



# 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."

*Everything about the Church Year culminates in*

## Three Holy Days

Usually we use this front page as a monthly devotional message. This month, though, as we prepare to celebrate Easter, please allow a different purpose.

In mid-April we enter "Holy Week." For nearly 2,000 years, this week has been observed as the high point in Christians' annual worship life. From Palm Sunday (Apr 17) through Easter Sunday (Apr 24), we celebrate some of the most unique and meaningful services of the year. Since those services are so unique, it's helpful to have a bit of preparation for what we're seeing, hearing, saying, singing and experiencing over these days.

A little bit of history first. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday. That's the day Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time so he might suffer and die. His entrance on a donkey as people laid palm branches at his feet was prophesied hundreds of years earlier by Zechariah (see Zechariah 9:9,10). It continues with Maundy Thursday, the night Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, gave his disciples the command to "Love one another" and was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. On Good Friday, we solemnly observe his death

on the cross. Easter Sunday marks his resurrection—the single most important event in the history of the world.

Over the years, the Christian Church began to celebrate Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Saturday before Easter as "The Triduum" (Latin for "The Three Days"). We're not accustomed to worshiping on the Saturday before Easter, but late on "Holy Saturday" congregations would gather together and hold an "Easter Vigil" that focused on their baptisms and Christ's resurrection. The service would conclude at midnight with the cry "Christ is risen!" and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. While that practice isn't very common in our circles these days, many churches still have an "echo" of it: our "Easter Sunrise" services are a modern adaptation of the Easter Vigil.

There are a number of unique elements for each of the services that are helpful to know about in advance to make these days as meaningful as possible:

### **Palm Sunday**

Just as the people of Jerusalem lay palm branches at Jesus' feet as he entered Jerusalem, so do we in worship,



too. Our Sunday School children help us begin our worship with "All Glory, Laud and Honor" as they bring palm branches forward and place them before the altar.

### **Maundy Thursday**

The emphasis on Maundy Thursday is Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper. To help emphasize that, the sermon is often brought to the

front of the service—immediately after the opening hymn. After the sermon, the rest of the liturgy flows up to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The service ends with a “stripping of the altar.” The altar represents Christ's presence among us. As the choir sings a setting of Psalm 88, the lights are dimmed and the candles, book stand, fair linen and paraments are removed from the altar, reminding us of the way Christ was abandoned by his friends and stripped by his enemies as the first Maundy Thursday drew to a close.

Since Maundy Thursday's worship is technically part of the three-day worship service that lasts from Thursday till Sunday, there is no closing benediction. Worshipers leave in silent contemplation of Christ's command to love each other, and his love for us in the Sacrament.

### Good Friday *Tenebrae*

It isn't an overstatement to say that Good Friday was the darkest day in history. The Bible tells us that the sun stopped shining for three hours while Christ hung on the cross (Lk 23:45). The *Tenebrae* service developed in remembrance of that day.

“Tenebrae” comes from the Latin word for “shadows” or “darkness.” The service is divided into seven brief devotions on the seven statements Christ made from the cross. After each devotion, one of seven candles is extinguished, and the sanctuary lights are dimmed. At the end of the service, only one candle remains. Instead of being blown out, it's carried out of the sanctuary and brought back in, reminding us that we're looking forward to the resurrection of Easter Sunday morn.

By the end of the service, the sanctuary is nearly dark. The final two hymns are sung by the choir. As a congregation, we recite the Apostles' Creed and then leave in silence, focusing on the meaning of Christ's death, the cost of our sins, and the unfathomable nature of our Father's love for us.

### Easter Sunday worship

The darkness of Good Friday couldn't meet a greater contrast than our Easter Sunday worship! After omitting our *alleluias* for the forty days of Lent, we begin worship with a triumphant, “Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!” The entire service is filled with our most joyful songs as we celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead and God's guarantee of our coming resurrection.

Our Sunday morning

celebrations will also include an Easter brunch and an Easter egg hunt for the children of our church and our community.

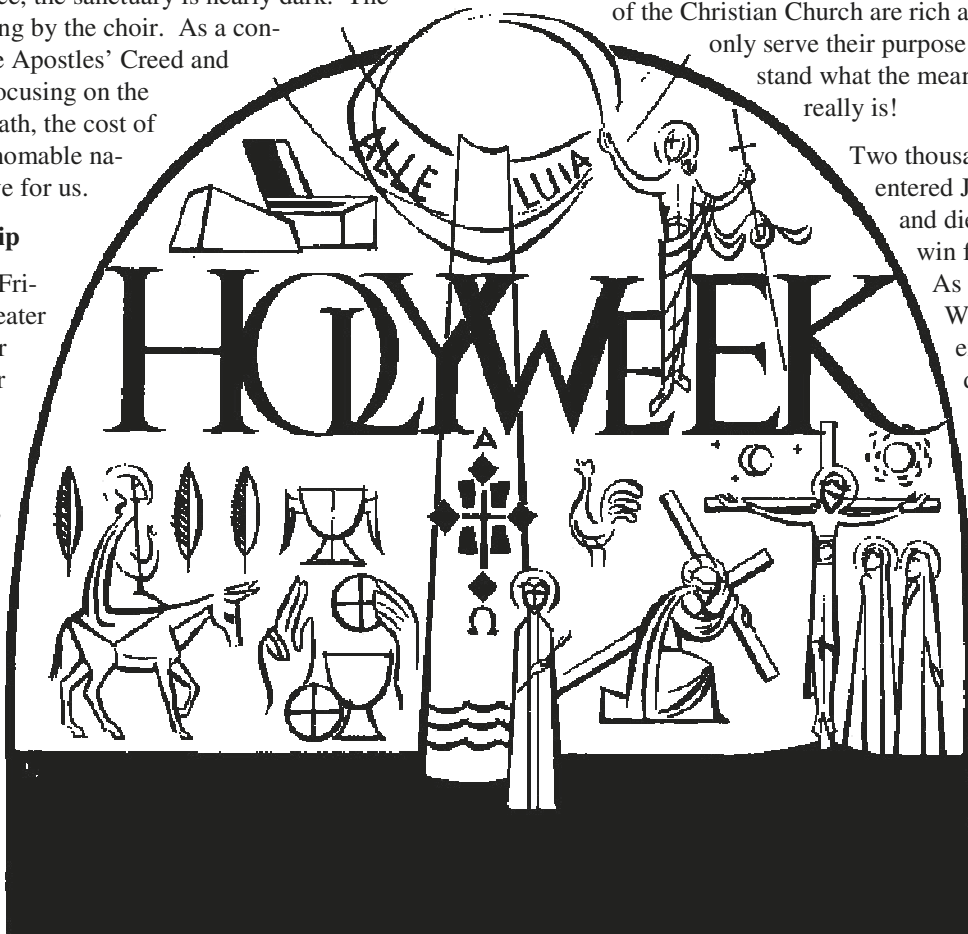
### A few thoughts on celebrating Holy Week

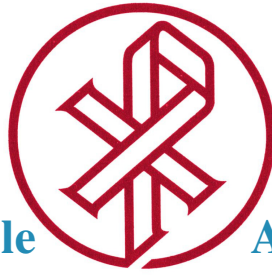
As we enter the most precious time of year for Christians, there are a few things to keep in mind that may help you appreciate these services even more:

- Remind yourself of what you're about to experience (and *why*). Read through this article again before Holy Week begins, or read through the gospel accounts that trace Christ's last week in your home devotional life.
- Explanations of the services will be printed in the front page of each day's worship folder. Make a point of arriving at church a little earlier to read through these and focus your hearts on the coming worship.
- If you have young children, talk with them about what will be different about that day's service in advance. Children are exceptional at picking up on symbolism. If you explain what the meaning of the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday is, or the darkness of Good Friday, the worship will be all the more meaningful for them.
- As you invite friends to worship on these days (this is a wonderful time of year to learn about “the basics” of the Christian faith), let them know about the service ahead of time. Tell them that these services are a bit different from our normal Sunday worship, and explain why.
- If you have any questions about how these days are celebrated, don't hesitate to talk to Pastor Seifert. The traditions of the Christian Church are rich and meaningful, but only serve their purpose when we understand what the meaning behind them really is!

Two thousand years ago, Jesus entered Jerusalem to suffer and die for our sins and win for us eternal life. As we enter Holy Week, we don't go expecting to find death, but true life in Christ's saving work.

May the Lord richly bless your celebration of these days, and so convince you of his love that on Easter Sunday you're able to proclaim with heart-felt joy: *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*





## 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](http://www.nph.net).)*

### The Personal Devotions in Christian Worship

Over the last century or two, we’ve learned to “farm out” an amazing portion of the work that people used to do in their own homes. Very few people grow the majority of their own food or make their own clothes anymore. And it doesn’t stop there: The majority of our children’s education takes place outside the home, we contract out our health care and senior care, our hair cuts and oil changes.

There are certainly great blessings that come with this. It allows for more space and rest in our schedules, and we can trust that “experts” are handling so many of the unique tasks that people used to tackle themselves.

This isn’t the way it’s supposed to be for our faith-lives, though. We gather together for church every Sunday morning. We attend Bible Class or Sunday School—maybe a weekday study or service here or there. Those are good things! But as much of a blessing our public ministers (pastors and teachers) are, God says again and again that the primary spiritual leaders of a home are right there—in the home. The faithful husband as he leads his family in devotions. The loving parents as they work together to bring up their children in the truth.

How do you do that? There are countless resources that can help—the quarterly “Meditations” books, other devotional books or illustrated Bible stories for children, a good daily Bible reading schedule, etc.

There are a few resources in our hymnal that may be a help as well. On p. 150-153 in the front of the hymnal are three different devotions (a *General Devotion*, *Morning Devotion*, and *Evening Devotion*). Each one opens with some verses spoken responsively and a prayer. There’s a portion for reading Scripture, singing a hymn or reading a Psalm, another prayer and a blessing.

Below are a few suggestions if you’re considering incorporating these in your devotional life:

- If you’re using these together with your family, have at least two copies of the hymnal so that everyone can easily see what they’re reading.
- Choose your Scripture readings in advance. One easy approach might be to pick a book (the gospel of John or the book of Romans, for example), and read one chapter every devotion.
- Especially if you have children, consider including the hymn (even if you don’t think you’re a good singer!). Pick one hymn every week or every month—a simple, beautiful, meaningful one—and just work on learning and singing a verse or two.
- Don’t hesitate to include the Blessing. It can be a powerful and treasured experience for children to grow up with their parents speaking the Lord’s blessing to them every day.
- Try to be consistent, but don’t beat yourself up when you fail. As you move into a more regular devotional life, there will certainly be forgotten or missed days along the way. That’s alright. What matters is that you continue to strive for time in the Word.
- If you’re single or without children, don’t feel like these devotions aren’t for you. Speak or read both parts by yourself, and every day have the reminder that the Lord is in your home with you.

It’s a joy to gather at God’s house and feast on his Word together. But God grant us every blessing as we look to be “self-feeders” who grow in faith seven days a week. And may God bless our families all the more as children look to their fathers and mothers and see not just a supplier of food and clothes, but their spiritual leaders who give them the bread of life and clothe them in the robes of Christ’s righteousness.

*Next month: A look at the Christian Church Year*



# Spiritual Truths in Wood & Stone—part 5 of 5

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

At first glance, *ritual* and *symbolism* aren't words that seem to be too important to our culture. Those are words that speak of a connection to the past, maybe even words that emphasize *form* over *function*. In our day and age, we're very much about *living in the now*, looking forward instead of backwards, emphasizing *function* over *form*.

Or so it might seem. But in reality, we surround ourselves with ritual and symbolism. Have you ever been to a ballgame that *didn't* start with the national anthem being sung as thousands of people placed their hands over their hearts or took off their caps? Could you imagine a judge taking the bench without wearing a robe? We still surround ourselves with symbols and rituals.

That's especially the heritage of the Christian Church. Throughout history, God has chosen to communicate with his people through symbols: the thunder on Mt. Sinai, the blood of the Passover Lamb, the parables of Christ. And we still treasure it in our worship today as the minister begins worship with the sign of the cross or raises his hands in a closing benediction.

What's true of our worship services is also true of our worship buildings. Whether you think of the massive European cathedrals designed in the shape of a cross or the way we still use candles on our altar to symbolize the light of God's presence (even though we've pretty well mastered the use of electric light...), we still use symbolism in our churches.

It's true that, to some extent, rich symbolism in our buildings hasn't been as common as it once was (when was the last time you visited an American church built in the shape of a cross?). There are a number of reasons for that. As frontiers pushed across America, they built simple churches that would serve the few farm families located around them—a style that started to become the norm. In our own Lutheran circles, the negative influence of a movement called *Pietism* (common especially in the late 16th and early 17th century) had eradicated much of the symbolism and ritual that had been embraced by the Christian Church and Lutheran Reformers. And American practicality still struggles with the thought of designing buildings with ritual and symbolism in mind; we often stress *function* over *form*, instead of reaching a healthy balance between the two.

All that being said, there is still beautiful symbolism that we may be used to seeing in our churches. We often top our churches with steeples that serve as a finger pointing our eyes up to heaven. Church doors are often strikingly large or welcoming, emphasizing that through Jesus we have the way into heaven. Solid walls and construction remind us that God's Word is a sure foundation to build on. The use of space and light serve to impress on our hearts that we've gathered together in *a holy place*, a place that's set aside for people to gather in God's presence, be served by him, and rejoice in his light.

What's the point of talking about some of this as we look at a new church home? More than anything, it's to remind ourselves that as we look at structures we don't simply ask ourselves, "What can this building *do*?" (How many people can it fit? How many classrooms will it have? Will there be a kitchen?), but "What does this building *say*?" When people see it from the road, will they see a place that's entirely different from a house or a store—or even a church of another denomination? When a visitor walks in for the first time, will they at all be struck by the thought that once filled Jacob's heart: *Surely the Lord is in this place* (Ge. 28:16)? As our children grow up worshipping within its walls, will what they see help them understand why Luther called us to *fear, love and trust in God above all things*? There are countless ways to reflect those truths: the positioning of a baptismal font or the type of altar we use, the location of our windows or the presence/absence of a communion rail—even the way we arrange seating says something about what we emphasize about the relationship between God and his people.

The way a church is built is an expression of faith. It's one of the ways we tell God, "This is what you're worth to us" and "This is what we think of you." And it's not only our expression of faith *to* God, it's our expression of faith *about* God as we tell others, "This building reflects the kind of God we have." Just like God once used the thunder of Sinai or the blood of a lamb to impress truths about his power and love to his people in a way that touched their hearts, so too can we use the gifts God has given us to proclaim the Lord who makes his home among us.

The discussion makes me think of an atheist friend I once worked with. Leaving work and walking around downtown Milwaukee together, we discussed the Christian faith. He kept explaining that he didn't believe—that he *couldn't* bring himself to believe that there was anything real to the words of Scripture—but then he stopped dead in his tracks. Our walk had taken us right in front of a church—a simple church, but one that had been thoughtfully put together. His eyes were pulled up towards the steeple as he paused and said in a hushed tone, "*But Christians sure build beautiful buildings.*"

It was nothing but brick and wood, but that building still spoke a message. God grant that he and many others will hear it.

## 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*



## Holy Week Schedule

As we enter into Holy Week, please note the service schedule:

- Palm Sunday: Sunday, April 17th, 10:00 am
- Maundy Thursday: Thursday, April 21st, 7:00 pm
- Good Friday: Friday, April 22nd, 7:00 pm
- Easter Sunday: Sunday, April 24th, 10:00 am

As we prepare for these special services, we'll make sure that sufficient seating is set up for the guests and visitors that you might invite.

God's blessings as you gather in his house around the great truths of salvation!

# Easter for Kids!

Saturday, April 16th, 10:00—11:30 am



Your children and their friends are invited to join us for an *Easter for Kids* held on Saturday, April 16th at Shining Mountains.

*Easter for Kids* is a "one-day VBS" that focus on the Easter message. What should your children expect?

- a chance to learn more about what happened on Easter Sunday—and what it means for them
- Crafts and songs that focus on the Easter message
- Fun games together with their friends

*Easter for Kids* will last about 90 minutes—a perfect chance for mom or dad to get a few errands run in town. To help us plan appropriately, please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board if you'd like your children to take part.

Don't forget to bring a friend!

## Easter Brunch

The men of the congregation prepare and serve us an Easter Brunch held shortly after the worship service (April 24th). All our members and guests are invited to join us for a time of food and fellowship as we continue to rejoice in the truths of Easter Sunday.

Men, if you're interested in helping out prepare for the brunch, grab your aprons and talk to Dan Gustafson.

## MSU Graduation

Kristen Schaffer, friend of Shining Mountains, is graduated from MSU's College of Engineering on May 7th, 2011. The ceremony will be held at the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse at 9:00 am (processional starting at 8:40 am).

Kris invites the members of Shining Mountains to a get together following the ceremony at 43 N. Hunters Way. Snacks and refreshments will be served.

God's blessings on Kris as she continues to use her gifts to her Savior's glory!



# Sanctuary Use Policy under Discussion

The Church Council is working on a policy for those congregational members and people from the community who might wish to make use of our facility for non-ministry purposes. If we're blessed to move into a new church home in the near future, such requests might be a more common occurrence.

While a finalized policy will be brought before the Voters for consideration soon, these are the guiding principles the Council has been considering:

1. The activity must not conflict with other scheduled ministry events
2. The activity must not reflect negatively on or be in conflict with our theology and mission (e.g., a Boy Scout meeting would raise issues because of *fellowship* concerns)
3. Members have priority over non-members in seeking use of the space
4. Continued use will not be allowed if the room is not returned to good, clean order
5. Users are encouraged to give a donation fitting with the use

Fees would not be collected lest we either give the wrong impression that our church is just a "room to be rented out" or we inadvertently jeopardize our tax-exempt status.

If you are interested in making use of our building for non-ministry purposes, please speak to Pastor Seifert or to a member of the Council for more information.

# Sunday School corner

As our Sunday School teachers work to share the truths of our Savior with our youth, parents serve the most important role yet. They get to do all week long what the teachers get to work at for forty-five minutes, as they continue to talk about the week's lesson and help their son or daughter connect it to their daily life.

To help you as you do so, here are the lessons that the students will be working on over the coming weeks:

Sun, Mar 27:  
*Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42)*

Sun, Apr 3:  
*Jesus heals a blind man (John 9)*

Sun, Apr 10:  
*Jesus raises Lazarus (John 11:1-45)*

Sun, Apr 17:  
*The Passion of Christ (Matthew 27:11-66)*

Sun, Apr 24:  
*No class (Easter Sunday)*

Sun, May 1:  
*The Resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-10)*

**Don't forget:** On Palm Sunday (Apr. 17th), our Sunday School children will lead us in our opening hymn (*All Glory, Laud and Honor*) as they lay their palm branches before our altar.




Many continued thanks for both our Sunday School teachers and the parents who faithfully continue that work at home.

## Serving Us in April *Thanks to those who served in March!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
4/3	J Thiede / D Thiede	P Pruitt	E Hammer	Pruitt (D&P)
4/6	J Lauersdorf / T Zulauf	<i>(Midweek Lenten Service)</i>		
4/10	T Linn / P Marozick	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Pruitt (A&R)
4/13	D Pruitt / M Joecks	<i>(Midweek Lenten Service)</i>		
4/17	J Kohler / T Armbrecht	R Pruitt	<i>open</i>	Seifert
4/21	J Newton / L Hunziker	<i>(Maundy Thursday—Lord's Supper is celebrated)</i>		
4/22	R Buchholz / P Agenten	<i>(Good Friday)</i>		
4/24	L Baker / B Ballard	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Thiede

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**

# April 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
<b>3</b> 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship 11:15 Women's Fellowship meeting 	<b>4</b> 6:15 pm Church Council meeting	<b>5</b> 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Midweek Lenten worship	<b>6</b> 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Midweek Lenten worship	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 10 am Congregational Canvassing for Easter
<b>10</b> 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship 11:30—Building Committee meeting with Massmann Studios	<b>11</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>12</b> 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Midweek Lenten worship	<b>13</b> 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Midweek Lenten worship	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 10—11:30 am "Easter for Kids"
<b>17</b> 9:00 Sunday School/Bible class 10:00 Worship 11:30 am Voters' Meeting 	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 7pm Maundy Thursday worship 	<b>22</b> 7pm Good Friday Tenet service	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 10:00 Worship, followed by brunch and an Easter egg hunt	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>

# Upcoming Messages

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In April we bring Lent to a close and rejoice in the celebrations of Easter Sunday. Below is a list of both our Sunday worship themes and our midweek worship opportunities.

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

*Sundays and other services in April (Sundays are in **bold**)*

**Apr 3**    ***The Fourth Sunday in Lent (Ge 37:1-11, Ro 8:1-10, Mt 20:17-28)***

Apr 6    *Midweek Lent #4 (Matthew 27:22—What Shall I Do, Then, with Jesus?)*

**Apr 10**    ***The Fifth Sunday in Lent (2 Ki 4:18-37; Ro 8:11-19; Jn 11:17-27, 38-45)***

Apr 13    *Midweek Lent #5 (John 18:11—Shall I Not Drink the Cup the Father Has Given Me?)*

**Apr 17**    ***Palm Sunday (Zec 9:9,10; Php 2:5-11; Mt 21:1-11)***

Apr 21    *Maundy Thursday*

Apr 22    *Good Friday (“God Foretold Good Friday Long Ago”)*

**Apr 24**    ***Easter Sunday (Jnh 2:2-9, Col 3:1-4, Mt 28:1-10)***



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