



The Branches

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The Gift of Hymns and Songs

God has graciously given us many gifts. Music has been a prominent one from creation. It seems that there is a correlation between our spiritual circumstances and the song that is in our hearts. David wrote in the Psalms, “(God) also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God” (40:2,3a). I am sure that each one of us at some point in our lives has or will find this true of our songs. A belligerent-leaning soul tends to reject the praises of the Lord, whereas a glad heart holds a “new song.”

What song is in your heart? I must admit that all too often the songs of my own heart are not ones of grateful praise and adoration to the Lord. I have no trouble at all memorizing catchy tunes from the radio or jingles from the TV, and those are usually what I find myself humming. When trouble arises, I cannot turn to the message of those songs. The songs I should recall more often in the good times are the ones I must lean to in the difficult times. They are the solid, meaningful words of our classic hymns. The words bring comfort and reassurance; they are drawn from—or even word-by-word—what Scripture says.

A hymn can crack the emotions. It praises, it magnifies, it thanks, it pleases: it is a prayer. Hymns tell the story of redemption. “Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord” (40:3b). Hymns might even contain our own memories. During our lives, different hymns may strike us more deeply than others. But the hymns that come home the most often to me are those I learned growing up. Doing chores at the barn, in the dark, by myself, listening to the coyotes howl behind the fence, “Thy Strong Word” was my own favorite. The remainder of the verse explains why! I would memorize some before going out at night so I could sing more and more of it as I trudged through the snow. Perhaps each of us has a story to a hymn, be it a wedding, baptism, or a funeral, holiday gatherings, family devotions, or just an old standby. Keep those songs in your heart, and each time you sing it, make it a new song.

—Abby Matzke, St. Peter’s, Stambaugh, MI

“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

—Ephesians 5:19

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Pen From the Past

Women's Contribution to Our Easter Hymns

We can continue enjoying the benefits of the Easter season by reading and singing the Easter hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. One of these 25 hymns was written by a woman; six others were translated by women.

Birgitte Katerine Boye wrote hymn #189, "He is Arisen, Glorious Word." This magnificent single-stanza poem, coupled with Philipp Nicolai's "Queen of the Chorales" tune, "Wie Schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern," so vividly portrays Christ's triumph over death that the hymn was often sung in church services before the reading of the Gospel from Easter Sunday to Ascension Day. This remarkable Danish woman, mother of four children in five years, diligently studied German, French, and English in her "spare" time. Her family met with hard times when her husband first lost his job and later died when the children were young. The Danish hymnal published during her lifetime contained 124 of her hymns.

Jane Borthwick, born in Edinburgh, Scotland, translated hymn #188, "Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!" from the German. She and her sister Sarah published their translations in *Hymns from the Land of Luther*. Almost every hymnal published in England and America contains her work.

Hymn #191, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today; Alleluia," was an ancient hymn which Martin Luther highly esteemed. Jane Eliza Leeson translated it into English. Little is known about her private life.

"He's Risen, He's Risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord" (#198) was written in German by C. F. W. Walther and translated into English by Anna Magdalena Meyer nee Plehn. Her school years were spent in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, where her father was a Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor for 22 years. Her original poems and translations from the German were published in church periodicals such as *The Lutheran Witness*.

Our Lutheran Hymnal contains five hymns translated from German into English by Frances Elizabeth Cox. Her Easter hymn #201, "Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won," beautifully renders the closing thought of the original by saying, "Jesus is my Confidence."

The Lord endowed an English woman, Catherine Winkworth, with ability to translate hymns from the German language. She has done more to revive the English use of German hymns than any other writer. *The Lutheran Hymnal* contains 73 of her translations, two of them Easter hymns: #190, "Christ the Lord is Risen Again," and #206, "Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense." Some say the latter was written by a woman, Louise Henrietta, Electress of Brandenburg.

In our personal devotions and when joining our fellow believers in congregational singing, we can appreciate the faithful work of the women who brought us these hymns in our own language. Their contributions attest to the variety of gifts among Christians, "but one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11).

—This article was written by Lois Mackensen for the Spring 1989, #6 issue of Women In Fellowship. She is currently a member of Our Redeemer, Red Wing, MN.

He's Risen, TLH 198

**Then sing your hosannas
and raise your glad voice;**

**Proclaim the blest tidings
that all may rejoice.**

**Laud, honor, and praise to
the Lamb that was slain,**

**Who sitteth in glory and
ever shall reign.**

A Message in the Titles

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus—all our sins and griefs to bear!"
This I know is true because "Jesus Loves Me" even here.
And on that "O Holy Night" when "Angels We Have Heard On High,"
Sang "A Great and Mighty Wonder," "While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night."

Then we "See in Yonder Manger Low" "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt,"
That "Once in Royal David's City" all the love of God was felt.
And on that "Silent Night, Holy Night," "Amazing Grace" did ring;
And the "Hallelujah Chorus" "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

Now "I Lay My Sins on Jesus" knowing "How Great Thou Art,"
As He was "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted," His wounds did heal my heart.
Then I "Lift High the Cross" as "I know that My Redeemer Lives,"
And "Crown Him with Many Crowns"—"The Church's One Foundation" gives.

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," ye "Children of the Heavenly Father"
And "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" disregarding any other.
Then "Go Tell It On the Mountain"—"A Mighty Fortress is Our God."
"No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet" accompanied the road He trod.

As I've been "Baptized in Water" knowing that "God Loves Me Dearly,"
I will "Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus," and "Listen, God is Calling."
"By Grace I'm Saved, Grace Free and Boundless;" yes, truly, grace is free!
"My Hope is Built on Nothing Less," His "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me."

And when "I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table," "Nearer my God to Thee,"
"Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior," "Take my Life and Let It Be."
"Alas, My God, My Sins Are Great!" "O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace."
"Go, My Children, With My blessing," God's eternal love embrace.

And though "I'm But a Stranger Here," "Lord Jesus Christ We Humbly Pray,"
"When in the Hour of Utmost Need," "Abide With Me"—"I Would Not Live Away."
"The Day is Surely Drawing Near"—"Then the Glory, Then the Rest."
"On Eagles Wings" You bear me up. "Forever with the Lord" at last.

"Jerusalem, My Happy Home," "There Is an Hour of Peaceful Rest" awaiting.
"I hear the Savior Calling" even "O'er the Distant Mountains Breaking."
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem" now "Sing with all the Saints in Glory."
"It is Not Death to Die" in Christ. "A Rest Remaineth for the Weary."

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN

All hymn titles are taken from *The Lutheran Hymnal and the Worship Supplement 2000*.



Women of Faith

Tales From the Back Pew

It's Sunday morning. I pack the diaper bag carefully: sippy cup and fruit snack—check; paper and crayons—check; small, quiet toys and books—check; diapers, wipes, and a change of clothes—check, check, check. I am the mother of a toddler, about to embark on the weekly blessing—and challenge—of worship with my family.

Yes, that very common denizen of the pews, toddler mommies, so often seen slightly sweaty and disheveled-looking, struggling with an energetic child in their arms long enough to say the Lord's prayer. They haven't had their hands free during a service long enough to fold them for 6, or 8, 10, maybe 12 years now, since their first was born, but their prayers are still heartfelt as those same hands simultaneously disentangle the little fingers from their hair, scoop up the pacifier from the floor, and deftly produce a baggie of goldfish crackers. My prayer is silent and fervent: "Almighty, ever-living God, grant that I may gladly hear Thy word, and that all my worship may be acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen" (p.4, TLH). How can my worship be acceptable unto You, Lord, when I'm picking damp Cheerios out of my blouse or prying squished fruit snacks off the floor?

During the gradual, my daughter scoots too far forward on the pew, falls off, and catches her forehead on the hymnal rack. Howls ensue. I snatch her up; her foot swings around and clips the head of a friend sitting in front of me. She glances back, slightly cross-eyed, and grins a reassuring, "That's ok, I'm fine," as I toss her an agonized "I'm so sorry," look, then flee with the screaming toddler. A few turn disapproving looks at the noise (my mom taught me early on that unless someone was actually keeling over, politeness dictates that one never turns to look at any disturbance in church). I try to tiptoe across the narthex and downstairs while carrying 30-odd pounds of toddler. Once there, the boo-boo is soon forgotten. There are toys, puzzles, books, maybe another toddler or two. It's peaceful and carpeted. There is a rocking chair and a speaker wired so I can listen to the service. It is very tempting to remain here through the sermon. Down here, my fellow Christians in the back half of the church won't be distracted by her squirmings and I can listen in peace.

However, she catches on. By the time she's two years old, she has tried faking a fall, yelling melodramatically, "OW!" with a faked cry, then suggested sweetly, "Downstairs, Mommy?" Oops. This can't be good. She'll never learn to behave if I retreat downstairs every sermon to keep the peace. If downstairs means toys, we're not teaching her that upstairs means "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Many people, I've found, have strong opinions of how children should be taught to behave during church. Sit in the front pew with them. Take them out only for discipline, never play. No snacks, toys, or books in church beyond the baby bottle stage, on the principle that church should never be mistaken as playtime, and these things are only distractions for the children and those around them. My mom, the pastor's wife and mother of eight, coped with us by farming us out to various willing members of the church. The nice elderly lady I sat with would hand me a mint and a pen so I could draw on the bulletin. I have felt guilty for allowing my kids to snack, draw, or play with a My Little Pony during the sermon, but it kept them quiet and occupied. And by three or four years old, my kids understood the principles of remaining quiet and attentive, and they began participating in the service.

Everyone has their own methods. The good thing is that these toddler parents are there in the pews, trying to hear the Word of God and hoping their children do, too. Patience, then, please, for those of you who may be disturbed by the Romper Room atmosphere in the back three pews. We're coping the best we can.

-Gail Richardson, Redemption, Lynwood, WA

Shepherd of Tender Youth, TLH 628

**Shepherd of tender youth,
Guiding in love and truth
Through devious ways;
Christ, our triumphant King,
We come Thy name to sing
And here our children bring
To join Thy praise.**

My Amazing Mother

Only now I am beginning to realize that my mother was an amazing woman. In her mid-forties, her days revolved around husband, four children, and a large parsonage; life was full. Then, suddenly, Dad suffered a fatal heart attack and she was on her own, virtually penniless. As a four-year-old, I understood less than my older siblings and have few memories of the privations the family experienced. I remember taking long walks in a park and watching birds there.

After several years of struggle, she accepted the job of dorm supervisor at Dr. Martin Luther College. It included free education for my brother, Bert, and sister, Lois. It was not easy, and she was often overcome with loneliness. My older brother, Ben, was serving in Italy in WWII, and Mom was notified several times that he had been wounded, adding to her sadness. I, now in the middle grades, loved riding my bike around the countryside, wind in my face, pigtails flying.

After college, Lois was offered a teaching position in Milwaukee, our home town. She and Mom decided they might afford to rent an apartment there, and we moved back to the city Mom considered home. Our lower flat was old, run-down, and infested with rats in the basement. Mom traveled three hours by bus each day to sew uniforms in a Children's Home, returning exhausted each evening. I roller-skated up and down the neighborhood and picked flowers that somehow managed to thrive next door.

My sister fell in love with a young man, but hesitated, wondering how Mom would manage without her. Mom accepted an offer of marriage at the same time, though she knew it would not be an ideal match. Financial worries were lessened, but were replaced with the difficulties two very different people of widely varied backgrounds and interests would encounter. We moved to a nicer home and I became involved with the excitement of high school years: dating, sports, drama, and more.

Once again, Mom experienced the death of a spouse and was left alone. She took a part-time job and continued to be interested and involved in the lives of children and grand-children. I was now enjoying life as a wife and mother, living several hundred miles away.

Though age began to take its toll, her wry sense of humor remained. She struggled with words to express thoughts. When her hearing aids were not turned up far enough and we would tease, she laughed along with us. I had a household of teens and a pre-teen tag-along, and worked full-time. We were able to convince Mom to take an apartment in Eau Claire, and her last years were spent here. She lived to be ninety-eight years old.

Lately, I have encountered some of the same physical afflictions Mom had, and I reflect on her life. I remember the look of frustration as she searched for words that didn't come, and I understand. I ask a granddaughter to repeat what she has said, again, and realize how discouraging that must also have been for Mom. How could I have been so involved with my own life, aware of and yet not fully understanding what she endured? And how did she remain so upbeat? In her last months she expressed a desire to be at Home with Dad, and with my brother Ben, who died earlier, and with other loved ones. I know she is there now, finally freed from this world's difficulties, her faculties not only restored but perfected. For whatever remaining years the Lord has planned for my life, I pray that I may learn from her example to accept His will and to know that "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

-Eunice Roehl, Messiah, Eau Claire, WI

Encouragements

Wives, Love Your Husbands

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

—Ephesians 5:22

I am chewing on this passage...pondering it. It seems to have great implications. Do I treat Ray the same as I would the Lord? I do understand that the passage speaks of submitting and obeying your husband, but for me, my attitude toward him in general will determine how I treat him daily. To answer the question, I put myself in this scenario: It is the end of the day. The house is a mess, the children have been a challenge to say the least, and thanks to them I've had every possible human fluid on me at some point during the day. I'm trying to cook supper and have three kids hanging off me in the process—and of course, they are screaming. Then, it happens. My husband walks through the door. This is the moment of truth; do I greet him with a smile—even a tired one—or do I give him the “Get-Over-Here-And-Take-These-Kids!!!” look?

Let me put a different spin on it. If I am to submit to my husband as to the Lord, what would my reaction be if *Jesus* walked through the door? (Gulp.) I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I would pull myself together and greet Him with reverence and joy. I have invented every type of excuse that there is: “But Jesus is never crabby. It would be easier to greet Him with a smile.” “Jesus would never ask me just exactly what I had accomplished with my day that the laundry did not get done.” (Just to clarify, Ray has never asked me that either.) “Jesus would always be happy with the meal, no matter how toasted it was.” It is true that our husbands are human as we are, but Scripture does not say “submit to your husbands when they are in a good mood, have helped you with the housework, have made supper for you, etc.”

On the flip side of this issue, the passage does go on to say, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Eph. 5:25). It makes it *much* easier for me to cheerfully submit when I feel that Ray appreciates me and is loving toward me. But I wonder if it is that the more I lovingly treat Ray, the easier it is for him to reciprocate.

God be with you.

—Julie Schopp, *St. Luke's, Lemmon, SD*

—*Reviewer's Note: There is a wonderful article on the topic of submission in the March 1973 issue of The Spokesman. To obtain a copy of the article, contact Prof. David Lau, CLC Archivist.*

News & Notes

Need a birthday, graduation, or belated Christmas gift?

If you are looking for that perfect something for another sister-in-Christ, try a year's subscription to *The Branches* magazine! There's no better gift than sharing the Word and fellowship in it. Send a note to the Business Manager (see back page) for more information. Have a blessed 2005!

Surprises in Heaven

**I dreamt death came, the other night,
And heaven's gate swung wide,**

**An Angel with a halo bright
Ushered me inside.**

**And there, to my astonishment,
Stood folds I'd judged and labeled**

**As "Quite unfit, of little worth,"
And "Spiritually disabled."**

**Indignant words rose to my lips,
but never were set free,**

**For every face showed stunned surprise...
Not *one* expected me.**

—*Author Unknown,
contributed by Dorothy LaJeunesse,
Calvary, Marquette, MI*

Tips & Advice

What ever happened to writing Thank You notes?

Here's the advice: write them, even if others don't. Gifts from a shower or wedding, gifts received by mail or while in the hospital, sympathy letters, flowers, when you are a houseguest overnight (unless it was a close relative or friend you stayed with), and notes or gifts of congratulations are all proper times to write thanks. If you find a situation not listed and are unsure, write one for good measure.

Write it within a week, if possible. If you are hospitalized and you need to thank someone, wait to write until you are well enough. If it is after a wedding, within three months is the general rule. "As soon as possible" sums it up.

Wedding thank-yous should be more formal, but others may be informal. Cards don't have to be expensive, but should be thoughtful. This small amount of effort can make someone's day. Just a few lines will do; hand-written is best. Though it doesn't have to be long, it should be personalized, even if you have a two-mile list of people to thank. I heard of one couple whose thank-you for a wedding was typed and generic; they sent out a thank-you for a fire extinguisher that read: "Thank you for the gift. I'm sure we'll be using it soon." Not much thought went into that. A good way to personalize is to reference specifically what was received. "Thank you for the *fire extinguisher*. We'll be using it often," would have been better. At least it would make someone smile.

—Abby Matzke, St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI

CLC Postcard



A glimpse of our family from...

Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wisconsin.

Many things come to mind when thinking of Madison, Wisconsin. It is the state capital, a university town, is located on an isthmus, has a population of 208,000 with sprawling suburbs, expanding businesses, and an ever-changing countryside. The downtown area is host to a new Overture Center featuring concerts and plays. Through the summer, the square around the capital hosts the Farmers Market. On football Saturdays, Camp Randall Stadium becomes a sea of red when the Wisconsin Badgers play. In the suburb of Middleton, away from the busy downtown and university area, is Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church. It is located near Lake Mendota beside a park that is used for camping much of the summer. Even though it is close to the university and shopping centers, the area offers hiking trails, boating, and easy access for getaways to the attractions to the north, including water parks and seeing the Green Bay Packer football games.

Peace Thru Christ is a growing church and has been blessed with a school for 3 years. The plans for expansion have started this fall with the completion of a schoolroom and fellowship hall by spring. Our calendar fills up quickly with Sunday school and Sunday morning Bible class, midweek Bible Classes, Ladies and Mens Meetings, Sunday school teachers' meetings and monthly family fun night. Midweek Lenten and Advent services replace the midweek Bible classes during the year. A favorite time is having the end of the school year program put on by the grade school children. Everyone looks forward to it each year. The sign-up sheets for potlucks fill up quickly even when there is not a reason to celebrate. If you are in the area, stop to worship with us. Just as the name of our church states, we have Peace Thru Christ. Visit our website at: www.peacethruchrist.org.

—Ellen Bratz, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI

Please send in a "postcard" description of your own congregation—we'd love to hear from you!

Looking for a Good Book?

When I walk through a library or book store, I often wonder what motivates so many people to write a book. Did you know that when the best seller lists are compiled, they deliberately ignore the one book that truly is the best seller? It's the book that God wrote for us, the Bible. It has had the most copies of any book printed throughout the history of mankind.

It's such a delightful book to read! It contains poetry, history, murder & intrigue, lessons, predictions, advice... But most of all, it teaches us about our history through God's eyes. He tells us why and how He created us; where we went astray; and about His marvelous plan to redeem us through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It's a guidebook to help us navigate through the complexities of life. Acts 17:11 tells us the Bereans "received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

God wrote the Book and now He wants you to read it. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

What are your Bible reading habits? Does the book sit neglected in the corner, gathering dust, while you read the latest "best seller"? Can you recall verses that are appropriate to the moment when a co-worker or acquaintance has questions about God? How much time is spent each day searching "the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me" (John 5:39)?

How many times have you read the Bible through in its entirety in one year? "It's too big!" you say? If you read two Old Testament chapters and one New Testament chapter each day, plus two extra chapters per week, you can read the Bible in one year. The president of the United States, George W. Bush, reads the Bible through each year. Surely you aren't busier than he is!

I challenge every one of you to read the Bible through in one year. You can challenge your husbands, children, friends, and relatives to join you. Talk to your pastor to invite the congregation to join the challenge. Every word written in the Bible was selected by God! There are no idle words; and many surprises await you as you acquaint yourself with every part of Scripture.

Here is a suggestion: Keep a chart of the books of the Bible and mark them as you finish them. At the end of the year, send me an email at nhansen@mnsu.edu and let me know how many in your group read the entire Bible.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

—Nancy Hansen, Prince of Peace, Hecla, SD

**"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man.
All the good from The Savior of the world is
communicated to us through this Book."**

—Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th U.S. President



CLC Women's Retreat

April 1-3, 2005 Trego, Wisconsin.

Mark your calendars to attend! Here's what others had to say: "An uplifting experience—I'm happy that I came." "Restoring, relaxing, and stimulating at the same time. Inspirational and filled with wonderful Christian fellowship." "It helped me to focus on the really important things." "This was my fifth year—and I will be back next year!" "It was so wonderful to learn so much and meet all of these women—you can bet I won't miss it next year!"

Katanga Update

This is the latest concerning the project to assist the ladies in the Congo with some of their needs in proclaiming Christ in their area. Four hundred dollars was delivered by Rev. Koenig to the contact in Katanga. Swahili Bibles cost \$7 each. One woman from the States is planning a trip to visit and help the women next year; they are looking forward to her arrival. The ladies have been working on sewing projects and have much to talk about. Lynette Roehl is currently in contact with Pastor Muzakuza's wife, who is heading up the ladies group. If you have any questions, please direct them to Lynette at: lynette.roehl@ilc.edu.

Thank you Lynette for donating your time and organizational skills on our behalf!

Miss Read-er's Review

If you like stories of the English country life, look for Miss Read. She writes wry and comfortable novels about rural England. She has two series; one is about the village of Thrush Green. The second is told in the first person by the church school teacher, who lives in the school house. It is about the children, people, and activities involved with the position.

Miss Read is Dora Saint and a teacher in real life. However, the books are usually catalogued under "Read" and occasionally under "Saint." Once, at Borders, I found her listed under "Miss." If you enjoy English cookery, there is also "Miss Read's Country Cooking," where you will find a recipe for Rissoles, Lemon Curd, Marrow and Ginger Jam, and much more. Her book, "The White Robin," a short story, is wonderful—and possibly true! There are other short stories about friends and her growing-up years in relationship to her grandparents. Many of these books I have found to be worth reading more than once!

—Edith Haertl, Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ



A Look Ahead

Upcoming Themes for *The Branches*

"A Few of My Favorite Things" is coming to a swift close. Suggestions for future themes are requested! Also, submit your article for April's theme, "Favorite memories and stories," by March 1.

Don't let the themes limit you! Submit any of your writing that you would like to share with your sisters in Christ. If you want direction, we are short on Delicious Dishes—of all things!—and also short on Tips & Advice, Ask the Expert columns, News & Notes, and humor. There are hundreds of us waiting for *your* article!

We are still waiting for a response to a request for ways to cope with grief and loss. Help me out—fortunately, I lack much experience in this area! Also, we still want to hear opinions about children's manners. Speak your minds, ladies!

Send to:

Abby Matzke

P.O. Box 238 • Stambaugh, MI 49964

abby_matzke@yahoo.com

Confirmation Day

On June 6th, our 15-year-old son Eric was confirmed. Webster's Dictionary defines 'confirmed' as "to verify, make certain, corroborate, to assure by added proof. Both 'confirm' and 'corroborate' presuppose something already existed to which the confirmation or corroboration is added." Like the definition claims, the confirming lies in something that already exists. So what does this all mean for a Christian? What are we confirming?

Confirmation Day is an affirmation of what Christ has done for us. We can go back to our baptism and look at what God did for us there. God Himself put His name on us during baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. All the benefits that Christ won for us on the cross, forgiveness of all sins, eternal life and salvation, are given to us at our baptism. Scripture tells us that we are baptized into Christ's death. Romans 6:3,5: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." We no longer have to suffer death because Christ did for us, and He gives us that benefit when we are baptized into His death.

For many years, Eric learned about this Man, who is also God, and what He did for him and how He did it. It is a blessing that we are able to be preserved in the living faith through the Word of God in our life, our children reinforced through the studies in Sunday School and Catechism. In these classes, we learn about Christ and what He gave to us at our baptism. Then, to top it off, God Himself invites us to His table, where His body and blood are given to us for the strengthening of our faith. Our faith motivates us to go to church to hear God's Word preached and to go to the Lord's Supper. We also have the blessed privilege to confess and then hear in our ears that God Himself forgives us. There is forgiveness of sins in these means of grace that God provides, and His gift of faith believes that sin is removed from us as far as the East is from the West.

Because of the God-given faith we have received through no merit of our own, we publicly declare to the world, "Yes, I believe what God has done for me through His Son!" Our strength does not come from our declaration, but from the very fountain of Life, from the water and the blood, connected with the Word, flowing directly from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! What a beautiful Confirmation Day!

—Marianna Gummerus, Calvary, Marquette, MI

Delicious Dishes

Confirmation Brownies

1 lb. butter	4 tsp. baking powder
2 lb. sugar	2 tsp. salt
12 beaten eggs	12 oz. chopped nuts
12 oz. cake flour	4 Tbs. vanilla
8 oz. cocoa	

Melt butter, then combine with sugar and eggs. In another bowl, mix dry ingredients, except nuts, together. Add to butter mixture. Add nuts and vanilla. Spread a 1/2" layer in a greased 12 x 20" pan. Bake at 325° for 25–30 minutes. Makes 4 dozen.

—chef unknown

Bagel Pizzas

plain bagels
pizza sauce
Mozzarella cheese
misc. topping: pepperoni, cooked Italian sausage, chopped ham, olives, onions, peppers, mushrooms, etc.

Slice open bagels and lie them flat on a cookie sheet. Add sauce, cheese, and toppings of choice. Bake at 425° until cheese melts or is slightly golden. These can be conveniently made ahead and refrigerated or frozen and baked later. They can be adjusted for quantity and flavor to feed and please all. A great snack, too!

—Roberta "Bunny" Johnson,
St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI

Letters to the Editor

I just received my issue of *The Branches*, and even though there was laundry waiting to be folded, and supper to plan, I dropped everything, and sat down and read it. Thank you for taking this on, and doing it so well. I hope more will subscribe—I will be talking it up here!

So the laundry did not get folded, and we will have tomato soup for supper. But I do feel uplifted by the articles and fellowship shared in the issue. Keep up the good work, and God's blessings on the next issue! I can hardly wait!

After a year in information classes, Pastor David Naumann brought our hearts, minds, and souls prepared to be received into Luther Memorial church here in Fond du Lac.

We were previously Catholics. I had spent all my life schooling and teaching CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). I went to every class I could to learn more about serving our great God. As these years stretched into decades, I still felt restless thinking there had to be more answers.

After the Catholic church scandal, I lost all faith in the hierarchy and quit going to church. I prayed and searched for a new community that I could believe in. I was always impressed with my son Christopher's family. He had changed to Luther Memorial when he married Trish. They were so kind and lived their faith.

My daughter enrolled her little girl in Luther Memorial and started the information classes. I sat in on them to see what it was about, and then my husband joined our threesome. As the year unwound, Pastor Naumann opened new doors of a beautiful transformation. As Luther, I loved Scripture and each week Pastor showed us the truth. I slowly tucked my doubts away and started to anxiously wait for the day we could join as members. Reformation Sunday brought us three ex-Catholics—myself, Rick, who is my husband, and Ann, our daughter, to the altar, and we pledged our lives to God through Luther Memorial church.

—Kathryn Sabel, Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, WI

I am sharing this magazine with 2 other ladies from church. Their ages are 75 and 86. I live in the city, and they both live in the country. You can find all 3 of us in church on Sunday and all attending all church functions. Two of us work on VBS in the kitchen preparing snacks every August. One of us does hot lunch at our school once a month during school time. The information we are waiting to see in the magazine would cover all three of us: useful recipes to whet our appetites. We will also enjoy humor sent our way. We need ideas for hot lunches and VBS snacks. Pass them along soon! We have quite a few dinners and need ideas for dishes to pass there. Any new desserts would be welcome.

—Ruth E. Pussehl, Gethsemane, Saginaw, MI

Editor's Notes

- **Concerning Vol. 1, No. 2, article by Duane Riggert entitled "Monte: A Life of Love." The article was excerpted from *A Farm Boy Gets Along*, by Duane W. Riggert, 2003. The article was printed in whole form; there is not a continuation for the present (January) issue. Apologies for this oversight.**
- **The department formerly called "Congregation & Location" has been renamed "CLC Postcard." Any submissions written to fit the former will simply be printed under the latter title.**



P.O. Box 238
Stambaugh, MI 49964

***I am the Vine,
you are the branches.
He who abides in Me,
and I in him,
bears much fruit;
for without Me
you can do nothing.***

—John 15:5

***“It is impossible to
enslave mentally or socially
a Bible-reading people.
The principles of the Bible
are the groundwork of
human freedom.”***

—Horace Greeley (1811-1872),
American newspaper editor



Publication Information

Editor

Abby Matzke, P.O. Box 238, Stambaugh, MI 49964,
E-mail abby_matzke@yahoo.com

Business Manager

Tina Eichstadt, 417 Woodhaven Lane, Mankato, MN 56001,
E-mail teichstadt@charter.net

Primary Pastoral Reviewer

Rev. Philip Matzke, P.O. Box 238, Stambaugh, MI 49964,
E-mail stpeters_clc@yahoo.com

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Artwork and Layout
Debbie Olson