us- as a shepherd looks after his sheep. He demands nothing of us and is always seeking us as his “lost sheep.” We are under his protection as his children or as his “sheep” as any good shepherd would protect his flock from harm. We are lost sheep and do not deserve (nor can we do anything to deserve) his grace but he is always willing to support and uphold us as his lambs as long as we remain His children and part of His flock. All he asks us to do is believe in him and trust in him fully. He knows we are not perfect and definitely not without sin, but if we believe in Him and trust Him, he will have mercy on us and help us walk the straight path and walk as He would walk. All we can do is believe in Him and trust Him to guide us in the path of righteousness. He will always Love us and protect us. I am not perfect but I strive to live a life that My Father would have me live. That is all I can do.

Stan Weir,
Facilities & Properties Ministry Coordinator

Church Bulletin Funnies

Need a laugh? Here are some actual church bulletin announcements that escaped the proofreading process. Taken from pastors.com.

“Potluck supper: prayer and medication to follow.”

“Next Sunday Mrs. Vinson will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on ‘It’s a Terrible Experience’.”

“Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 to 8:30p.m. Please use the back door.”
Worship Ministry
Discipleship

Jesus spoke these words to Simon and his brother Andrew, who were fishermen, while he was passing alongside the sea of Galilee “Follow me, and I make you fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17 ESV) They immediately left their nets and followed Jesus thus becoming his followers and disciples. Raising the question: Just who are His disciples? Disciples are Christians:

- Who follow, believe, trust, have faith and are obedient to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have accepted God and shares in making God real to others so that they may experience God’s mercy, forgiveness, love and grace.
- Who are self-giving (love) having sacrificial concerns for another person. They take what God gives them (talents) and use them to bring others to Christ.
- Who minister to others that the Gospel may be seen through the life they live and to let others know that there’s nothing we can do to earn salvation. We are God’s children and our redemption is a gift of (pure) grace, a gift offered without any stipulations and is their duty to inform people of this precious gift. Jesus lived, died, and rose to life to give this precious gift to all mankind.
- Who humbly listen to God and proclaim his message. They are generous, grateful for their gifts and are disciplined to abide by the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, Jesus final command to his disciples, which includes all believers is, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…” (Matt.28:19). This is the mission of all believers to go and make other disciples for Jesus until the end of time. God does not leave you alone, the Holy Spirit guides and direct us to share the grace of God with others. Jesus has called you to serve and has given each of us the implements to do so.

Charles Craig, Worship Ministry Coordinator

In Our Neighborhood
FIDO

Highland Park Friends In Dog Ownership (FIDO) is a group of neighbors committed to the idea that dog owners should clean up after their animals to ensure the public health and maintain the beauty and quality of life of our neighborhood. The group's main goal is to create a culture of pride and individual responsibility in keeping Highland Park beautiful for its residents and as a model of a livable, sustainable dog-friendly destination neighborhood.

The Highland Park Neighborhood Association formed FIDO in 2014 as part of its Beautification Committee to work on the growing problem of dog waste in our public green spaces. FIDO was formed by a small core group that met over a period of several months to develop a plan and present it to the neighborhood association. The plan presented, approved and implemented includes activities that FIDO now conducts as part of an annual spring awareness and cleanup campaign prior to the Do Dah Day Festival called the "Flaggin & Baggin Campaign". Other activities implemented as part of the plan in the first year involved coordination with the Neighborhood Association and City of Birmingham to install doggie waste cleanup stations in Caldwell, Rhodes and Rushton Parks and to place Birmingham City Ordinance signs along Highland Avenue to inform people of the city's fine for violating that ordinance. FIDO is also responsible for raising funds during the year to fill and maintain the doggie waste stations in the three parks. Last year FIDO raised these funds through a 10% Tuesday offered at Rojo and a Do Dah Day parking fundraiser offered through our own First Lutheran Church.
Outreach Ministry
A Neighborhood Celebration

At a recent Sunday morning Bible study, Pastor Tommy told us that he would ask people “What is your church known for?” The answers were varied and sometimes funny, like “We are known for having the best cooks!” And we could truly say that about First Lutheran Church—we are indeed blessed with many great cooks. But I think he was looking for more, perhaps a mission statement or a brief description of their doctrine.

I hope that we are known for more than the great cooks that are our members. We have just held another very successful event at Caldwell Park—a community Easter Egg Hunt with over 100 kids and parents on a beautiful Saturday, hunting eggs, playing games, and eating cupcakes. Pastor Tommy started with a wonderful message about stones, specifically a moved stone and an empty tomb.

Pastor Tommy shared a message about the concern of a large stone blocking the way to the grave where Jesus was buried. Those who were concerned about how it might be moved in order to take care of their loved one’s body found that it had been rolled away. They discovered that by His love, God had gained a victory. The stone was rolled out of the way. Jesus was not in the grave, but alive! They rejoiced. As a result, the crowd was encouraged to trust God when there were obstacles in their life that seemed impossible to move. God would not let any obstacle to prevent His love in reaching them. Pastor invited everyone to take a small stone with them as a reminder of God’s great promise fulfilled!

We are so very committed to telling the story of our salvation that this message is given at every outreach event that we hold. Without apologies, a gospel message delivered at a secular event.

If you still think that evangelism is ringing doorbells and handing out tracts of literature, please think again. The Southern District of LCMS provided an inspired teacher, Pastor Eric Johnson, to teach us about “evangelism” in today’s society. We have left the safety of the “national parks” and ventured into the wild lands with our message. And it is not just telling the message. It is showing the love of Jesus to all we meet with our smiling faces and acts of kindness given freely and without reservation.

Thanks to the Lord for all of our faithful members who set up tables, hid eggs, played games, baked cupcakes, took photos, and sang “Jesus Loves Me”—all to the glory of God! You are fulfilling the great commission given to all Christians by Jesus! This is what First Lutheran Church is known for in our community. And if someone asks you “what is this church known for?”—I hope this answer comes from your heart.

Click here to revisit this day on our website at “Easter Bunnies at Caldwell Park 2018.” Photos may be selected and downloaded to your own device.

Our outreach team has plans for some new and fun events (hint: get your dancing boots ready!). I hope to see you there showing the love to the people who attend our events. And if you have a nice conversation with someone, please tell about our church, where we serve the Lord with gladness, where we love Jesus, where we welcome all who seek Him.

June Weir, Congregational President
Christ Care Ministry
The Art of Listening—Part I

“Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” - Philippians 2:4-7a

A central question people ask when called to participate in the ministry of the congregation is, “What shall I say to people?” I think a more appropriate first question to ask in relating to others is, “How may I learn to listen and understand?” In his book, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the ministry of listening: “The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to his Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God’s love for us that he not only gives us his Word but also lends us his ear. So it is his work that we do for our brother or sister when we learn to listen to him or her. Christians so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. We often forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.”

We Christians have often forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to us by Christ himself, the Great Listener, whose work we should share. It is for us to learn to listen as God listens, that we may speak God’s Word. This month I invite you all to read John’s account of the conversation that Jesus had with the woman at the well in Samaria (*John 4:1-45*). Marvel at Jesus’ skill in listening. The dialog, the shared meanings, and the progression of two people talking and listening to one another provide an insight into the possibilities of life and growth when people genuinely care and listen and talk with one another. Jesus was communicating his love for this woman by the way in which he listened to her, as well as by the way in which he spoke to her. That listening skill and intent needs to be reaffirmed in the church, in the neighborhood, and in the home. You could say, caring for others with the love of Christ begins with big ears, a small mouth, and a lot of the love Christ has already shown you.

Tune in next time for more adventure on the subject of listening.

God loves you dearly,
Rev. Tom Lackey, Christ Care Minister


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Have an announcement for the newsletter? Please submit it by the 15th of the month to firstimpressionseditor@firstlutheranbham.org. Thank you!
Inreach Ministry
The Cost of Discipleship

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. - Luke 14:33

Congregations often ask the question, “What does it take our church to grow in discipleship?” A trip to the bookstore (either brick and mortar or online) will reveal all kinds of resources. Just by looking at titles, it is easy to see that authors will attempt to help by offering “steps” to discipleship. With a quick glance one might conclude that there are anywhere from three to 12 steps in the process depending on the author. Some authors use a weekly process. Usually providing behavioral changes for each week leading to becoming a more mature disciple. Some emphasize adding certain ideas or habits to your life. Others emphasize subtracting ideas or habits.

In Luke 14, Jesus has a difficult teaching on discipleship. He uses imagery of putting following him above love for family. He compares it to carrying a cross. He illustrates the process of sitting down and counting the cost to build a tower. He even discusses the thoughts a king may have when preparing to go to battle with another king. Jesus concludes this discussion with the verse from above. It’s very difficult to hear because of the deep challenge that it presents. It would be easy to conclude that the cost is too high. The temptation would be to never start the process, or if the process has been engaged, to give up.

Consider an alternate conclusion. Instead of focusing on the cost, consider the benefit. Ask yourself this question. Would you rather be disobedient to God and 10 years from now look back and wish you had followed His teaching? Or would you rather take up His challenge to be His disciple and be able to see what He has done in your life? Yes, this challenge is hard. It sounds like condemning law. However, throughout the Bible, God connects these challenges with the work of His Spirit, and with His hand of blessing and favor. This is not a call to have a life of dismay, depression, fear or defeat. It’s an invitation to see the love of God through Christ. God did consider the cost and He has done what it takes.

There was an advertising campaign some years ago that promoted “Advertising.” The slogan was, “Advertising doesn’t cost – it pays.” Jesus teaches that the bottom line in the teaching of discipleship, a disciple will ultimately come to understand that the reality is Discipleship is really beneficial and not a detriment.

Rev. Tommy Lampella, Pastor
Inreach Ministry

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry
S.H.A.P.E.

What is your SHAPE?
(Spiritual gifts…Heart…Aptitude…Personality…Experience)

The objective of our ministry is to create an army of ministers using their unique God given S.H.A.P.E. to serve as we are called. We are discovering who God made us to be and discovering what God made us to do.

CALLED TO SERVE…
The role and function of this Ministry is to encourage the Congregation as it seeks to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). This Ministry seeks to recruit volunteers to fill mission and ministry opportunities and also assist with discovering their S.H.A.P.E.

CALLED TO CELEBRATE…
This Ministry is responsible for coordinating our celebration and fellowship functions, such as meals, receptions and special fellowship activities. This ministry seeks to recruit volunteers to carry out these needs.

Lorenza Robinson
Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry Coordinator