



DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA

CHRISTIANS AND HALLOWEEN

Innocent fun, or something to avoid?

Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President



What I know is that Halloween has become a major commercialized and popular holiday, second only to Christmas.

Halloween is short for All Hallows Eve, the evening before All Saints Day, a holy day on which Christians remember the heroes and martyrs of the faith. For us Lutherans, All Hallows Eve is also Reformation Day, when Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church door.

In the Middle Ages, people had a sense for the demonic. People believed that the demons were especially active on the eve of All Hallows. People carved gourds with ugly faces and set them out to guard their homes. This was similar to the practice of carving grotesque gargoyles on the drain spouts of cathedrals to ward off devils. People paraded in the streets dressed in costumes and masks to confuse the demons and confound their schemes.

All Saints Day has all but died out,

especially in Protestant Christianity. Our culture has latched on to All Hallows Eve and turned it into another money-making gimmick. Much of the fun is innocent, but bad for teeth.

There is a darker, more sinister side to Halloween. Satanic and pagan groups have made Halloween their own special "high holy day." Animal shelters warn owners of black cats to keep them indoors so that they are not harmed. A night that was once a confrontation with the devil has become a celebration of all things devilish. Ought Christians participate? The easy answer would be no. But every road has two ditches, and Halloween is no exception.

In the one ditch, there is the danger of taking death and the devil too lightly. Make no mistake, the devil is real. He isn't some red guy with a pointy tail and a pitchfork. Then we

would know him by sight and stay away from him. He is a liar — the father of lies — and a murderer. He masquerades as an angel of light, appearing to be very religious in order to deceive people and draw their focus away from Jesus Christ.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

— 2 Cor. 11: 13-15



A baptized believer belongs to the Lord and has no fellowship with the devil or his demons. So when Christians take part in the darker side of Halloween, they may create the false impression that death and the devil are not serious business, or that

it's OK for Christians to dine with the devil once in a while, as long as their silverware is long enough. Christians who take sin, death and the devil seriously shouldn't want anything to do with that.

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HALLOWEEN

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In the other ditch, there is the danger of taking the devil too seriously. Contrary to what many believe, the devil is not all-powerful, all-knowing, almighty or present everywhere. He is a fallen angel, a creature of God turned against the Creator. Luther calls the devil “God’s devil,” for God has power over him. He stands chained and defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is a liar and a loser, and his only hope with the short time that he has left is to convince the world that Jesus’ death on the cross isn’t enough to save us.

Jesus Christ has conquered death once for all people. He has defeated the devil by that death on the cross. A baptized Christian can live in confidence, free from the fear of death and the devil, knowing that God is at peace with us in the death of His Son, Jesus, and that Jesus is risen from the dead and that we too will rise.

In the middle of the road, Jesus didn’t hang on a cross so that Christians could go around with a sad look on their faces, judging everyone around them.



When Christians become overly critical of Halloween, they may create the false impression that Jesus does not reign now over all things, including the devil; and that He has not conquered death by His dying and rising; or that the devil is to be feared more than God.

Therefore, what about Halloween? Well, I don’t expect to see you baptized Chris-

tians out dancing in the woods around a bonfire while chanting pagan prayers to the mother goddess, or sanctifying or sacrificing black cats. On the other hand, the devil’s chief work is to draw us away from Christ’s death and resurrection, to focus on our works or the death and darkness that Satan has brought into the world.

How do we decide? What would your neighbor, family, children and brother or sister in Christ think of your Halloween celebration? Will it help or hinder their faith in Jesus? Does your Halloween fun witness to the victory and freedom of Jesus’ death and resurrection, or does it lift up the powers of darkness and death?

The best thing I can say about Halloween is to mock the devil, honor Christ and take that mask off your face and show the child of God that you are in Christ Jesus. Remember who you are in Holy Baptism — a baptized priest in Christ’s holy priesthood, “that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Boo!

**Your servant in Christ
President Bertsch**

Celebrate Reformation with hymns

A Reformation Hymn Sing will be held at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 27, at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 508 Division Ave. N. in Cavalier.

The hymn sing will be led by a organ and brass ensemble. Hymns include:

- ▶ “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name”
- ▶ “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”
- ▶ “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”
- ▶ “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Bars and coffee will be served following the hymn sing.

“**Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.**”

— Martin Luther



Pastors invited to pre-Lent retreat

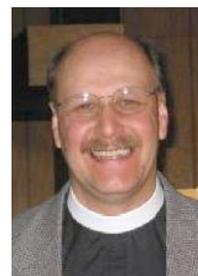
A retreat for North Dakota District pastors will be held Jan. 6-8 in Bismarck. Rev. Bernie Worrall, senior pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Fargo will present on Hebrews 11.

Worrall writes: If you’ve ever been to the Capitol Building in Washington D.C., then you’ve seen the statues in the hallways. Each state has two statues. North Dakota has John Burke, who served as its 10th governor and as a state Supreme Court justice, and as U.S. treasurer; and Sakakawea, who traveled with the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Hebrews 11 also has a great hallway of faith filled with living memorials of those who have walked in faith before us. Heb. 13:7 says:

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

For more information, go to nodaklcms.org/calendar-news/news and scroll down.



Worrall

Installations

Rev. Tim Stout was installed as pastor of St. Peter's, Sawyer, on Aug. 18. Clergy participating in the service are, from left, Revs. Dr. Matthew Richard, Daryl Rothchild, Scott Ramey, Philip Byersdorf (directly behind Ramey), Tim Stout, Carlyle Roth, Arie Bertsch, Paul Nelson, Brandon Woodruff.



Richard Dailey was installed as vicar at Bethel, Bismarck, on Aug. 4, and **Shepherd of the Valley, Bismarck,** on Aug. 11. Vicar Dailey is pictured with his wife, Sarah, and their children, Matthias, Ruth and Samuel. He attends Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Christopher Durham was installed as vicar at Zion, Bismarck, on June 30. He attends Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. Vicar Durham is pictured with his wife, Mary, and their son, Gregory.

40 Days for Life

Help make North Dakota an abortion-free state

The North Dakota 40 Days for Life effort began on Sept. 25 and ends on Nov. 3. You are asked to help provide a peaceful, prayerful presence in front of the Red River Women's Clinic at 512 1st Avenue N. in Fargo. The vigil is held 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.



The goal is for at least two people to always be at the clinic during the 40-day vigil. For more information, visit 40daysforlife.com, send an email to phc@polarcomm.com, or call 701-356-7979.



The mission of Higher Things is to assist parents, pastors, and congregations in cultivating a distinctly Lutheran identity among their youth and young adults.

Two Higher Things youth retreats planned for 2020

TOPIC: What is Church?

Northwest Spring Retreat
March 27-28 • St. Paul's, Minot
Grades 6-12, \$50 per person

Southeast Spring Retreat
March 27-28
Immanuel, Wahpeton
Grades 6-12, \$50 per person

More info coming soon!

Volunteers needed to pack meals

Mercy Meals of North Dakota has scheduled a packing event for 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9, at Immanuel, Fargo.

Supplies and training in order to mix, weigh, seal and pack nutritious meals will be provided. The meals will be given to children in Liberia, Africa. Volunteers will be able to participate in a "hands-on" way in sharing Christ's love with fellow Christians through food and acts of encouragement.

The goal is to pack 10,000 meals. Therefore, your are needed to help in this endeavor. Bring the whole family. Come for an hour or the whole afternoon.

Please consider giving generously of your time and efforts in making this mission event a reality.

For more information contact Rev. Steven Schulz, Immanuel pastor, at 701-293-7979.

Space still available to attend **middle school gathering**

Make your plans now to attend the 23rd North Dakota District Annual Middle School Gathering. The event is for those in sixth grade and up.

The event will be held from 7 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 17, to noon, Saturday, Oct. 19, at Ramada Inn, 1400 East Interchange Ave., in Bismarck.

Registration is due by Sunday, Oct. 6, but registrations received after this date will be accepted if space is still available. Registration forms are available at ndyouthonfire.org/downloads.

For more information, contact Pat Sebastian, Gathering coordinator, at 701-471-3289 or patsebbis@aol.com.

The \$175 registration fee includes:

- ▶ Your hotel room for Thursday and Friday nights (four people per room).
- ▶ Friday meals, Saturday breakfast and three snacks.
- ▶ Program costs (including covering partial cost of Mercy Meals supplies).

If youth attend the Gathering with an adult counselor and your congregation group makes other housing arrangements (for example, stay at a relative's house or at home), a reduced fee is available.

Part-time attendees are also welcome! If you can attend only parts of the Gathering, you will be asked to specify which parts: 1) Thursday evening; 2) Friday morning; 3) Friday afternoon; 4) Friday evening, and/or; 5) Saturday morning. The cost for each segment is \$30 and does not include breakfasts or sleeping room.

The Bible study leader is Rev. Ben Griffin of Maplewood, Minn., who serves as director of LINC Twin Cities (Lutheran Inter-City Network Coalition).

Ben is first and foremost a follower of Jesus. He is also a proud father of three teenagers and is almost two



Rev. Ben Griffin

decades into a lifetime of adventures with his wife, Kate. He has served as the outreach/missions pastor at Woodbury Lutheran Church, Woodbury, Minn. and as the founding pastor of the Alley church. In the Alley's short existence, it has been blessed to reach many new believers and launched two daughter churches.

Most recently, Ben has been catalyzing new churches and raising up a diversity of urban leaders with LINC Twin Cities.

Ben loves to help people and organizations uncover their unique God-given calling. He loves life and the One who created it. He believes that every person has been uniquely gifted and desires to see people fully use their gifts to the glory of God.

In his free time he produces short ministry-related videos, chauffeurs kids and watches too many superhero movies.

Guest musicians are 100 White Flags (100whiteflags.com).



Men's event will focus on deaf ministry

Men of the North Dakota District are invited to a discussion on the challenges of bringing God's Word to the deaf, including translating God's Word into American Sign Language (ASL) so that the deaf can indeed hear with their eyes and believe.

The event will be held from 8:45 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 2, at Dakota Boys & Girls Ranch in Fargo. The event will also include breakfast and fellowship.

Rev. William Knaack will lead the discussion. His daughter, Jennifer, was born deaf in 1975 and Pastor Knaack learned sign language. After graduating from seminary in 1994, he's been involved in deaf ministry.

He retired in 2019 but still serves the deaf in the North Wisconsin, Minnesota North and North Dakota districts. Pastor Knaack holds services for the deaf at Grace, Fargo; Immanuel, Grand Forks; and St. Mark's Minot.

Send an RSVP to corey.isaak@gracefargo.org.

Send submissions for the district supplement to **Marie Johnson** at news@nodaklcms.org