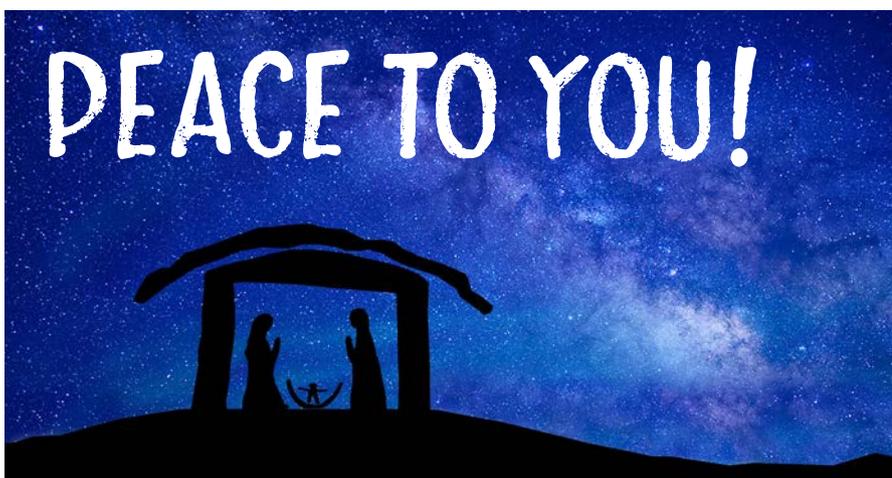




DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

I pray that peace is what you experience this month as we celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus our Savior!

The reality for many people — and maybe you — is that they would rather say bah humbug. With all that goes on in December — preparing for Christmas, getting the family together, cooking meals, purchasing gifts and attending office parties — you probably get to the point of wanting to say Bah humbug. It's so easy to be dragged away from the real meaning of Christmas and end up with no peace.

My goal is to bring you the refreshing peace that we all need this time of the year. I bring you the one-sentence sermon of the angels from Luke 2:14:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on



Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President

earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.”

In this one-sentence sermon, the angels are able to sum up all of the Old Testament. Oh how sure I am that the Lord's people I was privileged to serve with Word and Sacrament ministry over the years would have wished that I could and would have given a sentence-long sermon; let alone the whole Old Testament! What peace it would be indeed!

It is God's desire that there be peace on earth — peace among the nations of the world and peace among people. It is not God's will and desire that neighbors do not get along, that husband and wife are at each other's throats, that children quarrel with each other, that Christians don't work and live together in brotherly and sisterly love, and that we get overwhelmed with preparations for the peace that God has given. This peace is something that we as individuals work on by the Holy Spirit working in us.

But God has in mind a totally different

peace when He sends the Prince of Peace into the world. This peace to men is much higher and much more noble. This is a spiritual peace; a peace that is between God and man.

Looking at the angels' sermon, we first see that thanks and praise are being sung to God because of the peace to men being restored; peace that was lost from the beginning of time by Adam and Eve is now being taken care of by God. There is going to be peace and communion again between God and people; peace that Adam and Eve had before Satan deceived them and all mankind fell into sin. Because of that original sin, which we are all born into and have, there is death. Also, because of sin, there was and is no longer any peace with God without Jesus Christ.

God wanted peace again and sent His Son to be born among men. To have flesh and blood, that He received from the Virgin Mary. By that little Child in Bethlehem's manger, God makes peace with us because behind the manger is the cross. “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). That was to be the work of this Child: To take upon Himself your sins and my sins and the sins of the whole world. By His death on the cross He would bridge the conflict that separated us from God. That is the peace that He brings. Now God is no longer angry with us. He is at peace with us and asks us to be at peace with Him by believing in Jesus, who was born that first Christmas Day.

Are you at peace with God? You are if with a humble heart your spirit kneels at the manger and you trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Consider looking at the

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'YOU DID IT TO ME'

THE SEWING DISCIPLES OF OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH (OSLC), Minot, have been busy since their last shipment in May. They were able to ship 60 quilts and 118 school kits to Lutheran World Relief (LWR) in mid-October! Today and every day, LWR quilts and kits give families around the world some of life's essentials, as well as a reminder that they are not alone.

Where do the quilts and school kits go? The Sewing Disciples are able to "barcode" their shipped boxes and LWR lets

them know to which country they are delivered. Quilts have gone to Nepal, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Burkina Faso, Angola and Niger. School kits have gone to Jordan, Tanzania, Djibouti, Nicaragua, Senegal and Angola.

Thanks to its continued support of the outreach of the Sewing Disciples, OSLC has made an impact around the world!

"Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

— **MATT. 25:40**



From left, Rev. Dr. Don Fondow, Minnesota North District president; Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS president; Rev. Bernie Seter; and Rev. Arie Bertsch, North Dakota District president.

40 YEARS!

Congratulations to Rev. Bernie Seter, who completed his fourth decade in the pastoral ministry. The congregations he serves — Trinity, Drayton; Zion English, Grafton; and St. John, Crystal — gathered together with others from around the district and Synod to celebrate the Reformation and Seter's 40th ordination anniversary. Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS president, was on hand for this special occasion.

Pastor Seter has been privileged to travel around the world and see the church's mercy work in action. He is convinced it is not only what we are "compelled" to do because of Christ; it is what we have been baptized for. Christ's love compels us, constrains us and sends us forth.

Find Seter's writings on mercy at northerncrossingsmercy.org.

Register for winter camp

Winter Kids Camp at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads will be held Dec. 27-29 for children ages 8-16. Outdoor activities include sledding and ice skating, while campers can also warm up inside with crafts, games and Bible studies.

Register early online (shretreat.org/events/winter-kids-camp) or by calling the camp office at 701-244-5225 to save your spot. The cost is \$100 per camper.

Special donation opportunities

As you finish up your Christmas shopping — or any online shopping — don't forget that with AmazonSmile, you can have 0.5 percent of your pur-



chases donated to Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads. The amount also increases other times of the year. Watch the camp Facebook page

(facebook.com/SHRetreat) or website for more details on those times.

Shepherd's Hill has a matching funds opportunity from a local entity — up to \$5,000! For more information, please contact Rev. Jon Bonine, camp executive director, for details on this special opportunity for donations.

Thrivent members, please remember to designate your Thrivent Choice dollars to the camp! Each month, a donation is made from Thrivent from the choice dollars that have been designated. Those funds help to cover camp expenses.

Send submissions for the district supplement to: Marie Johnson • news@nodaklcms.org

Tri-parish welcomes Pastor Suelzle

Rev. Michael Suelzle was installed as pastor of St. Peter, Devils Lake; Grace, Lakota; and St. Andrew, Niagara, on Oct. 14 in Niagara. Clergy participating were, from left (front row) Revs. Dan Voth, Mark Chepulis, Suelzle, Arie Bertsch, Tim Stout, Scott Ramey; (back row) Jon Bonine, Craig Fenske, Les Wolfgram, Andrew Wolfgram, Daniel Suelzle and Leo Deitemeyer.



Immanuel, Fargo, to hold workshop focusing on elders

On Saturday, Feb. 2, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Fargo, will host a lay workshop focusing on elders in the church. The workshop, however, will not be for elders alone; it will also cover care ministry within a congregation.



Tyler Arnold

The presenter will be Rev. Tyler Arnold, a DOXOLOGY collegium fellow and senior pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Platte Woods, Mo. He completed DOXOLOGY training in 2010, receiving a Certificate in Christian Counsel and Care.

The Immanuel elders will provide lunch. The workshop begins with registration at 9 a.m. A freewill offering will be taken to defray the workshop costs. Pastor Arnold will also be Immanuel's guest during worship on Sunday, Feb 3.

Stay tuned for more details.

Give children hope this Christmas

As you might imagine, this Christmas will be hard for many of our kids — a reminder that they're not with family. The whole world is celebrating, but they only see that they're not like "normal" kids. It can be a very difficult time.

Some of our boys and girls have never celebrated a traditional family Christmas. And for others, it'll be the first time they'll hear about the true meaning of Advent and the reason for the season: Jesus Christ.

This year, a third of our kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch will stay with us for Christmas, often because they have no family.

Your year-end gift will make the holidays special — with presents for each child, fun activities and even a Christmas dinner as staff and children come together as a family. To help, please visit dakotaranch.givingfuel.com/e18k2.

Thank you for partnering with hundreds of other generous Ranch donors to show these precious children that the holidays can be a time of growth, healing and redemption. May your Christmas be filled with peace, joy and celebration.

Joy Ryan, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch President and CEO • dakotaranch.org

Bethlehem dedicates additions

The building of a parish hall, kitchen, office and storage room at Bethlehem, near Upham, began July 10, 2017. Much of the work was done by members — and was completed in December 2017. Phase 2 began in June — handicap-accessible restrooms and a ramp. It was completed by September. Thank you to all who made this possible. To God be the Glory!



ANNUAL MEN'S WINTER RETREAT

How **not** to read the Bible

Jan. 25-26 | Shepherd's Hill
at the Crossroads

The Bible is God's loving, self-revelation to the world; and the center of the whole thing is Christ, crucified and risen for the forgiveness of all people.

However, this simple and wonderful good news is often left behind as teachers, preachers and popular Christian authors **twist, distort** and **manipulate verses** in order to make the text say things it simply does not say.

At this year's men's retreat, the Rev.

Dan Suelzle will present "Misquoted: Things the Bible Doesn't Say" and discuss how we read the Bible on its own terms, **looking for Christ on every page**, so that we will have the true comfort that God gives there. We'll also look at a few examples of how the Bible is often misquoted and provide a better way of understanding those texts.

Suelzle, a native of Hazen, is the campus pastor of Wittenberg Lutheran



Dan Suelzle

Chapel, which serves the students of the University of North Dakota. Before accepting the call to Wittenberg, he served for six years at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Eugene, Ore. Suelzle is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He and his wife, Mary, have four children.

The retreat begins with supper at 6 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 25, and ends at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 26. The cost is \$80, which includes three meals, snacks and games.

To register, contact **Corey Isaak** at **701-281-0240** or **corey.isaak@gracefargo.org**.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Church as the manger where you, like a beast, come to feed on Word and Sacrament. Peace can be lost in this world with all its false hopes of peace, when you are not feeding your soul.

Did you realize that we hear the angels' sermon of peace to men in our worship at church. We call it the "Hymn of Praise" or the "Gloria in Excelsis." The angels preached and sang this glory of peace to the whole earth. And we sing it with the angels throughout the year, and with the angels present during worship.

The theme of the song is that the Savior promised for so long has come and lies in a manger. The Savior comes as a baby. This baby's birth is for the glory of God. Their sermon was not intended to instruct us about things that we have to do to be saved; rather, it was what God was going to do. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16) ... all glory will go to God.

In other words, the angels declare that because this little Child lies in a manger, God will be glorified and praised. Everything the prophets foretold will now come to be. Such as: "The seed of the woman will crush Satan's head" and defeat sin,

death and the power of the grave. Also: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel," which means God with us, and: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

With the angels' sermon we are able to know, trust and believe what God has done. Then why isn't there peace on earth? Because people do not recognize or believe this sermon. They are without Christ. They only hear the devil's sermon, which says, "Gobble away here, guzzle there, steal here, fornicate there, hate here, murder there" and so on. Therefore, there is violence everywhere. Everyone is seeking to be No. 1 by working for money, goods, honor and power. Often when a laborer has money, a student has intelligence, an employer has property, a president has power, a woman has a fashionable dress, a young girl has fancy boots or a stylish skirt, they want to be fussed over like a god rather than giving glory to God. They are focused on themselves and (at least momentarily) are without Christ and don't care to know Him.

The angels' sermon turns all this around.

It takes away all that we are and have, and shows us that we have peace not with earthly things, but with what God has sent from heaven, namely, His Son, of whom the angels preached about. People who believe in this Child will not only give God glory in all things, but will also be kind and loving to others because of God's kindness and love that gives believers peace on earth.

This peace will assure all men of the good will of the Father in heaven. This is so that we would have joyous courage against all suffering we may endure, so that we may say to the devil, "You can't make life so evil or dismal that you spoil my joy in this Child of Peace. He gives me more joy than any sorrow that you can bring on me."

Christian friends, remember, the angels said: "A Savior has been born to you." He came to bring you peace with God. When you have this peace, all is well between God and you. Your sin no longer condemns you. All other problems will work for the good of those who love God — in the Prince of Peace. When life is over, you shall be with Jesus in glory.

Why can you be happy and at peace today? The Holy Child was born. God's angels proclaimed that birth. God's will and desire of peace was revealed in flesh and blood. Glory to God in the highest!

Peace to you on whom His favor rests!