

Announcements

While Pastor Lilienthal is serving the vacancy at First Shell Rock Lutheran Church in Northwood, IA, some of these announcements reflect the concerns of that parish.

Please Keep in Your Prayers:

- Darrell Cafourek, who is struggling with his ailment at home
- Ernie Halvorson, who is going through various medical procedures

Members who are homebound, kept from gathering with us, but visited and called by the Pastor:

- Darrell & Rachelle Cafourek
- JoAnn Green
- Randy Giebel
- Ernie Halvorson
- Sandy Pieper
- Marcie Severson
- Betty Stalheim
- Verna Tuttle
- Marilyn Wendt
- Dale Thompson

Farewell Pot-Luck

Pastor Lilienthal's last Sunday at Our Savior's and First Shell Rock will be February 18. The Ladies' Aid is sponsoring a farewell pot-luck for Pastor and his family this day. Please come with a dish to share, and bid farewell to the Lilienthals!

Lay Education Conferences

On April 27 in Hartland and September 21 in Ames there are two Lay Conferences being held in our Circuit. The purpose is to keep laypeople (non-pastors) updated and strong in theological topics and discussions, so that the congregation may be strengthened. It is advisable for us to elect at least one delegate to attend each of these conferences.

Last Month:

Attendance:	Offerings Received:	Weekly Need:
12/31 32	\$1664.75	\$2041.15
1/7 41	\$1955.00	
1/14 17	\$1833.00	
1/21 37		

February 2023

To Get Ahold of Pastor:

- **Wednesdays 11-2**
- I might not always be in my study, because I'm frequently out making pastoral calls or taking care of my family. **Call me: (715) 295-4020, or (507) 369-5832; or e-mail me: revmlilienthal@gmail.com**

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From Pastor's Desk

Rev. Michael G. Lilienthal

Sarah and I moved to Albert Lea April 2018. A handful of you were there that day to help us move into the apartment we had found, carrying boxes and pieces of furniture up the flight of steps into the space we would call home for the next two and a half years. A couple of you also helped me move boxes of books and office supplies into my study at Our Savior's. There was a surprise snow-storm that week. The next Sunday was the installation service, and I heard a lot of names that wouldn't sink into my memory until weeks and sometimes months later. Slowly I got to know you.

A year later, we brought two new foster kids into our family, and started bringing them to church. I remember most of those days through a fog. I can vaguely picture what our church looked like with an average attendance in the 80s. In the first half of 2020, you can all remember what happened. Our congregation, like many congregations, got hit with a sort of reset-button. After several weeks of no in-person Services, we came back together and slowly increased attendance until we aver-

aged in the mid-30s—a pale shadow of the numbers we'd had previously.

We started getting to know each other again. Over the next four years, we realized that we were simultaneously in a strange new world, and a world that had not changed at all. We got to know by experience that Scripture was true: **“There is nothing new under the sun”** (Eccl. 1:9). Human beings remained sinners, self-centered, full of wickedness, and full of desperate need, need which only the Gospel can fill. And there we also learned that this Scripture was true: **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”** (Heb. 13:8).

Satan has worked in several global events to convince people that God's Word is not reliable. But God has used these same events to prove exactly the opposite. You can see from our experiences together how God's Promises remain true. We have learned, as St. Paul has, **“in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be**

February 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4—Presentation (observed) 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School	5 Circuit 7 Winkel	6—St. Titus	7 10a.m. Bible Study	8	9	10
11—Baptism of Our Lord 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School	12	13	14—Ash Wed. 🕯️ 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers	15	16	17
18—Lent 1 9a.m. Service 10:30 Farewell Pot-Luck	19 🕯️	20	21 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers	22	23	24—St. Matthias
25—Lent 2 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School	26	27	28 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers	29		

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hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:11-13). We’ve been taught this important, sometimes very difficult, lesson: **“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”** (1 Tim. 6:6-7).

Because of the difficulty of this lesson, how hard it can be for us to say goodbye to many of the things we have found so important to us—possessions, homes, loved ones, even what we saw as the identity of our church—the truly essential things are needed to sustain us, to strengthen us, to comfort us. We need the Gospel, the ever sure Word of God to wrap us up in the love of Jesus, to hide us in his wounds. We need each other—we need the Church: **“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”** (Heb. 10:23-25).

I know with some of the disasters and troubling waters around us you have seen signs of the Last Day. That’s good. Seeing that Day approaching, you can look with joy at the coming of your redemption. Of course, I don’t mean that you won’t feel any trepidation. But when you do feel concern or worry, you have a place to go. That place is your church—the members around you.

In human terms, I had sometimes expected that I would remain in this place until retirement. I could see growing old in this congregation. I’m thankful that no one has asked me why I have accepted the Call to the congregations in Belview—I don’t have a singular, or even an expressible complex, “why.” All I can say is that God’s will shall be done. That shouldn’t surprise us, because after all we pray for it every day. But I also want you to remember that God’s will also includes your own daily bread, the forgiveness of your trespasses, your deliverance from evil. You are united to one another in Christ Jesus, in whom all these gifts are yours. And even though I’ll be more than a hundred miles away, I rejoice to be united to you in Jesus, too. Whenever I kneel down in prayer, each of you will be kneeling with me. The comfort of our membership in Christ is enhanced by the comfort of our membership to one another. It’s true, we lose members—it’s easier when God takes them to himself. Some leave us for other reasons. This hurts. But let me encourage you to look to those who remain around you. Ask yourself how they need your support; and when you need support yourself, ask them.

The Lord of the Church is with each of us, no matter where we are. And whether we are separated by hundreds or thousands of miles, we all hear the same voice of our Good Shepherd, so there is **“one flock and one shepherd”** (John 10:16). And so, **“For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you’”** (Ps. 122:8).