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All about the Church

- Pastor Sorenson

In this month when we celebrate the Reformation, it is a good time for all of us here at St. Peter to consider the topic of the Church. For one of the hallmarks of the Reformation was the emphasis on the Church belonging to Christ, not the Pope. While we certainly do not have the problem today with people in the Lutheran church submitting to the Pope, we can have a similar issue of thinking that one or more human beings are in charge of the Church. Lord, protect us from this! For the Church belongs to Christ and He is her Lord and Head. Yet, we are members of this Church. So, what exactly should we be doing? What is our church supposed to do? Below, you will find questions along these lines with answers coming from our Lutheran Confessions and from the only rule and norm, Holy Scripture. I pray that this will be a blessing to us all as we here at St. Peter consider what it means for us to be part of the Church.

- First, what is the Church? (notice here as well that “Church” refers to the universal Church, while “church” typically refers to a local congregation)

Augsburg Confession Article VII – “Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. **The Church is the congregation of saints (Psalm 149:1) in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered.**”

Smalcald Articles 3.XII – “Thank God, today a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:11-16).”

- Who has control in the Church?

Ephesians 1:22-23 – “²² And he put all things under his (Christ’s) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

John 10:14-16 – (Jesus said,) “¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

- Who are we as members of the church?

1 Peter 2:9-10 – “⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Colossians 3:11 – “¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.”

1 Corinthians 12:25-27 – “that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

Ephesians 2:19-22 – “¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

- Christ gives the church an order and gifts which vary according to that order. Why?

Romans 12:4-8 – “⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Ephesians 4:11-16 – “¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

- How are we to regard the pastoral office? (The Bible uses many different terms for pastors such as “elders,” “deacons,” “presbyters,” etc., but they are all ordained pastors)

1 Peter 5:1-4 – “So I exhort the elders (pastors) among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

1 Timothy 5:17 – “¹⁷ Let the elders (pastors) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

2 Timothy 4:1-5 – “I charge you” (Timothy, a young pastor) “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Galatians 6:6-7 – “⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

- What is the church supposed to do?

1. Look to Christ for His gifts:

Apology of the Augsburg Confession IV.9 – “No matter how great the multitude of the wicked is, we may know that the Church still exists and Christ provides those gifts He has promised to the Church – to forgive sins, to hear prayer, to give the Holy Spirit.”

2. Bring the forgiveness of sins by Christ’s command and with His promise:

John 20:21-23 – “²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

3. Baptize and teach:

Matthew 28:18-20 – “¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

4. Devote ourselves to hearing the Word and receiving the Sacraments:

Acts 2:42-43 – “⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

Hebrews 10:23-25 – “²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Psalms 122:1 – “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”

5. Be on guard against false doctrine:

Galatians 1:8 – “⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

6. Pray for the work of the church:

Luke 10:2 – “² And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

7. Proclaim Christ to the world:

Acts 1:8 – Jesus said, “⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

8. Take care of those in the church as any have need:

Acts 2:44-47 – “⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

9. Build one another up in Christ

1 Thessalonians 5:11-18 – “¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. ¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

- What does all of this mean for St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church?

In everything we do, let our focus always remain on Christ. Let everything we do always be for those purposes for which God has created and sustained the church. Never allow anything to be placed above Christ, and that includes never allowing anything to be placed above His Word and His Sacraments. If anything ever threatens to hamper the proclamation of God’s Word or the faithful administration of Holy Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, be it false teaching, poor practices, or even finances, we must act in such a way that upholds our proclamation and administration. **The church is here first and foremost, as her proper work, to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments wherein the forgiveness of sins is given to us.** In this way, our first question whenever a decision is to be made, should always be: “How does this support or hamper the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments here at St. Peter?”

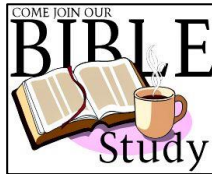
When either side of a decision supports the proper work of the church, then rejoice even if your side “loses,” for the proclamation of the Word and administration of the Sacraments has not been harmed in any way. When one side or the other of a decision, however, hampers the proper work of the church, then let us all, as one body, with one voice, declare how this is so in love and do that which supports the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

From this point, as we move forward here at St. Peter, let us consider everything else that follows from this proper work of the church. Let us consider how we can better encourage our members to devote themselves to the Word of God and to the faithful reception of the Sacraments. Let us consider how we can guard ourselves and others against false doctrine, which is truly the most dangerous thing in the world. Let us consider how we can share Christ with even more people in our community and around the world. Let us consider how we can help those in our congregation who are in need. Let us consider how we can build each other up, instead of tearing each other down and creating factions within the church.

Only, let us consider each of these things, not as the highest good of the church, but as that which flows out of our life around the Word and the Sacraments. When our decisions become solely about fulfilling these other things, or worse yet when they become solely about personal vendettas, we lose out on the very thing that makes us the church: Christ, His Word, His Sacraments, His forgiveness, and His salvation. Lord, protect Your saints at St. Peter from this now and until You return again to raise us from the dead to live with You in paradise. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY:

From 10:15-11:15 a.m. following our worship service, join us for study of the Gospel of Matthew.



BOOK OF CONCORD: Pastor's study on the Book of Concord will meet on Sunday, October 13th, at 5:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share for a light supper following our study.

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY:

Wednesday night Bible study, *A Simple Way to Pray*, is still going on and all are welcome, but this topic will soon come to a close. Watch your bulletin for the start of a new topic this fall, and plan to jump in on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m.!

YOUTH CLASSES

YOUTH GROUP

The October gathering for the Youth Group will be to assist at our annual Fish Fry on October 20th from 4:00-7:00 p.m. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway of the Parish Hall. Please put down your name and the hours that you are available that day. We are very happy to have the help of our youth group!

SUNDAY SCHOOL will be in session all four Sundays in October. Children preschool through high school have classes available to them. We give our thanks to the teachers and helpers that are volunteering their time each week.

MUSIC GROUPS

The **MUSIC GROUP** for singers and musicians will meet October 12th and 26th (the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month) at 10:00 a.m. in the parish hall.

HANDBELL PRACTICE will begin in October. Choir members need to text or call Debbie Flohr at (812) 341-4724 to let her know if they intend to play. The practice night will be determined after the group comes together.

CHURCH EVENTS

This Friday, October 4th, we will host another **GAME NIGHT** starting at 6:00 p.m. Bring your games and your friends for a fun night of fellowship. We will be having a **taco bar** for dinner. Please sign up on the sheet posted on the office door. Looking forward to seeing you!

Our **ANNUAL FISH FRY** is fast approaching. It will be held on **Sunday, October 20th, from 4:00-7:00 p.m.** Proceeds from the event will go toward our General Fund. Please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall hallway if you are available to help set up, work that evening, and/or provide pie (or another dessert). We look forward to coming together as a congregation to provide this fun community event.

FROM THE OFFICE

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Visit our church website at www.stpeterwaymansville.com for daily announcements and information about events.

St. Peter Lutheran Church Calendar

October 2019

Ushers: Curt Acton & Dan Acree

Acolytes: Oct. 6 – Mackenzie May

Oct. 13 – Laurie Schultz

Communion Set-Up: 10/6: Jenni Acton

Oct. 20 – Gus Sciano

Oct. 27 – Jonah Sciano

10/20: Jenni Acton

10/27: Amy Sciano

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 6:30-Bible Study	3 7:00-Elders' Meeting	4	5
6 9:00 – Divine Service (Communion) 10:15-11:15 – Adult Bible Study Sunday School Classes 11:30 – Youth Catechesis	7	8	9 6:30-Bible Study	10 7:00-Church Board Meeting	11	12 10:00 – Music Group <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Pastor at PALS Meeting</div>
13 9:00 – Divine Service 10:15-11:15 – Adult Bible Study Sunday School Classes 11:30 – Youth Catechesis 5:00 – Book of Concord Study	14	15	16 6:30-Bible Study	17	18	19
20 9 – Divine Service (Communion) 10:15-11:15 – Adult Bible Study Sunday School Classes 11:30 – Youth Catechesis 4:00-7:00 – Fish Fry 	21 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 100%; text-align: center;">Pastor at Fall Conference</div>	22	23 6:30-Bible Study	24 October Newsletter Deadline	25	26 10:00 – Music Group
27 9:00 – Divine Service, Reformation (Communion) 10:15-11:15 – Adult Bible Study Sunday School Classes 11:30 – Youth Catechesis	28	29	30 6:30-Bible Study	31	Upcoming Dates: 12/1: Start of Advent	

