

“Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting Rock.”
Isaiah 26:4

THE ROCK

Issue No. 1

January 2010

Special Dates

- Dec 20 Youth Group Christmas
- Dec 24 Candlelight Service
- Dec 25 Christmas Day Service
- Dec 31 New Year Eve Service
- Jan 4 Ladies Bible Study
- Jan 5 Elders Meeting
- Jan 6 Confirmation resumes
- Jan 6 Adult Study resumes
- Jan 7 Bible Study
- Jan 10 De-decorate Church
- Jan 12 Circuit Pastors meet at Faith Lutheran
- Jan 13 Quilting Resumes
- Jan 15 3rd Friday
- Jan 18 Ladies Bible Study
- Jan 20 Choir resumes
- Jan 21 Church Council
- Jan 21 Bible Study
- Jan 23 Ladies Guild Meeting
- Jan 24 Youth Night
- Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday
- Feb. 28 LVR Sunday

A New Year Prayer

Abba Father,

God of our yesterdays, our today, and our tomorrows.

We praise You for Your unequalled greatness.

Thank You for the year behind us and for the year ahead.

Help us in Your new year, Father, to fret less and laugh more.

To teach our children to laugh by laughing with them.

To teach others to love by loving them.

Knowing, when Love came to the stable in Bethlehem, He came for us.

So that Love could be with us, and we could know You.

That we could share Love with others.

Help us, Father, to hear Your love song in every sunrise,

in the chirping of sparrows in our backyards,

in the stories of our old folks, and the fantasies of our children.

Help us to stop and listen to Your love songs,

so that we may know You better and better.

We rejoice in the world You loved into being.

Thank You for another new year and for new chances every day.

<i>Tradition</i>	2	We pray for peace, for light, and for hope, that we might spread them to others.
<i>Ladies Guild/LWML</i>	3	Forgive us for falling short this past year.
<i>Library</i>	3	We leave the irreparable past in your hands, and step out into the unknown new year knowing You will go with us.
<i>Thank You</i>	3	We accept Your gift of a new year and we rejoice in what's ahead, depending on You to help us do exactly what You want..
<i>Mma Lorato</i>	4	I say it again, we rejoice!
<i>Parish Ministry Assistant</i>	5	In Jesus name we pray,
<i>Mma Lorato, continued</i>	5	Amen.
<i>De-decorate</i>	6	
<i>Amy Grant</i>	6	

Tradition!

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Article Fifteen of our Augsburg Confession deals with how Lutherans should view “traditions” in the Church: “With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like. Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. Moreover it is taught that all ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ. Accordingly monastic vows and other traditions concerning distinction of foods, days, etc., by which it is intended to earn grace and make satisfaction for sin, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.

“Tradition,” scoffed British-born poet W.H. Auden, “is the democracy of the dead – it means letting our ancestors decide what we should do and how we should live.” G.K. Chesterton, another Christian poet and author, viewed tradition more positively: “Tradition does not mean that the living are dead but that the dead are living.”

Christmas is the season of traditions. Are traditions in the church good or bad? Our forefathers in the faith answered wisely, “Well, it depends.” Whether in family or in politics or in the church, few issues arouse such passion, debate, and even division as the role and value of tradition. Is the White House Tree a “Christmas Tree” or a “Holiday Tree”? Our culture is struggling with major challenges to our traditions. It has been said that a doctrinal error from the pulpit on Sunday morning is more likely to go unnoticed than an unsuspected departure from traditional practice.

This issue of traditions is not a new one. My favorite all-time musical, *Fiddler on the Roof* deals with tradition so beautifully. I love Tevye who laments, “On the one hand... on the other.” The Lutheran confessors in 1520 admitted that the subject of traditions involves many difficult and controversial questions. Faced with two equally troublesome extremes – observance or elimination – the fathers of Lutheranism proposed a “middle way” - It all depends. Traditions are good when they may be observed without sin and contribute to peace and good order within the church. Traditions are bad when they contradict or compromise the Gospel and authority of God’s Word alone as the divine guide for faith and life.

In our increasingly frantic and fragmented society, psychologists, educators, and religious leaders are reemphasizing the importance of traditions in families. They can help fill the very human need for order, continuity, and a sense of “belonging.” But for many, traditions have become so vague or even lost, that popular books are now available to teach families how to create new traditions. Good family traditions can build a sense of identity that will hold a family together from year to year and generation to generation.

In the beginning, God Himself brought order out of disorder. And as those “created in His image,” we too have a desire, a need, for order and structure. Thus God gave His people certain festivals and rituals to give order and continuity to their lives. Read Exodus 12:24-27 to read His words about Passover. So how did the New Testament view such ancient ceremonies in Colossians 2:16-17? What else does Paul advise in 1 Corinthians 14:33 and 40? Although “Christianized,” the earliest Christians were mostly of Jewish origin and retained the familiar aspects of worship from Judaism, noting how they point to the Christ, the promised Messiah.

But over the centuries, many of these traditions and forms of worship came to be regarded as more “sacred” and important than the Word itself. And other traditions contained elements that by their very nature were contrary to the precious and comforting Gospel of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone. When Luther and other reformers spoke out against such errors, they were accused of attacking the foundations of faith, or “the way we’ve always done it.”

Read Mark 7:1-13. What was Jesus’ criticism of the church leaders? In what ways can human traditions “nullify the Word of God”? Check out Colossians 2:8 also. What aspects of Christian ministry can be adapted to a particular locality, culture, or generation? What can never be adapted to fit our own needs and circumstances? Is God happier with our “traditional” hymns with beautiful organ music than with modern praise band lyrics?

So this holiday season might be a great time to reflect on what you appreciate most about our church’s traditions? How do traditions help you to cherish the Holy Scriptures even more, to see the Christ Child, the King? His blessings in this New Year, Anno Domini, 2010, the Year of our Lord.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,
Pastor Ron

LWML/Ladies Guild

New Year's Blessings and thank you all for the contributions for Ladies Guild this year. We are so blessed to have such an incredible response to all our projects. We had almost 50 at our Christmas program and party! Thanks again to Wolf for his great music!

Our next meeting is SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2PM here at Rock of Ages. We will be preparing the college and military care packages. Hope to see some of you who can't make the weeknight meetings. We will have devotion, food, and fellowship too.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who helped make the first Annual World AIDS Day Concert and Prayer Service a success. Especially thank you to the choir and the quilting group. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide 2 tubs of food to the Southern Colorado AIDS project food bank and \$285 to HIV CareLink.

Library—Monthly Featured Item

The following are recent donations from Donna Thiemert who purchased them from the Focus on the Family Gift Store:

- 1) "The Way They Learn" by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias—How to discover and teach to your child's strengths. The author introduces a variety of learning styles that shape the way students interpret their world.
- 2) "Creative Learning" by Lisa Whelchel—Extraordinary Ideas for Everyday Discipline - You've tried timeout, grounding, and spanking but still your child won't change. Maybe it's time for a new strategy.
- 3) "Jesus' Friends" by Peggy Wilber & Marianne Hering—Includes 5 short children's books: "Thomas", "Martha", "Lazarus", "Mary", and "Peter"
- 4) "The Mother-In-Law Dance" by Annie Chapman—Can two women love the same man and still get along? Describing the often delicate relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law as a dance, the author candidly discusses the twist and turns of this connection and provides practical advice to help you better relate to your mother-in-law or daughter-in-law.



Mma Lorato

Mma Lorato wiped the sweat off her brow. She had walked the five miles from the village in the noon-day African sun. Normally, such an act was beyond the ability of her time-worn, ample frame. But today required the extra effort.

She stopped to gather herself. Although she had been doing this work all these years as a deaconess, it never was easy. She took a deep breath, crossed herself, and prayed, "Jesus give me strength." Then she knocked quietly on the door and said "Kuku."

A barely audible voice raspily responded "Tsena." At this she pushed the door open. The rancid smell of the hut immediately overwhelmed her, and it was all Mma Lorato could do to keep herself from vomiting.

As she stepped further into the blackness, her eyes began to slowly adjust. She could make out the shape of the body belonging to the voice. He was lying on the mud floor, curled up into the fetal position. He let out a moan.

Mma Lorato was told about this man yesterday. One of the village cattle-herding boys had stopped by the church to tell her about a man dying at this deserted cattle post. Amidst the flurry of activity in preparing to leave she had nearly forgotten the rumors circulating around the village about a local boy returned with shame from the city. She had told the pastor and set off to see what she could do.

The man could not even muster enough strength to lift his head in greeting. Mma Lorato could see his body was covered with open sores, and his ribs were each distinctly visible. The evidence of a long-fought intestinal battle permeated his ragged blanket. "Please" he said, "I need a drink."

Mma Lorato reached down and laid a gentle hand on the man's head. "Rest, my brother, and I will find some water." The tears began to flow as she stumbled into the heat of the day and nearly collided with the Pastor.

"Pastor- it is Mpo. I haven't seen him in years and he is barely recognizable- but it is him." The Pastor sadly nodded his head.

"I presume it is the usual suspect?"

"Yes" Mma Lorato replied "I am afraid he is dying of AIDS."

A half hour later Mma Lorato returned from the river with a bucket of water. She found Pastor kneeling on the mud floor beside Mpo, preparing for the Lord's Supper. There were tears in the eyes of both the suffering man and Pastor. "Mpo has confessed before God, and desires to have communion."

Mma Lorato's eyes began to fill with tears. She remembered the bouncy baby who came to service each Sunday with his grandmother. Even then, he was full of mischief. She remembered the pride he had in looking after his younger siblings and cousins. She thought about his first communion, all those years ago when he had been confirmed in the little concrete church. It was hard to believe that this suffering piece of humanity was the same confident young man who had gone to University only ten years ago.

She couldn't see through her tears as Pastor consecrated the bread and the wine. Mma Lorato knew her part well. She gently reached under Mpo's head, and ever so tenderly cradled it in her lap as Pastor dipped the body in the blood. "This is the body of Christ, given to you. This is the blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins" Pastor said as he placed it in Mpo's mouth. The young man swallowed.

"Thank you Jesus" he whispered.

The three sat in silence. No words could utter the depths of their feelings. There was a new presence in the dismal mud hut. There was a new light suffusing their tiny world. It was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mma Lorato slowly pulled herself to her feet and lit a fire in the corner. As water heated over the flames, she began cleaning the floor of the hut. When the liquid was warm to her touch, she returned to her place beside Mpo.

Parish Ministry Assistant

Grace, Peace, and Happy New Year in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Donna and I would like to thank everyone of you for the generous gifts you blessed us with this Christmas season, known and anonymous. Thank you very much.

There has been a lot of change this past year that have touched all of us in one way or another, and sometimes change can be unsettling. But one thing doesn't change—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Recently the color version of the World War I movie “All Quiet on the Western Front” (with John-boy in it) was on the tube and I was re-struck by how the writer had written a scene where the old timer in the trenches who had taught the young men survival in the most terrible of circumstances questioned one of the young soldier's faith in God. The young man was going to study theology when the war was over, and Kat (the old leader) was asking the kid in front of everyone (not in a mean way though) how after everything he had seen, he could still believe in God or if there even was a God? I forget the exact question Kat proposed, but I remember the soldier's answer, “Nothing changes that!” - even among the horrible foulness of trench warfare, faith was still alive.

Some of you have personally seen things like the young man in the story. Some of you have seen other things that the devil has tried to use to drive you from the Lord. We all have battle scars and pains in one way or another, and sometimes our faith may shake a bit. Jesus knows this. He created us. That's why He redeemed us in His atoning work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead taking our sins away! That's why He gave us the Holy spirit so we could have faith in Him! That's why even now as you read this I want to encourage you in these difficult times to focus on Jesus and His cross or even His fish symbol and know that He hasn't changed one bit! Know that He loves you very much and is with you and will be returning for you—soon—to take you out of whatever “trench” you may be in. Amen.

In Jesus,
Troy Dieters

Mma Lorato, continued

She slowly started to wash the man's body. Beginning with his face, she worked her way over the sores and the jutting bones. She massaged as she went, wondering how long it had been since the young man had been touched with real love. There was no rush, no clock ticking the hours away. Time stood still as she did her labor of loving mercy. The dirt and grime flowed with the water away from his body. The man was breathing easier and barely made a sound as Mma Lorato finished massaging his mile-worn feet.

With Pastor's help, she removed the soiled blanket and replaced it with the one from her own bed. Now the waiting would begin. Mma Lorato once again lifted the young man's head and placed it in her ample lap. As she made the sign of the cross on his forehead, she caught a whiff of his breath. It still smelled sweet. Jesus!

Suddenly the words of that strange missionary lady from her training came back- something about Jesus serving Jesus. She understood Matthew 25 for the first time.

“And then the righteous will answer him, saying “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.””

Deaconess Sarah

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LORD GOD IS AN EVERLASTING ROCK."
ISAIAH 26:4**

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De-Decorate

**Please mark your calendars for
January 10th
to stay after Bible Class and help remove all of the
Christmas decorations and restore them in the
shed.**

**Newsletter Deadline
January 20, 2010**

**The more people we have available for this the
quicker we get done and then everyone can have a
great afternoon.**

LUTHERAN HOUR TIME

Sun. 7:30 a.m. KZNT 1640 AM

Lutheran Family Services Fundraising Concert

On Friday, February 26 at 8 pm Amy Grant will be in concert at The Paramount Theatre, 1621 Glenarm Place, Denver, 80202. Tickets to this fundraising event may be purchased at www.lfsc.org, 1.866.461.6556 or at the Paramount Box Office, Pepsi Center or Dick's Sporting Good's Park. Ticket Prices range from \$40 to \$150. There are limited tickets available for \$150 which also includes a dessert reception with Amy Grant.



FUNDS UPDATE

Building Fund = \$210.00
Scholarship Fund = \$9,461.15
Capital Improvement Fund = \$13,472.60
Ukraine Fund = \$6213.90

