



St. Olaf Lutheran Church

The CALLER

JANUARY 2015

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR MATT:

Question: Pastor, I mean this with all seriousness—If God knows what I am going to do before I do it, then how can I make free choices? I have been wrestling with it quite a bit.

Answer: Ahhhh, one of the ancient questions that never seems to stop befuddling us. Luther wrestled quite a bit with this one—or at least a variation of it—and did quite well with it. But before I go to Luther, I want to take us back to the time of Rabbi Akiva who was born not long after Jesus was crucified. He reflected, *“All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted.”*

I like Rabbi Akiva’s statement because it keeps these opposing ideas in tension as he couches them in the realm of faith rather than risk one cancelling the other out and sweeping the whole matter under the rug. In doing so, there are three points that can be made in that one sentence. The first point focuses on “All is foreseen,” or God foresees all things. This is one of the most basic attributes of God: God is all knowing, all powerful, and all present. God must be greater than humanity for God to be God. Still, if God transcends all of humanity, can humans make choices that are independent of God? In other words, if God is greater than we are, how can we make any choices that are not subservient to God?

There is another wrinkle here, and that has to do with humans as moral beings. The concept of morality means making good choices over bad ones. If our will were not free, then how can God tell us through the commandments to make the right choices. How can God tell us through the prophets to “Do this,” but “Don’t do that.” How can God measure out justice, and call out what is wicked or declare what is righteous, if we cannot freely make choices? Which brings us

back to the point, how do we reconcile this freedom of choice and our morality with an all-powerful God? Don’t worry we are not done yet!

A friend I had in college used to say, “What works on paper, does not always work in everyday life.” In other words, not all logic fits how relationships work. Point number two takes us another step beyond the logic and applies it to how our relationship works with God. Rabbi Akiva beautifully states that while choice is granted, the world is judged in his kindness. To answer the first point is that God has “given us choice.” Humanity cannot decide on its own to have free will. But if God is to be all-powerful, then God cannot be restricted from giving that choice either. God grants us that choice.

But in that free choice how are we going to live up to God’s standards? Or as one theologian put it—if we are always in the presence of the King of kings, what person can be found righteous before his judgment? Here comes the beauty of the Rabbi’s statement: “the world is judged in his kindness.”

Not only does the Rabbi point out the merciful ways of God, but I interject the ways and words of Jesus, who was also called Rabbi, and whom we call the revealed form of God. How often did Jesus restore those whom the world cast aside—the woman at the well whom Jesus made an evangelist, bringing her whole town to believe; the prostitute who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair and Jesus declared her forgiven amidst the complaining religious folks; the woman who was about to be stoned because of her sin, and Jesus said, “Let those without sin cast the first stone.” And then he turned to the woman and said, “Go and sin no more.” While choice is granted, the world is judged in his kindness, indeed.

We are given choice, but it is not that we are free and away from God in our making choices. God is always with us—during the good choices and the bad ones and everything else in between. God is also with us judging us kindly—not in order to cast us away, but to lead us to better choices...more God-like choices. I must add that God goes through an awful lot of muck in the process and that process of leading us is a long one, but that is God's choice. And the nature of that choice is to be a merciful God.

Point three brings us to Luther. Luther pushed the almightiness of God beyond any other theologian. In doing so, Luther also pushes Rabbi Akiva beyond his own statements and reasoning.

Luther was in a long drawn-out debate with Erasmus, one of the church's brightest theologians. Luther stated similarly to Rabbi Akiva that our will is bound...that our choices are not made in separation from God. Erasmus argued that our will is free and took more of the stance of the church at the time—God is off at a distance, watching and judging in a more condemning way than we previously discussed. The debate ended messily with Erasmus walking away trying to defend himself from a statement Luther made. Luther, however, went forward with his bondage of the will. In short, Luther proclaimed that while God gives us the freedom to make choices with things below us (in everyday life), God is the only one who makes the choice of things that are above us (namely salvation). God's choice in terms of salvation is you are forgiven. And as Luther points out in the Small Catechism, where forgiveness is given so is righteousness, new life, and salvation. Like Rabbi Akiva, Luther points out that God is always with us judging in kindness and leading us to choices over and over again. But Luther pushes that kindness beyond our making better choices in this life, to that kindness giving us a new life to live in the here and now (a Christ-like life) as well as eternal life in heaven.

God's Peace,

Pastor Matt

P.S. Please send me more questions.

January Lay Ministry Schedule

Date	Asst. Minister	Acolyte
Sat., Jan. 3 5:00 p.m.	George Monis	
Sun., Jan. 4 9:00 a.m.	Anne Hautala	Destiny Krueger
Sat., Jan. 10 5:00 p.m.	Dave Johnston	
Sun., Jan. 11 9:00 a.m.	Jane Christenson	Rachel Roth
Sat., Jan. 17 5:00 p.m.	Dawn Freiburger	
Sun., Jan. 18 9:00 a.m.	Pam Eggert	RaeAnn Eggert
Sat., Jan. 24 5:00 p.m.	Mary Hershoff	
Sun., Jan. 25 9:00 a.m.	Cindy Schlieve	Madelyn Schutze
Sat., Jan. 31 5:00 p.m.	Max Roth	

January Altar Guild

Paula Lumsden, Joan Uhlman

January Counters

Jim Lumsden, Rob Howell, Ron Egelseer

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 Clayton and Tonia Klink
- 14 Matthew and Laura Lee
- 23 David and Marilyn Carlson

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Jake Homulos, Elizabeth Schlehlein
- 2 Melissa Meier, Renee Solveson, Debra Uhlman, Kelsey Uhlman
- 5 RaeAnn Eggert
- 7 Zachary Brewer, Logan DeBack
- 9 Caroline Kraemer
- 10 Rachel Roth
- 11 Jennifer Guenther, Vicky St.George
- 12 Sandra Gannon
- 13 Brandon St.George
- 15 Taylor Slade
- 16 Madelyn Schutze
- 17 Espen Wilke
- 19 Makensie Christel
- 20 Denise Cairns, Anne Hautala
- 21 Annah Guenther, Catherine Lee
- 22 Andrew Schlehlein
- 27 Gerald Bohem
- 28 Earl Christenson
- 29 Jon Evert, John Reed
- 31 Madison DeBack, Payton DeBack, Makenna Dunn

ST. OLAF'S BLOOD DRIVE

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2015 from 2:30 to 6:30 pm

SAVE THE DAY!!

Schedule an appointment at www.bcw.edu/stolaf or call the church office at 920-474-7042. Open to family and friends. Appointments encouraged.

BloodCenter of Wisconsin celebrates National Blood Donor Month by paying tribute to people who help others through the simple act of giving blood. As a special thank you, all attempting donors will receive an additional 200 points that can be redeemed for items in BloodCenter's Recognition Center.

AN INVITATION TO THE WOMEN OF ST. OLAF

(Guests and young women are welcome)

As a special thank you for sharing your gifts to help make the Lutefisk Dinner and Bake Sale special and successful, please accept our invitation to our Fourth Spa Day and Luncheon. The event will be held on **Saturday, January 24, 2015, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall. Once again we have a special day planned that will offer you the opportunity to enjoy some special treats just for you! There will also be lunch, laughter, good conversation and wonderful fellowship available for all. A sign up sheet will be available sometime in early January. Please contact Cindy Schlieve, 920-474-7134, or Elaine Monis, 920-344-3791, with any questions about the day.

ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Adult Education Committee (AEC) has been working on a very special series of opportunities for the upcoming months, beginning in January 2015. We're taking a sabbatical from classes for the month of December since everyone has so many plans and activities already. Please take the opportunity to attend any of the other events that are happening in December here at St. Olaf. You'll find information on most events or activities elsewhere within this newsletter.

We are very excited to offer you the opportunity to look at your wellbeing by looking at different aspects of your life. One of the books we will use as reference is entitled *Wellbeing: "The Five*

Essential Elements" written by Tom Rath and Jim Harter. One of the things we'll learn about is our strengths and how we can use that knowledge to better understand the choices we make in our lives or perhaps how we can make some changes that are more in keeping with our strengths and who we are. Once we learn our strengths, we can take that knowledge in so many different directions! It will be a fun and enlightening program that will offer you a wealth of information and knowledge about your life and how to best interact with others as well. More details will be available in coming weeks. Watch the January Caller for more information.

We look forward to seeing many of you -- adults, confirmed youth, parents, grandparents are all welcome. Please contact Cindy Schlieve, Marilyn Carlson, or Pastor Matt, with any questions regarding this or other educational opportunities.

VALENTINE'S DINNER

St. Olaf's will be hosting a Valentine's Dinner on January 31, 2015 in the Fellowship Hall. We will be taking reservations for the dinner from 4pm to 7pm. The menu will include tenderloin steak and lobster, baked potato, John's salad, roll, dessert and beverage. A complimentary glass of wine is included in the price which is \$50 per person. Steak and lobster can be substituted for (2) pieces of lobster or a bone-in ribeye steak. Live music will, also, be provided along with an inside wine and beer station, outside cigar bar. Daycare run by the Youth Group will be provided downstairs.

So come out for an enchanted evening at St. Olaf's and enjoy yourselves by supporting our missions. Proceeds from the event will go to the Wounded Warrior project and the outdoor sign fund.

To make reservations, call Gene Eggert at 414-315-4156 or email

gene@architecturaldesignsinc.com.

Thank you.

Valentine's Dinner Committee

LUKEFISK DINNER/BAKE SALE

Thank you and more thanks for another fun and successful Lutefisk and Meatball Dinner and our celebration of Norwegian Heritage. Thank you for all the cookies and other donations. Thank you for all the volunteer hours. At 11:00 we counted at least 62 volunteers, so we estimate with the shift changes over 100 people helped on the day of the dinner. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We pray you all enjoyed the event. There were 546 dinner tickets sold. Profit after expenses \$4771.87. Bake Sale income was \$2997.60. \$200 of this was donated to "A Child's Smile" and the rest will be disbursed to various missions within the next few weeks.

THANK YOU!!!!

A special thank you to the following who took time from their busy lives to come and help decorate the Sanctuary and the Gathering space at church for all to enjoy!



Becky Christenson, Jane Christenson,
Lyn Johnson, Pastor and Laura Lee,
George and Clara Birkel

THANKS FOR A GREAT CHRISTMAS PROGRAM!!

This year we tried something new for the annual children's Christmas program, and this shorter traditional program was well received. We had angels, shepherds, sheep, a camel, soldiers, wise men, a star carrier, Herod, Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, the Chief Priest and other important characters in the nativity story who all worked together to share the birth of Jesus and the true meaning of the season. A special thank you goes to Claudine and Karl Scheife who directed the play, Clara Birkel for the beautiful music, Amy Hoffmann for the wonderful cake, Justine Cadena and Laura Lee for arranging volunteers, and Don and Pauline Christopherson for the treat bags and the families for coming to watch and for letting their children participate. Other volunteers helped with costumes and keeping order. We couldn't do activities like this without the help, so thank you to all!

MORTGAGE MATCHING FUND

We are pleased to announce that we reached our goal of \$10,000 raised towards the Mortgage Matching Fund. The congregation donated \$5155.00 towards the fund and it will be matched by \$5155.00 in seed money for a total of \$10,310.00. On December 1st, \$10,000 was paid in towards the loan for the renewal of the mortgage. We were able to secure financing again at 4.5% for another 5 years. The current balance is \$232,879.00. Our goal is to pay off the mortgage by our 175th Anniversary as a congregation which is on December 8, 2019. Thanks to all who participated in this drive, and, also, thanks to all who have contributed to the mortgage fund over the past decade. Without your generous support we would not be in the position we are currently in today.

John Christenson, Treasurer

AND MORE THANKS:

The sale of horse hay from the church land brought in \$853 in 2014. \$500 went into the general fund. \$353 went into the outdoor lighting fund.

HAPPY 170TH ANNIVERSARY ST. OLAF'S

by Roger Johnson

People who are active in their church and have an interest in its future are often the ones who are interested in its history. They look to the past to see what worked and what didn't work. They look back to avoid making the mistakes of the past. To not do so can result in making the same mistakes again and again and an inefficient use of time and energy.

As we look back, we begin to grasp the difficult circumstances under which the church founders had to work to start a church. They were strong believers, but there were obstacles at every turn. First they had to survive as pioneers in a wild country with harsh winters. There was neither time nor money to build and maintain a building where they could meet to worship on Sunday. There were no Lutheran pastors here, and there was no support from their home country in providing pastors to nurture their faith. Even if there had been pastors here, these pioneers, struggling to

survive in the New World, couldn't afford to support them.

Paying attention to the past, makes you want to be a strong church supporter in the present because you become aware of how difficult it was for earlier generations to sustain the church you have today; not only through the pioneering days but through our nation's wars and depressions, and personal tragedies. You come to understand how easy we have it today comparatively speaking, and you don't want to be the generation that drops the ball.

Our mission statement is "Sharing God's love and caring for community". We are only able to have this mission because of the efforts of earlier generations who got our church to the point where we can move forward on it. Let us appreciate their faith and efforts as we enter our 171st year.

Being aware of the past and recognizing and appreciating what people, with the help of God, went through to get our church to this point should give us strength and energy to continue supporting our church and to pursue our mission to the glory of God.

PREACHING CHRIST IN THE CHAOS OF CONSUMERISM?

By Karoline M. Lewis

Reading the title of this piece, I know what you are thinking. Here comes yet another plea to "put Christ back into Christmas." Every year, as surely as Christmas comes, also arrives the bashing of what Christmas has become, a merry marketplace that has overtaken the true meaning of Christmas.

What you need to do, "they" remind us, is to be less materialistic, less worldly, and remember "Jesus is the Reason for the Season." As if we can successfully extricate ourselves from the holiday tidal wave by appropriate lamenting, boycotting, and longing for the spirit of Christmas. As if preparing for the coming of Christ can happen while living in an ornament-shaped bubble.

But, if we take the incarnation seriously, I am not sure that God would want us to escape our inevitable reality, but to enter into it deeply, as God will do in the manger on Christmas Day.

Can we imagine a way of anticipation and preparation for Christmas that takes on fully the real humanness of what the chaos is all about?

Perhaps we could take our cue from Luke's gospel, (Luke 1:39-56), where we hear the story of two women, Elizabeth and Mary. They share much—familial relationship, miraculous pregnancies, and God's regard. Holding the stories of both of these women together, the primary theme that comes to the surface is relationship.

The pre-Christmas story could have just been about Mary and would still have been meaningful. But then, it would have been just about her. Luke's story of Jesus' birth suggests that at the heart of anything and everything for which we magnify the Lord is *relationship*.

Isn't that what stewardship is all about? Isn't that what Christmas is all about? Think about it. Everything we do to get ready for Christmas is about relationship. Making cookies to take to a party or to decorate with our children. Hosting a festive gathering in our home. Finding just the right gift to give to each person on our list. Traveling to be with those we (mostly) love.

And then, there's God. Why did God decide to enter into humanity? Why did God determine that it was a good idea to become us? Because then, God would know, sense, experience a relationship with us that God never had before. Because then, God would know, sense, experience our relationships with each other. Because then, God would understand our desperate attempts to maintain relationships that have long ago faded, moved on, in which we still sense demand, or for which we still long.

I am not convinced that God observes all of our franticness and materialism and then decides to respond by decrying our gluttony or condemning our consumerism. I wonder if God watches our worried waiting and sees right through it all. That it is all an attempt to create, sustain and nurture relationships—with those very close, with those who are obligatory, with those from whom we anticipate the yearly correspondence, with those

for whom our Christmas greeting, letter, photo or card matters, or they would worry.

To preach Jesus in the chaos of consumerism is simply to witness to our need for relationship, and the extent to which we, and God, will go to realize it.

St. Olaf Sunday School
presents
**DANIEL & THE LIONS'
DEN**
January 4 - 25



Daniel had some enemies. Maybe you know that feeling, too. They persuaded the king to sign an order that people could pray only to the king. Anyone who disobeyed the order would be thrown to the lions. But Daniel worshipped God, not the king, and the king's order did not stop him from praying to God. Three times a day he went to his house and prayed. His enemies went to his house and caught him praying and told the king. The king was upset, but according to the law he had to carry out his order, so he commanded that Daniel be thrown to the lions, saying, "May your God deliver you!" The next morning the king hurried to the lion's den and called, "Daniel, did your God save you?" And Daniel answered, "God sent an angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me." The king was overjoyed. Daniel was freed unharmed from the lion's den and the king wrote a message to all the world saying, "In all my kingdom people shall fear the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring for ever. He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in

heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." It takes strength and guts to believe in God and obey God's commands and be a role model to others. Believing one thing and doing another is wrong. Saying you love God but not obeying God is wrong. Daniel probably thought about giving in and hiding the fact that he was a follower of God. But Daniel decided to stand up for his belief in God, even if it meant death. There are times when even kids have to stand up for their beliefs--when they see someone treating another badly--when they hear gossip--when they have the tough choice of sleeping in or going to church--when it's time to pray and they'd rather play--when others speak negatively about church--when there are things distracting them away from worshipping God. Distractions and lions come in all shapes and sizes!

Sunday School Classes

- In the Oasis Café we will make Lion Corncakes and focus on the lions Daniel met.
- In Colors of Faith we will make mosaics that retell the story of Daniel's bravery.
- In Creation Exploration we will learn more about prayer as we explore a prayer labyrinth.
- In Jammin' with Jesus we will play some games and learn more about facing the lions we encounter in our daily lives.

Our focus verse:

In all my kingdom people shall fear the God
of Daniel,
for he is the living God, enduring for ever.

Daniel 6:26

NEWS regarding Opportunities for YOUTH & Families

January, 2015 Mark your calendars so you won't miss out

Everyone is busy, busy, busy! If sports are not taking up your time on the following weekends, think about trying a new experience for growing in faith. Let Justine know if you are interested in one of these weekends below!

TEC (TEENS ENCOUNTER CHRIST) for HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH February 6-8, 2015

Sr. High Youth in grades 10 & up are invited to attend a Teens Encounter Christ weekend retreat. Cost is \$45.00 which includes a T-shirt, & all your food & activities. Checks payable to Badger TEC need to be sent in with your application.

You would need to miss school on Friday, Feb 6th since it begins at 9:00 a.m. on Friday and would return on Sunday, Feb 8th about 5:00 p.m. Please call Justine for more info if you are interested in attending.

Applications need to be sent in by Jan 9th.

Those of you that have attended a weekend and would like to serve on team, the overnight training date is: Friday, Jan 23 6:00 p.m. till Sat. Jan 24 at 6:00 p.m. We will meet here at 5:15 p.m. to carpool. Those on Team leave from St. Olaf's for the actual weekend on Thurs. Feb. 6 at 5:15 p.m. Also, **if you are planning on inviting someone to attend the weekend for the first time, we need to get their application filled out & returned to me to send it in by Jan 9th.** Applications are in the envelope attached to the Youth Board. Call Justine for more info.

"SWAG" EVENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

Friday-Sunday, January 23-25, 2015 at Blue Harbor Resort in Sheboygan

It's an event for youth from many churches, near and far. It's the Synod-Wide Annual Gathering. \$75 per participant & includes the water park (half of your registration will be paid for you). Let Justine know if interested or sign up on the Youth board. **Reservations are needed ASAP. Invite a friend to go along.**

You may just have a good time, learn something new, or see someone you know there. Other youth from your area High Schools will be participating, ask if any of your friends are going.

LASERTAG

Saturday, January 24 Meet here at 5:00 p.m. Return about 9:30 p.m.

2 point Youth Event for Confirmation Class students

We're planning a St. Olaf "**Cross-Generational**" event for youth 12 yrs. old & up, teens, parents, and mentors that would like to join in at **Lasertag Adventure in Waukesha, a Christian Place. Price would be \$25.00/person** and include the lasertag, tokens for other games and a pizza party. **We need parent drivers.** Please sign up on the Youth board if interested. No waiver form is needed and no permission slip is needed if a parent is attending. Friends still need a St. Olaf Consent/Permission slip. Check it out at www.lasertagadventure.com

SHOREHAVEN NURSING HOME

Sunday, January 25 Meet here at 9:00 a.m. Return by Noon

2 Service points for Confirmation Class students

The 4th Sunday of the month is our turn to help wheel the elderly to Chapel for Worship Service. Those that have gone there in the past know how much our volunteering means to them. Please consider helping out.

ASHIPPUN BREAD BASKET FOOD PANTRY

Wednesday Jan. 28 Meet here at 6:00 p.m. Return by 7:00 p.m.

1 Service Point for Confirmation Class students

Need a few youth and/or a parent that would like to go. Please sign up on the Youth board calendar. A little volunteering goes a long way and means so much! They are currently serving about 18 families.

"The Invitation"/Confirmation Classes resume Sunday, Jan. 4th at 6:00 p.m. Come prepared!