

 **Cross Words**

**Monthly Newsletter of Cross Ev. Lutheran Church**

**January 2015 Volume 15, Issue 1**

**What is eternal life?**



 It is that time again when we encounter the change from the old year to the new. For some the ushering in of a new year is a ritual of staying up until midnight to make a bunch of noise or perhaps sing an old song. Yet in one way or another, the beginning of a new year is a time of reflection and planning. We take stock of what happened in the last year. We think of our pains, regrets, joys, surprises, births, and deaths. We also look to the future and ponder what we want to do differently in days to come.

 In all of our planning, though, there is this unalterable fact that life here will end. Our time is finite. It has a limit. Come to think about it, everything about this world has a limit.

 The Bible tells us of one thing, however, that has no end. Referring to his believers Jesus said, “***I give them eternal life***” (John 10:28).In view of our knowledge and experience of limited life in this world, we wonder what eternal life is.

 Jesus explains***, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life”*** (John 5:24). Life is being connected to God and his blessings. The opposite is death which is separation from God and his goodness. All people are born separated from God because by nature they are sinners. As a result, they are headed toward an eternal separation from God to be condemned in a very real place called hell.

 But God did something very great. He sent the world a Savior who is Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God. In an unmatchable act of love, Jesus placed himself under our condemnation for sin. He willingly suffered the death sentence that all of us deserve.

 Through Jesus God has forgiven the world’s sin which separated people from him, and he gives the gift of eternal life. All who listen to the Savior and believe in God who sent him have eternal life. By faith in the true God of salvation they have crossed over from death to life. They do not face the fear of separation from God, but they rejoice in a close and blessed relationship with him now and forever.

 What a great way to start a new year! We have the confidence that no matter what has happened in days gone by and whatever the future holds, our life with God is secured forever by faith in Jesus.



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| KMSP |  | Channel 9 |  Sundays | 6:30 AM |

**The Tax Collector**

 Tax collector seems like a pretty innocent title. The IRS may not be everybody’s favorite government agency, but tax collectors have to earn a living too.

 But collecting taxes in Jesus’ day was a job with a far worse reputation. The tax collectors in Palestine were usually Jews contracted by the Roman government to collect money from their fellow countrymen. The simple fact that they were agents of the hated Roman Empire was enough to earn the ire of their neighbors. Add to that the fact that tax collectors in general had come to be known for collecting more than necessary and keeping the excess for themselves, and you can see why they would be despised.

 If you search the Bible for the term tax collector, you’ll find that these men are often mentioned right alongside prostitutes and “sinners.” When Jesus taught about church discipline, he told his disciples to treat the impenitent sinner like “a pagan or a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17). These were the kind of people everyone loved to hate and avoided at all costs.

 So it must have been quite a shock for Matthew, sitting at his tax booth near the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus came to him and said, “Follow me” (Luke 5:27). It was downright scandalous to the Pharisees who heard about it. They noticed the lavish party Matthew threw in honor of Jesus, saw the tax collectors and “sinners” on the guest list, and were beside themselves. What kind of a Messiah eats with the scum of the earth?

 Just the kind of Messiah we need.

 It’s easy for us to look down on the “sinners” of this world—people who by their words, actions, or even just reputations make themselves the kind of people no one wants to be around. But we are no different. Greed and deception are rooted in our sinful hearts too, and though we may hide our sins better than some of the “sinners” of this world, we are no more dignified, no more deserving of Jesus’ presence.

 That’s why it is so comforting to know that Jesus would call a tax collector without hesitation and sit down to eat with “sinners” without shame. It was for people like that—people like us—that Jesus came! It was for guilty, rotten sinners like you and me that the Son of God came to live with us. It was for contemptible outcasts like us that he died, so in faith we would fight against wrongful living of any kind and so we might live—and feast—with him forever.

 Thank God that Jesus called a tax collector as his disciple! Then I know that he calls even me.

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Scripture is taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.®

**Our Congregation’s Mission Statement**

This statement, in a concise and novel way, summarizes our mission and purpose for existing. All other groups and activities within the congregation ought to be carrying this mission out.

**C**ross Ev. Lutheran Church exists to give glory to our God and Savior by

**R**egular worship and faithful use of the Means of Grace with

**O**utreach to the community, nation, and world through our prayers and offerings by

**S**erving our fellow Christians and community, in turn

**S**trengthening our faith and promoting Christian fellowship.

**NEWS FROM THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING** The annual Congregation meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25 at 10:15 am.

 In addition to the presentation of the 2014 Annual Report, the Voter’s portion of the meeting will include the election of officers to the Church Council and approval of the 2015 budget.

**TRUSTEES –** The re-shingled of the parsonage roof will be brought to the voters at the annual meeting for approval.

 Three new baby-changing tables have been purchased and installed in the upstairs ladies room and in each men’s room.

 A deduct water meter will be purchased from the city of Rockford ($150) and installed. This will reduced the church’s water bill in the summer months.

**AED UNIT FOR THE CHURCH?** Whether or not to purchase an AED unit *(automated external defibrillator)* for the church and seeking donations for it it will be brought to the annual meeting.

**ELECTIONS FOR CHURCH COUNCIL** At the Annual Meeting elections will be held for the following positions: Chairman; 2 elders and a trustee. Please give prayerful and serious consideration to allow having your name on the ballot id asked.

**MINISTRY PLANNING COMMITTEE** The ministry Planning Committee will meet on Thursday, January 22 at 6:30 pm.

**WORSHIP PLANNING COMMITTEE** will meet on Thursday, January 29 at 6:30 pm.

**CROSS LIGHTS**

Cross LIGHTS will meet on Tuesday, Jan 6 at 7:30 pm. All women from the congregation are invited to attend.

 Cross LIGHTS provides an opportunity for fellowship, spiritual growth and service to the congregation and the Lord. If you haven’t attended before or it’s been a while, there is no better time to start!

**MEN’S BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY**

The January edition of the Men’s Breakfast Bible Study will be on January 17 at 9:00 am. We will be continuing our Study on Roman Catholicism. The breakfast menu will include Eggs & bacon.

 All confirmed men of the congregation are invited. Even if you have not come in the past, make this one of your new year’s resolutions. Hope yo see you there.

**NEWS FROM THE CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION**

Christmas 2014

 “*Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,*

 *The Savior promised long;*

 *Let every heart prepare a throne*

 *And every voice a song.”*

 CW 12

 Africa is a continent where hardship and beauty exist side by side. Our staff in both Zambia and Malawi have witnessed starvation and disease, yet the Lord provides opportunities for them to proclaim the good news that “a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

 In a recent letter Alison Westphal, clinic administrator for the Lutheran Mobile Clinic who arrived in Malawi in January 2014, writes, “I finally got to see elephants, crocodiles and hippos in one of the places God made for them, the Shire River in southern Malawi. In just one hour in a boat, I was blessed to see dozens of impala, hippos, and elephants alongside Malawian fishermen. Every one of them had come to the river for the daily

water the Lord provided them. This river, teeming with life in the shadow of one of Malawi’s many beautiful mountain ranges, was a breathtaking display of God’s wonderful creation.

 As a native Malawian was guiding me through what used to be a lush native forest, he shared that native trees bearing fruit had been cut down. In some cases, it was Malawians cutting the trees for firewood. In other cases, foreign timber companies cleared the forest to plant non-native pine trees so that the timber could be sold and exported. In both cases, the result was the same. In the past, they were able to use wild fruits and other items produced by the forest to feed themselves and support their families; people didn’t get as sick, and

the dry season never seemed as long. Now they rely heavily on less nutritious imported maize because the land God gave them can no longer support them.

 I was both saddened and encouraged by my guide’s story. I was saddened to hear that the beautiful life-sustaining landscape God created had been severely damaged, but I was encouraged to hear from someone who understood what caring for it meant and was working towards repairing the

damage. He understood, as we all must, that God has put ALL of his creation here for a reason, and if we care for it as he has directed us to, He will use it to care for us and gives us beautiful sunsets, waterfalls, cardinals and elephants just to make us smile along the way..”

 Since October, Alison and Kari (Belter) have been working with the Kusamala Institute of Agriculture & Ecology to bring new life to the garden plots at a couple of the Lutheran Mobile Clinic sites. These gardens will focus on organic growing using resources found near the villages. Hopefully it can show villagers how to be less reliant on purchased fertilizers. They will be able to grow food year-round. Herbs will also be planted around the clinic buildings to help prevent erosion, beautify the grounds and provide additional plants that are edible. Eight villagers are selected to be part of a nine week training program. They are expected to continue the program at their homes and eventually show others the benefits of organic gardening.

 Unfortunately, hunger and disease will continue to be part of the daily life. Mothers and their children can receive additional nutritional supplements through our Orphan/Infant Care program. Recently a mother brought her daughter named Chimwemwe (Joy) to our clinic for help. Despite being two months old, Joy weighs 2.6 kg (5.7 lbs.) and is 48 cm (18.9 inches) tall. Joy’s mother is malnourished so she is not able to provide sufficient nourishment to Joy through nursing. The clinic is providing the mother with Likuni Phala (fortified maize/soya) and education so she can continue nursing and ensure positive growth for Joy. We will pray and follow Joy’s progress the next year. Photos and stories will be shared through our website (camm.us).

 The Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre in Zambia continues to prosper under the direction of Chief Clinical Officer Jackson Kalekwa. The new clinic building is slowly nearing completion. Dedication is scheduled for mid-July 2015.

In November, Jackson writes “Our clinic works hard to improve the lives of people around Mwembezhi and beyond. The HIV/AIDS management program which the clinic started

in 2009 has saved many lives. I like my clinic work and people like my work too. People have faith in my work. I always like to be close to the patients which allows me to give medical treatment and spiritual advice. At clinic we see patients with different diseases - with an increase of hyper-tension (97 routine patients) and diabetes (21 routine patients). These two diseases were not common in Zambia a few years ago but now they are on an increase. We see over a thousand patients at the clinic each month plus we do home based care and community outreach. In clinical care, we were the best in our old district (Mumbwa) and are now considered the best and the model clinic in the new Shibuyunji district. Through the support of the Central Africa Medical Mission, we thank God that we are able to buy the necessary medications and vaccinations to help the needs of the Mwembezhi area and beyond. I feel very blessed that although I am now also a diabetic, the Lord has strengthened me and my faith so that I am able to carry out my responsibilities.”

 One of the highlights this year for the clinic was Children’s Health week. During the week of June 16-21, there were 1,757 children between ages 6 months to 59 months who received Vitamin A and Vermox (anti-worming). This is a special event because it promotes healthy children. It also provided an opportunity for these 1,757 children and their parents or guardians to hear a devotion to promote spiritual health.

 Jackson and the staff are extremely proud of our clinic and encourage you to “come and see”. We encourage you to come to Zambia to see the work the Lord enables us to do. Do not bring anything with you. Do not come to work. Simply come and witness the goodness of the Lord.

Thank you for your generous support during the past year. Our spirits are uplifted with your prayers and notes of encouragement. They provide us with daily strength to carry out the work entrusted to us. We join with our sisters and brothers of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa to rejoice in the Lord’s birth. May each of you enjoy a joyous and blessed Christmas.

*Jackson Kalekwa and the staff of the Lutheran Mission Rural Health Centre (Zambia)*

*Kari Belter, Alison Westphal and the staff of the Lutheran Mobile Clinic (Malawi)*

 *CAMM stateside committee (Linda Liesener, Bea Punke, Carole Hart, Rebekah Carey, Beth Evans, Jennifer Lee, Angela Sievert, Shelly Sievert, Dr. Mike Brooks, Pastor Kevin Schultz)*

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**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

We wish a Happy Birthday for those members of Cross who celebrate this month. If we missed your birthday contact someone in the church office! Thanks.

4 - Al Usset

8 – Adele Dolder

8 - Jamalyn Weege-Solind

9 - Elsie Bogart

9 - Charles Landeck

9 - Mitch Vergin

10 - Verna Lemmage

11 - Dylan Anderson

12 - Denzel Hickman

12 - Pete Heibel

16 - Ethel Holslin

16 - Kelly Colbjornsen

17 – Ayden Zimmerman

19 - Brady Schlagel

20 - Jennifer Waschek

24 - Karla Huikko

25 - Agatha Schulze

28 - Austin Koehler

29 - Doug Roush

29 - Blake Koehler

**In the Lord’s House - *We come to listen!***

 All of us are assaulted with a barrage of messages every day. Some suggest that an average American hears or sees three thousand ads every day. Whether or not the total is accurate doesn’t change the reality of our world. We hear and see noisy messages about almost everything under the sun.

 Yet one subject doesn’t get as much attention—Jesus. On occasion we might find some message about religion. The news might carry a story about someone who has helped the poor or needy, but it just as likely might be a story about some scandal in the church.

 At least in the messages outside of church, we will find little to help us understand Jesus and his message of forgiveness. Even if we limit our television or radio preferences to a religious or family oriented network, it doesn’t always help. We discover that the Jesus pictured there is not exactly the one we have come to know and love. The printed material that assaults us provides ideas that range from secular spiritual helps to requests for money from religious organizations.

 All this highlights one reason we come into the Lord’s house. We come to listen to his voice—the Scriptures. The beauty of coming to church is that we leave behind the raucous world with its blaring messages. It’s a quiet time—a time to listen. We come to sit quietly and wait for someone to read the Bible and comment on its meaning.

 Can’t we find time on our own to listen to God’s voice? Yes, and we should. But two things happen when we do not come to the Lord’s house to listen. First, we have a tendency to forget the message of God—his love for us in our Savior, Jesus. We might hope or even boast that we can find the quiet time on our own. But many times our lives get so hectic and busy that the resolution to listen disappears and the time evaporates in our own activities.

 One other thing happens when we don’t come to the Lord’s house. Soon we begin to imagine what God says instead of learning his truth carefully. Our thinking slowly drifts away from his truth. When we stay away from the Lord’s house, we simply begin to drift away.

When we come into his house, however, we allow the voice of God in the Scriptures to bend our thinking to his—to straighten our religious attitudes. If you don’t look at a compass, you will lose your way. Coming into God’s house to listen to him is our compass check. It keeps us on the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

***“Blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God and obey it”*** (Luke 11:28).

**News From**

**West Lutheran High School**

**Raise the Roof Update**

 Through God’s grace and many of you participating in the recent “Raise The Roof” matching fund opportunity, we were successful in raising enough to meet the $10,000 match.  Thank you to the members of Timothy Lutheran Church for providing the match and for the thoughtful generosity of those who gave toward it! While we’re getting closer to meeting our goal, we still have just $37,000 remaining to pay the final repair bill, hopefully by the end of January.

 Can you help us reach that goal? If so, please designate your special gift for the Raise the Roof Fund and send it to our school address at: West Lutheran High School, 3350 Harbor Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55447

Thank you, and God's peace in Jesus,

Tim Ulrich, Executive Director

**Dinner Auction Committee Looking for West Prom Photos**



Plans and preparations are being made for the 2015 West Lutheran High School Dinner Auction. This year's event will take place on Saturday, March 21, 2015 at the Crowne Plaza in Plymouth, MN.  The theme for this year's event is Prom through the Ages.  The Auction Committee is currently looking for old photos from former West Lutheran proms as well as photos from your high school prom.  If you have some to share, please email them to Emily Shoop.

In addition, the Auction Committee is looking for volunteers to aid with procuring donations for the event.  If you are interested in helping with donations, please contact Joyce Scott.  If you would like to help in another area, please contact Lorraine Gerdes or Kim Class

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| **Serving The Lord In** [**January**](http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/monthly.html?year=2015&month=1&country=1) **2015** |
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| **Sundays** | **Wednesdays** |
| **Sunday, January 4****Ushers**: Tom Ernst, Mike Ohm, Phil ErnstMark Kettenacker**Greeters**: Ken & Sharon Koehler**Counters**: Bart Janice Skafte**A/V Techs**: Blake Koehler | **Wednesday, January 7****Ushers** Pete Heibel , Roger Bechtold **Greeters:** Merrill & Barb Baker**Counters:** Dennis & Janice Beise**A/V Techs:** Jim Reader |
| **Sunday, January 11****Ushers**: Chuck Landeck, Rudy WassermannBob Randall, Lynn Marschel**Greeters**: Kevin & Jackie Koehler**Counters**: Jackie & Brent Vergin**A/V Techs**: Elly Landeck  | **Wednesday, January 14****Ushers** Ken Beise, Troy Beise**Greeters**: Clint & Elsie Bogart**Counters**: Mike & Chris Kettenacker**A/V Techs**: Lori Petersen |
| **Sunday, January 18****Ushers** Brent Vergin, Tim MuttererEugene Meyer, Dale Sieg**Greeters**: Eugene Meyer & Bob Randall**Counters**: Rudy Wassermann & Dan Mutterer**A/V Techs**: Blake Koehler | **Wednesday, January 21****Ushers** Mike Kettenacker, Joel Schulze**Greeters**: Pete & Avie Heibel**Counters**: Chuck Landeck**A/V Techs**:Jim Reader |
| **Sunday, January 25****Ushers:** Marty Bogart, Tom Dery, Jimmy Taylor, John Schuster**Greeters**: Myron & Ann Ohm**Counters**: Dan & Emma Hanson**A/V Techs**: Elly Landeck | **Wednesday, January 28****Ushers** Pete Heibel , Roger Bechtold**Greeters**: Mike & Chris Kettenacker**Counters**: Lori Petersen**A/V Techs**: Lori Petersen |

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