

Tidings of Hope

May 2024



Hope Lutheran Church
Ladysmith, Wisconsin

Tidings of Hope

Information & Inspiration
May 2024

A Word About Conflict and Peace By Pastor Christopher Martin

The other day I was having a conversation with someone from another church about conflict, and the discussion turned to what was the silliest conflict you had ever witnessed in your church. At one of my former churches, just as we had begun serving a free outreach dinner, a woman stormed out of the fellowship hall, screaming some rather unkind words to the other workers in the kitchen and myself, because someone other than her had made the coffee for that evening's meal. In another congregation, one Monday while I was out mowing the parsonage lawn, a member pulled into the driveway, and told me he was going to leave our church because another member of the congregation didn't say "hi" to him the previous day at worship, and then proceeded to share with me he would stay, but only if I excommunicated the other person right away. In both cases (and other similar ones I've been drawn into over the years of ministry), after some conversation, the reality in circumstances like these was that the little, seemingly insignificant issue that led to the blowup, wasn't really the issue. There was a much deeper conflict that had been allowed to simmer for years and had never truly been resolved and when it finally blew up, it wasn't good for anyone involved.

In almost 17 years of pastoral ministry, the reality has been that most people in the congregations I have served do not like conflict—especially in the life of the church. We often come to church seeking peace and refuge from all the conflict and polarization we witness in the world. And yet, when you put a group of people with sinful human natures together, it is never a matter of if you will have conflict, it is a matter of when it occurs and how we deal with it.

(Pastor's Column, cont.)

Many people in congregational life choose to simply ignore conflicts that occur in the life of their church in the hopes that it will simply go away. We just go about our lives in the church, pretending that it doesn't exist. Sometimes, we write it off, often with the belief, "Well, that's just so-and-so and that's the way they are." Sometimes, we just give in to those who create conflict, hoping that if we just give them whatever it is they want, they'll stop. Or we might speak of our conflicts, but instead of speaking with the person we have a conflict with, we decide to share it with anyone who will listen, so we have "support" for our "side" when or if we ever do decide to deal with the person we have a conflict with, or hoping that someone else will deal with it for us. (As long as we get what we want in the end of course!) The reality is, none of these strategies ever work. And why? Because when we turn to Scripture, we see that this isn't how God calls us to deal with conflict in the life of His people. When we turn to Matthew 18:15-17, we see how Jesus gives us steps for resolving our conflict and the goal we are to have in resolving our conflicts:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

In what I have sometimes referred to as Jesus' steps for peacemaking, does He allow us to ignore our conflict with others, or to speak of them with anyone except the person we have a conflict with? No. Does Jesus give us room to remain anonymous when we have a conflict with others? No. Does Jesus give us the option of ignoring our conflict in the hopes it goes away? No. Jesus calls us to resolve our conflicts with others by doing the hard thing: go and speak with the person we have a conflict with. Why? Because it could be we misunderstood the other person. Perhaps they were not the person in the wrong. Because it gives us the opportunity to share the forgiveness of Jesus Christ with one another, and heal those relationships one-on-one, and not allow our conflicts to spill over into others who were not involved.

(Pastor's Column, cont.)

The goal throughout is this: Jesus doesn't call us to look for winners and losers in our conflicts with one another, He calls us to a ministry of reconciliation. You've heard me say before that we, as Christians, are the most forgiven people in the world by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It should be fitting then that we in turn should be the most forgiving people in the world. And that starts with one another.

I am bringing this up at this time because, as a congregation, the reality is (if we are honest with ourselves) that the history of Hope Lutheran Church has several moments that have been defined with conflict, and this has been a pattern in the life of this congregation for many years. Conflict between one group of people and another. Conflict between groups of people and the pastors. Conflict between the congregation and the wider church. Conflict between different ministries of the congregation. Conflict at times with our parish agreement with Glen Flora. Conflict with the decisions made by the Council or others. While these conflicts have not always been constant, during relatively "quieter" moments, these things have lingered in the background, and when that happens, they tend to hurt our ability to live into the unlimited potential that we as a congregation at Hope Lutheran Church have to truly be a beacon of the Gospel of Jesus, and a powerful witness to this community and beyond that is laser focused on our Savior, Jesus.

So, the question is, how do we get beyond this, and move forward?

This past month, after first discussing this issue with our Executive Committee, your Church Council adopted a Conflict Resolution Policy at its April meeting that mirrors the steps Jesus gives us in Matthew 18:15-17. This policy is now a Continuing Resolution of the congregation, meaning it is "on the books" and is not a mere suggestion, but is how we will handle conflict in the life of our congregation in a Biblical manner moving forward. In having this conversation at Council, an observation was made that this was likely something we needed to have in place many years ago, but we are committed to working on now in the present day, to give Hope a chance at a much brighter future. Essentially, we are going to ask, be it staff, elected leadership, or elsewhere, that when conflicts arise, we direct those involved to follow the steps there and

(Pastor's Column, cont.)

talk with one another, again, not to win or lose arguments, but to find reconciliation. Should you ever find yourself needing to speak with someone about a decision made by a committee, we will direct you to speak with the committee's chairperson. If it is a council decision, we will direct you to speak with the Council President. If it's a staff member, we will direct you to speak with the staff member one on one.

We, as your leadership, have also made the commitment that from this point forward, we will not entertain anonymous or nameless comments, letters, complaints, or give any credibility to unofficial groups or meetings that are held outside the channels of our governing documents, as such robs everyone involved of the opportunity to achieve reconciliation and hope. We also wish to remind everyone of this reality that Jesus speaks of in our reading from Matthew: **this is not a step-by-step process to ensure that you will always “get your way” by following these steps.** There will be moments in which decisions that are made will stand, that you may not always agree with. Jesus never gives us a guarantee in this process that we will always get what we desire in this life. He calls us to be faithful to Him and His Word, and to share His gift of reconciliation with one another. He never intends for us to pit “winners” against “losers”, as such is not how He desires us to live out our life in His kingdom, because in Christ, we're all brothers and sisters in the family of Christ!

Again, while nobody enjoys conflict, sometimes having conversations in which we do not agree become moments in which we can learn from one another and broaden our vision for mission and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ in this congregation in the future. It is my prayer, and the prayer of our Council, that as we follow the procedures outlined by our Lord Jesus for those moments in which we disagree, that our life together will be much more peaceful, and that we will be united as one body at Hope Lutheran Church to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ, remain faithful to His Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to drive us into the future He has in store for us.

Mission Statement

Hope Lutheran Church is committed to make disciples,
commanded to love God and others, and committed to serve.



Graduate Recognition Sunday



Graduate Recognition Sunday will be held on May 19. On this day we will be recognizing the graduating high school seniors from our church family. A reception in their honor will be held in the fellowship hall following the worship service. If you have a graduating senior and did not receive a letter in the mail, please contact the church office.

Education & Fellowship Opportunities

Book Discussion: The book discussion group will meet on Sunday, May 19 at 10:30am in the Fireside Room. The book for May is *The Birthright* by Janette Oke and T Davis Bunn.

Sunday Morning Study: A new study on the book of Romans will meet in the Fireside Room on Sundays, May 5, 12 & 26 at 10:30am.

Meal of the Month: The next Meal of the Month will take place on Wednesday, May 15 at 11:30am at Cedar Lodge. This is an opportunity for members of Hope to enjoy a meal and fellowship while supporting a local business. Everyone is welcome.

Food Pantry

The Hope Lutheran Food Pantry serves those in need throughout Rusk County. The Pantry is open Mondays 1:00-3:00pm, and Fridays 9:30-11:30am. The Food Pantry will be closed on Monday, May 27 in observance of Memorial Day. Volunteers are needed on the first and third Mondays of each month (May 6 & 20) at 9:15am to help unload the Feed My People delivery and to stock shelves.

MANNA Meal

(Meals Available for the Nutritional Needs of All)

This month's MANNA Meal will be held on Thursday, May 30 with serving from 5:00-6:00pm. This is a free meal providing food and fellowship to those in need of either. This month's meal is sponsored by Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Anthony's Catholic Churches.



Hope Lutheran Church Women

May Meeting: The HLCW will hold their monthly meeting on Thursday, May 16 at 9:30am. Hostesses are Emily Peterson and Cora Schultz. All women of Hope are welcome.

Quilting: The quilting group will meet on Tuesday, May 28 beginning at 9:00am. There are jobs for all skill levels. If you can stay for the whole day, please bring a sack lunch. Quilt squares are also available to be sewn at home. Questions? Contact Karen Skeels (715-452-5444).

HLCW Directory: Copies of the HLCW directory can be picked up in the narthex.

Scandinavian Dinner: Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the Scandinavian Dinner a success. It takes many hands to make this event possible and we couldn't have done it without all of you!



GriefShare continues to meet on Wednesdays through the month of May from 6:00-7:30pm. If you, or someone you know, would like to register for the program, please call the Hope Lutheran Church office at 715-532-7739. Bonnie will take down your contact information and a GriefShare leader will call you back. You can also register online at griefshare.org, just click on "Find a group" and enter the 54848 zip code.

Bed Build Update

Thank you to everyone who donated and participated in the Sleep in Heavenly Peace Bed Build! Whether you helped build, donated money or bedding, or prayed for the project, we couldn't have done it without you! Your generosity was simply amazing! We surpassed our fundraising goal of \$5,000 for the build. We also received many bedding items and money to purchase more. Twenty beds were built in just over two hours and Sleep In Heavenly Peace already has requests for the beds.



Camp Firelight VBS

Mark your calendars! Vacation Bible School will be held Monday, July 22 through Wednesday, July 24 from 5:00-7:30pm. A light supper will be served each evening. Parish Education is seeking volunteers to help out with this event. If you have questions or would like to volunteers, please contact Laura Johnson (715-579-9363).

Adult VBS

Bethany and Bethel Lutheran Church (Catawba & Hawkins) invite you to participate in their 1st Annual Adult Vacation Bible School. This event will take place August 19-22 from 12:00-2:00pm at Bethany Lutheran Church in Catawba. The theme is "From the Mountain Top to the Doorstep: Faith and Footsteps". The days will include a Bible lesson, songs, crafts, and refreshments. There is no charge to attend, but pre-registration is requested by June 2. To register, please contact Pastor Hailey at 715-567-0561 or by emailing the church office at bethany_bethel@yahoo.com.

National Day of Prayer

The Rusk County National Day of Prayer observance will be held on Thursday, May 2 at Memorial Park. The event will begin at the flagpole and then will move to the Veteran's Pavilion. Attendees are asked to bring their own lawn chairs if they wish to sit during the program.

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL & COMMITTEE ACTION

Path Forward Update: The committee plans to submit recommendations to Council in May.

Audit Committee: Brian Buchholz has accepted the appointment as Audit Committee chairperson.

Endowment Committee Nomination: Jana Nyhagen accepted a three-year term.

Conflict Resolution Policy: Council adopted a Conflict Resolution policy as a Continuing Resolution to the church's constitution.

Congregational Care & Outreach: Committee continues to send out sympathy, get-well, and birthdays (80+ years old) cards and grief booklets. Visitation ministry continues. Next meeting: May 8 at 3:30pm.

Parish Education: VBS will be held July 22-24 from 5:00-7:30pm. The last day of Wednesday School will be May 8. Sunday School ended on April 28. Next meeting: May 6 at 4:00pm.

Property: Working with contractor on a start date for repair of the sanctuary wall. Spring cleaning day set for May 16 from 3:30-6:30pm. Next meeting: May 14 at 6:00pm.

Service & Fellowship: No minutes submitted. Next meeting: TBA.

Social Ministries: Food Pantry had 49 new clients in March. The Backpack program served 135 students. Benevolence and Missions funds were designated for the Lighthouse Shelter, Alzheimers Association, and Spiritual Orphans Network. Next meeting: May 14 at 4:00pm.

Stewardship & Finance: Regarding the insulation in the multi-purpose room, the committee voted to take \$5,000 from the building fund with the balance from general operating checking (total \$8,115). The balance of the soffit project should come out of the Weurth fund. Next meeting: May 14 at 5:30pm.

Worship & Music: Altar linens have been washed and are in good shape. Voted to discontinue the summer campfire services. Next meeting: May 7 at 6:00pm.

Youth Ministry: Fundraising for Sleep in Heavenly Peace went well. Planning some fundraising in the summer months to build health kits for NALC disaster response. Next meeting: May 1.

Next Council Meeting: May 21 at 6:30pm.

Do You Ever Wonder Why?

Do you ever wonder why we observe certain liturgical practices or why certain symbols are used in our church practices? Over the next several months, we will be looking at the “why” in an effort to enhance our membership’s knowledge and understanding of church practices. This month’s topic is Easter.

The season of Easter lasts for 50 days, beginning on Easter Sunday and continuing until Pentecost Sunday. In contrast to the season of Lent, Easter is full of upbeat hymns, flowers, brighter colors--reminders of our new life in Christ. We are reminded that through our Baptism we have been restored to a right relationship with God. The paraments are changed to white, symbolizing purity, light, glory, joy. You’ll notice that the Easter paraments here at Hope have butterflies and lilies on them. These symbolize rebirth and the purity of Christ.



5	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Jerry & Pat McEathron Bonnie Billings Chris Holtebeck Sophia Kammerud
12	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Nick Sovacool, Irene Titera Irene Titera Irene Titera Blake Nyhagen
19	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Don & Judy Soyring Bonnie Billings Dukerschein Nolan Kammerud
26	Ushers Lector Comm. Asst. Acolyte	Jerry & Pat McEathron Nick Sovacool Irene Titera Addison Hulle



Deadlines...

Items for the weekly bulletin are due in the church office no later than noon on Wednesday. Items for the May newsletter are due in the church office by Tuesday, May 21.

The preferred method of submission is via email (hlcladysmith@gmail.com) or electronic file. Items may also be left in the office mailbox or dropped off at the office during office hours.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS and/or PHONE NUMBER?

If you have had a change in your mailing address, email or phone number, please notify the church office of these changes. Also, in an effort to improve communication we are seeking email addresses for members of the congregation. If you would like to have your email address added to the list, please send it to the church office at hlcladysmith@gmail.com.

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor	Christopher Martin
Church Secretary	Bonnie Billings
Custodian	Rosemary Warwick
Organists	Lisa Borman Karen Tappon Terry Wedwick

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