



Shining Mountains *news*

"IT IS OUR MISSION, AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD AND COMMAND TO GROW IN HIS WORD, TO GATHER AROUND HIS WORD, AND TO GO WITH HIS WORD."

Throughout history, God has used his people to brave incredible risks to do incredible things

"I was cupbearer to the King"

Nehemiah's job was to lift a cup. He didn't seem like the most likely of heroes.

Oftentimes when you read the Bible, it's easier to see what's coming. Take Moses—born a Jewish slave but raised as an Egyptian prince, he threw it all away the day he killed an Egyptian slave-driver who was beating an Israelite. Or King David. Even as a boy, he was killing lions to protect his sheep. As a young man he took a stand against Goliath—the giant soldier who was making God's people shake in their boots. You just know people like that are going to turn out to be heroes.

Nehemiah was different. About 450 years before Jesus was born, many of God's people were living in exile in Persia. Nehemiah was one of them. Still, God was good to him and Nehemiah landed a "comfy job." He was cupbearer to Persia's King Artaxerxes. That was no small job. As the man who was always on hand to take the first sips of the king's wine or taste the first bites of his food, Nehemiah had one of the highest and most trusted positions in the kingdom.

But then something came that made

him "risk" it all. Nehemiah's brother made a trip to Jerusalem, and when Nehemiah asked him what things were like there, the news wasn't good: the walls of the city were broken down and the gate burned to ashes.

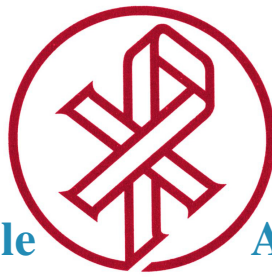
That troubled Nehemiah to the point of tears. Why?! Nehemiah was living a good life with a fine job. He had respect and he had a good roof over his heads. Why would he be so worried about life in Jerusalem?

But you know why, don't you? Jerusalem was "the city of God" - the place of God's promises. The place where God promised the Messiah would one day come. It broke Nehemiah's heart to think that while he had it so good, God's city and the Messiah's home were in ruins. It's not so hard to understand at all. It's the same thing that leads so many members to give countless hours to meetings, the same truth that prompts us to give our first-fruit offerings to the Lord, the same reason we work hard to build up the church with our prayers and our witness.

Nehemiah saw his Savior in God's promises and prophecies. And God moved him to risk everything to jour-



ney to Jerusalem and lead God's people in rebuilding the gates that Jesus would one day walk through. We still see our Savior in his Word. And that knowledge of God's goodness to us leads us to do the same thing Nehemiah once did—treasure the house of God and the place of his promises, and give our all to build up his people.



The Prayerbook of the People

A closer look at our hymnal

Hymnals have often been called “The prayer book of the people.” We usually think of the hymns that become near and dear to our hearts—words that often come to our mind even more quickly and memorably than some words of Scripture because of their rhyme and music. The hymnal, though, is much more than just hymns. Every month, this article will take a look at a different portion of our hymnal (Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal) in hopes of casting light on some of its often-overlooked blessings. (For those who don’t have one, copies of the hymnal can be ordered through Northwestern Publishing House at www.nph.net.)

The Prayers of Christian Worship

Prayer is a natural and essential part of a Christian life. God speaks to us in His Word; we speak to Him through our prayers. If we compare our Christian lives to our physical lives, hearing God’s Word would be *inhaling*; responding to Him in prayer is *exhaling*. Inhaling is what keeps us alive, but exhaling is its natural counterpart.

That doesn’t mean prayer lives are always easy. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, and we could often use a little bit of help, too. There are two main sections in the hymnal that can provide that help.

Personal Prayers for Worship

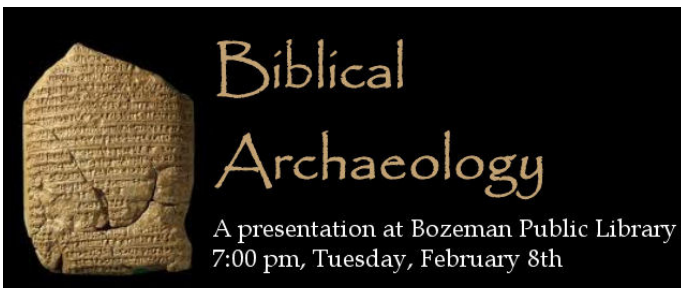
Beginning on page 10 in the front of the hymnal is a series of prayers intended to be used personally in our worship services. They pray for peace, for remembrance of our baptisms, for hearts ready to worship. There are also excellent prayers to help us prepare to receive—or give thanks after receiving—the Lord’s Supper. While it’s always enjoyable to visit with fellow members before church, consider saving a few quiet minutes before worship to say one or two of these prayers. After all, we’re here for this one hour with God and want to get as much out of it as we can! Refreshed by worship, enjoy visiting more with fellow members afterwards.

Personal Prayers

Pages 134-139 in the front of the hymnal list other various “personal prayers.” These aren’t intended for worship *per se*; they might be better used at home as you give thanks to God or ask his blessing on certain issues in your life. The prayers in this section deal with patience and love, forgiveness and willing obedience, prayers for our Called Workers and our families, to mention a few. Particularly beautiful are the prayers for the love of others and a life of service. The section closes with a set of four morning and four evening prayers, including with Martin Luther’s morning and evening prayers.

Christians pray. It’s a precious gift that God gives to us, blessed with the assurance that our Father in heaven will hear our prayers because of the merits of Jesus Christ. At times, it’s easy for our prayer life to become a bit stunted—only asking for things we need or even not remembering to ask for the things we need most! Do you often pray for your government leaders, as God directs us? Do you at times forget to pray for the missionaries who share the gospel in foreign land? Have you never thought to pray for single people who seek to live a chaste and holy life or find yourself coming up to communion without taking time to ask God’s blessings on your communing? God grant that these portions of the hymnal bring blessings to your prayer life—and lead to God blessing others through your prayers.

Next month: A look at Personal Preparation for Holy Communion.



Biblical Archaeology

A presentation at Bozeman Public Library
7:00 pm, Tuesday, February 8th

Every so often, an archaeologist is in the news for saying that they’ve found something that proves the Bible to be true. It’s usually not long after that that another one comes along claiming proof that the Bible is full of mistakes.

What’s going on here?

On Tuesday, February 8th, you have a chance to find out. Pastor Seifert will lead a discussion on *Biblical Archaeology* at

Bozeman Public Library. The presentation will start at 7:00 pm in the library’s Large Community Room and last just over an hour or so.

During the course of the presentation, we’ll explore the basics of how Biblical archaeology “works,” what it *can* (and *can’t*) tell us about the Bible, handle a few pieces of ancient pottery and learn about some of the most significant archaeological finds.

The lecture is open for all to attend, and opportunities like this can be great ways to open a dialogue with friends who are usually hesitant to talk about church or the Bible. Information is available on Shining Mountains’ website—if there’s any more information you’d like, just ask Pastor.

Even as we take a look at this interesting topic, may God give us the confidence that while some *truths* may be found from digging in the dirt, we can always find the *Truth* from digging more deeply into his Word!

Spiritual Truths in Wood & Stone—part 3 of 5

A five month series that examines how our churches express the truths confessed there

If you ask a Lutheran what the purpose of going to church is, you'd probably hear something like: "I go to hear God's Word." That's a wonderful answer! We don't come for the beauty of the music, the entertainment ability of the preacher or to impress others with our piety. We come to church because God promises to serve us here with his Word and Sacraments.

As wonderful as that answer is, it isn't a *complete* answer. The author of Hebrews exhorts us, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **let us encourage one another**" (He 10:25). The Apostle Paul encourages us to "**Speak to one another** with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:19). Our worship is **primarily** about "God and me," but it isn't **only** about that. It's also about me and my family of believers as we encourage one another by the hymns we sing, the responses we speak, and our presence itself.

If that's what we're here to do, that has some implications for our building. It means that the minister in the front of church isn't the only important one speaking or singing—the congregation is a key participant in our worship. We need to see and hear **each other** if we're going to encourage (and be encouraged by) each other. So how does that shape a building?

The "sight" question might be easier to answer. Many of our churches are designed with a long, narrow "nave" (the main area where the worshipers sit), similar to a movie theater in some ways, oriented towards "the show." That's not wrong, but it may not be the best reflection of our theology. That design comes primarily from Roman Catholic theology. According to that theology, the people were passive in worship. The liturgy was done in Latin (a language which most people didn't understand), the priests and choirs did all the singing, and worshipers didn't need to hear or take part in the service to somehow receive its benefit—they simply had to be there. Their ability to clearly see or hear anything wasn't all that important. If, however, worshipers are supposed to both clearly see what's happening at the front of church and be an encouragement to each other, that changes things. The first great example of scriptural Lutheran theology in architecture was the "Frauenkirche" in Dresden, Germany. The round shape of the building both keeps the entire congregation close to the altar, pulpit and font *and* lets them see one another in worship. A few floor plans of recently-built WELS churches show a modern approach to this issue, shown below right.

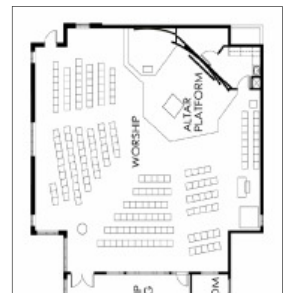
The "sound" question calls for more explanation. In our worship, we want *the gospel* to be heard. That means we want *the minister* to be heard from the pulpit and the altar and we want *the congregation* to be heard as they speak and sing from the nave. That has everything to do with the materials that we use in church. Are you ready to get technical? Different building materials absorb sound in different ways. Hard surfaces (like tile and cement) reflect sound. Soft surfaces (like carpet and the bodies of worshipers) absorb sound. A "reverberation period" (the amount of time a sound is bouncing around a room before it's absorbed) that's too short will leave music and singing feel dull, muted and lifeless. A reverberation period that's too long will make it hard to understand the spoken word. In a sanctuary where we will speak, sing and play music, a reverberation period of about 2 seconds is the ideal. Much more than that and it sounds like you're speaking in an echo chamber; much less, and it sounds like you're singing into a towel. That's generally achieved by hard surface floorings and ceilings, as well as walls built at the proper angles to diffuse sound well. If the technical aspect of it is a little hard to follow, maybe there's a simpler way to picture this: *Where does your singing voice sound best?* If you answered "*My shower*", then you understand how much reflective surfaces can improve sound.

What does all this look like in a church? In general, it means very little carpet on the sanctuary floor, using mostly tile, wood or cement instead. *A note on that: In our circles, this strikes some people as odd or raises concerns about a sanctuary that feels "cold" or "sterile." This doesn't need to be the case at all. Tour the great churches and cathedrals of the world, and you will rarely find a scrap of carpet in any of them. Or speak to other WELSers whose churches have ripped out their carpet (a move taking place all across our Synod). Time and again, the consensus is that their church is even more beautiful than before, and their congregation sounds like it doubled in size overnight because of the improved acoustics.* And it means a renewed focus on the words of God that are spoken and sung by our fellow Christians in worship, as we gather together to proclaim the wonders of what God has done. And God grant that it also means we're able to give a *full* answer of why we go to church: "I go to hear God's Word, and I go to encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ as I share the Gospel with them."

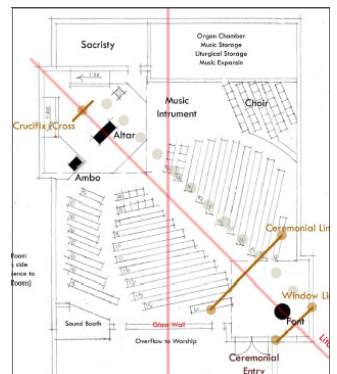
CONCEPTS THAT SHAPE LUTHERAN ARCHITECTURE

Over the next five months, this article will explore the ways these concepts shape Lutheran church buildings:

- *The Means of Grace*
- *Transcendence and immanence*
- *Mutual Encouragement*
- *Past and present*
- *Symbolism*



Two examples of floor plans that seek to position worshipers so that they can see and hear each other—but still focus on Word and sacrament.



A Question of Conscience?

How does a Christian look at Cremation

Over the last few months, the topic of cremation has been raised a number of times. How should a Christian view this burial practice? Does the Bible have anything to say about it? It's good whenever these questions drive us back to God's Word.

Christians of recent years approach the question with some suspicion or skepticism for a reason. Especially the two generations of the Christian Church preceding our own, it seems, has largely rejected the practice as being contrary to Biblical values. Many pastors and commentaries have labeled cremation as improper for a Christian.

It's worth beginning with what God's Word says, though. The Bible gives us no commands for how to bury our dead. None. We know from archaeological records and a few Biblical narratives about some biblical burial practices, but these things were never commanded for us.

Throughout the Bible, it seems traditional burial (in some form) was the norm. At times the body was simply placed in the dirt, at times a wooden coffin was used. Later on, natural or man-made caves were used as types of mausoleums or crypts (Jesus and Lazarus were both buried this way).

Throughout, believers seemed to understand that our bodies would eventually be destroyed (Moses, the first leader of the Israelites talked about the way God makes us *return to dust* in Psalm 90). They sought to show respect for bodies—to a point. When large above-ground tombs were used, the body would be set on stone "bench" inside the tomb. After the flesh and soft tissue had decayed, family members would go in, sweep grandpa's bones into a small box that would be stored elsewhere in the large tomb, and reuse the same area for the next family member who died.

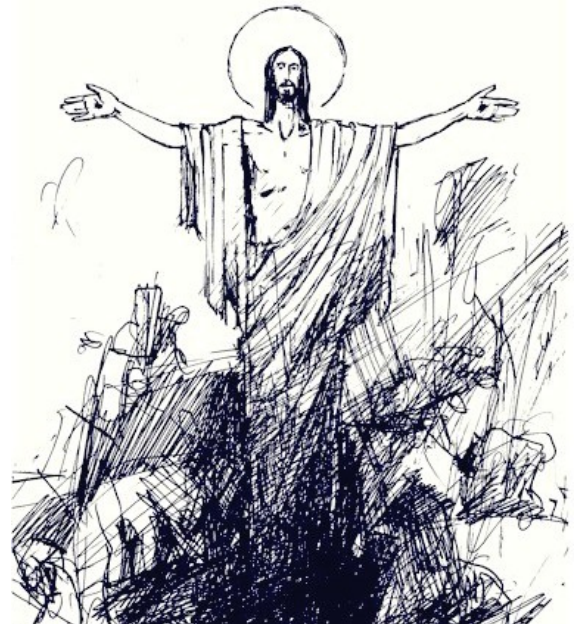
If there's no biblical command for or against cremation, why have some taught that it's wrong? Christians believe in the resurrection of the body. We know that Jesus will raise our bodies whether they were lost at sea, cremated, destroyed in a plane crash or filled with preserving chemicals and placed in an airtight vault. However, there was a period in which cremation was seen by some to be a *rejection* of the resurrection—almost a way of saying, "*Let's just see Jesus try and raise me now!*"

And that touches on how a Christian approaches this question. Why are you making the decision you're making? What does your decision say about your faith?

If someone is cremated because they reject (or don't care about) the resurrection of the body, such a decision is unchristian and wrong.

If someone decides to be cremated because they know that Christ has all power to raise our bodies (even after our "skin has been destroyed" - cf Job 19:26) and that we have no need to hide from the reality of death, then cremation can be a legitimate and God-pleasing decision.

Countless other factors may play a part in this decision. *What's the best use of our resources? How will this impact my family?* As you consider these things, make sure to talk to your family and help them understand your wishes and (above all) that you're able to consider your burial with the confidence that you will rise from the dead and see your Redeemer with your own eyes!



Serving Us in February *Thanks to those who served in January!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
2/6	J Newton / L Hunziker	<i>open / open</i>	E Baker	Hunziker
2/13	J Lauersdorf / T Zulauf	Lauersdorf / <i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Joecks
2/20	T Linn / P Marozick	<i>open / open</i>	Seifert	Kohler
2/27	D Pruitt / M Joecks	<i>open / open</i>	D & P Pruitt	Lauersdorf

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. **Psalm 84:10**

Upcoming Messages

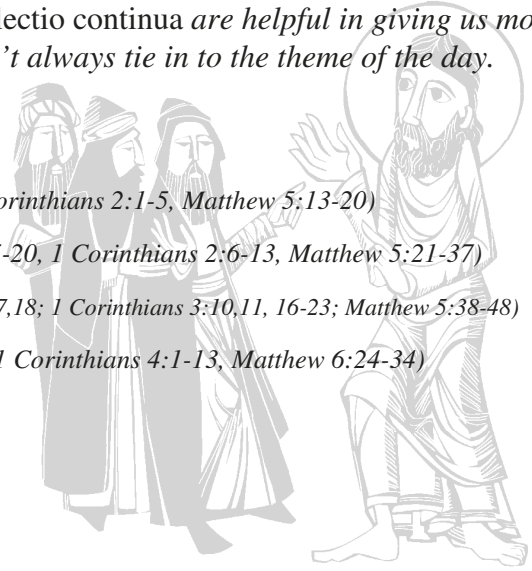
Throughout February we continue to celebrate the season of *Epiphany*. The word *Epiphany* means “appearing”; it’s the season when we celebrate that God revealed Christ as a Savior of *all* people. Below is a list of both our Sunday worship themes and focuses.

May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

A note on our readings in February: Generally, all three Scripture readings on a Sunday focus on the same theme. However, throughout part of January and February, the “Second Lesson” (or “Epistle Lesson”) is part of what’s called a lectio continua (Latin for “continuous reading”). For seven straight weeks, the “Second Lesson” is taken from sections of 1 Corinthians. These lectio continua are helpful in giving us more readings from a particular book of the Bible—but the lessons don’t always tie in to the theme of the day.

Sundays in February

- Feb 6 *The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany (Isaiah 58:5-9a, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Matthew 5:13-20)*
- Feb 13 *The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (Deuteronomy 30:15-20, 1 Corinthians 2:6-13, Matthew 5:21-37)*
- Feb 20 *The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany (Leviticus 19:1,2,17,18; 1 Corinthians 3:10,11, 16-23; Matthew 5:38-48)*
- Feb 27 *The Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany (Isaiah 49:13-18, 1 Corinthians 4:1-13, Matthew 6:24-34)*



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February 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:30 Elder's Meeting	2 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	3 6:15pm Church Council Meeting	4	5
6 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship w/ H.C	7	8 7:00 pm Archaeology and the Bible presentation at Bozeman Public Library	9 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	10 7:00 pm Choir Practice	11	12
13 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship	14	15	16 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	17	18	19
20 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship w/ H.C 11:30 —Voters' Meeting?	21	22	23 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	24 7:00 pm Choir Practice	25	26
27 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship	28 10-2:00pm Pastors' Circuit Meeting (Livingston)					
