



DISTRICT NEWS

NORTH DAKOTA

I am the Vine
you are the Branches
John 15:5



CONNECTED to the VINE

How good are you at making connections?

It is a very important part of our everyday life. If you want a good job it would help to have some connections. When I travel for Council of Presidents meetings, to get where I'm going I have to have at least one connecting flight, which I don't want to miss. If you talk on a cell phone you'll suffer if you don't have a good connection. So we understand the importance of connections.

Now, have you considered your connection with Jesus Christ? Jesus taught His disciples about a vital connection they



Rev. Arie Bertsch
District President

needed to have with Him. He said:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." JOHN 15:5

If you are connected to Christ you are alive and will bear much fruit. If you are connected to Christ you will share in

His life, even His resurrection life. But if you are not connected to Christ you are dead. And the dead branches will be picked up and "thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6).

So of course we want to be connected to Jesus! Although you should understand and consider that any branches connected to the vine will undergo some trimming. Yes, Jesus is the vine. Yes, we are the branches. And the Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit. And the branches that do bear fruit He prunes so that they will be even more fruitful. That's the part that can hurt at times.

If you're a gardener, you know what pruning is all about. It is taking a sharp steel clipper or trimmer and cutting back the growth. By pruning roses, shrubs or any green thing, you stimulate more growth. You cause the rose bush to flower all the more and blossom. You bring about more by creating less. It's nice to know there is a purpose to the pain.

That is what happens in the life of anyone who is connected to Christ. The Father prunes the branches that are bearing fruit so that they will be even more fruitful. God allows hardships into our lives so that we might grow in our faithfulness. He takes away things from us so that we might cling to Him. Heb. 12:10-11 (NIV) says:

God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Jesus was preparing the disciples for their own pruning. When Jesus spoke

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these words, it was just a few hours before His arrest in the garden. Peter in particular would feel the hard, sharp edge of those clippers. Remember when Peter denied our Lord three times? He was set up for this fall. Jesus told Peter:

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

LUKE 22:31-32

God granted Satan's request. He was handed over to his evil purpose. Yet God's purpose prevailed! For Peter came back from his fall stronger than ever because of his experience.

However, the pruning shears were really being turned upon our Lord. The disciples were “already clean because of the word” of Jesus (John 15:3). They had nothing to fear. But Jesus would have to feel the cold, hard steel of God's pruning shears Himself. For Jesus would be cut down in the prime of His life. As the prophet Isaiah said of our Lord on the cross:

We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. *IS. 53:4*

As the Scriptures say in Heb. 2:10, the Lord has made the “founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” The Father cut Him down only to see Him spring back! He was pruned hard and heavy so that He might be even more fruitful! He died that He might live again and share the fruits of His salvation with all who would believe!

So this month we celebrate Jesus being alive and bearing in His body the fruits of our salvation. He comes back bigger and better! He returns to us more alive than before! For by his death He obtains the victory over sin. And by His rising again He triumphs over the grave. And like any tree that bears fruit, so Christ does not bear these fruits of salvation for Himself. When was the last time you saw an apple tree eating its own apples? So also Christ produces

a victory that is for the entire world to share. Yes, it is His victory! But it is also your victory. Because you are connected to Him you enjoy the fruits of His salvation. You get to taste and see that the Lord is good. You by Baptism and faith partake in the benefits of His resurrection and life.

This is what it means to be connected to Christ. You are connected not only to His crucifixion. You are connected to His resurrection. Thus you can identify with Jesus when you suffer. And you can know the hope of everlasting life. You are not simply spectators of Easter. The festival of your Lord's resurrection is not something you witness at a distance. You are partakers in this victory parade. It is you and I that triumph this day. The news that Christ is risen is the news that we will rise again. Christ is the head of the church, His body. You are members of His body. Then if the Head has risen, so shall the other members of His body.

How then does one guarantee their connection with Christ? How do we know we are branches truly connected to the life-giving vine? What can we do to connect ourselves to Christ? What must we do to join ourselves to this Easter event? Where do we sign up? What list of things must we do? How do we graft ourselves in? What fertilizer must we prepare? What tools must we use?

The answer to all these questions is “Nothing!” Stop with your business.

Stop with your meddling. Only believe! For this salvation is the work of God through Jesus Christ. There is nothing left for you to do. You are made clean by the words of Christ. You are joined to Him by the Spirit. You are drawn to Jesus by the Father. You need only believe that all is accomplished. You need only trust the Word that all is well. You need only to have the confidence that your salvation is all in the Vine and not in the branches. For in Christ alone is your salvation!

We need connections for just about everything in life. And you need one connection and one connection only to have the life that never ends. You need to be connected to the Vine and receive the sap of God's Word and the Sacraments more than just on Easter or Christmas. You need to be fed daily and weekly in God's Word and Sacraments. This Easter isn't just about Jesus. It is about you. It is about your connection in Baptism with His death and resurrection and the new life that flows from your connection with Him. Therefore, don't just sit idly by. Rejoice! Be glad! And live your life anew! For you have been connected to Christ! His suffering is your suffering! His victory is your victory!

And His life is yours, which will never end.

Happy Easter! He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!



The North Dakota District is seeking candidates for office manager. This person will coordinate office administration and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness and efficiency. The office manager is an energetic professional who doesn't mind wearing multiple hats, and is experienced in handling a wide range of administrative and executive support-related tasks and able to work independently with little or no supervision.

The applicant should be well organized, flexible and enjoy the administrative challenges of supporting multiple programs. Essential job duties include customer service, relationship building, accounts receivable, accounts payable, writing, publishing and file management. The position is located in Fargo and is 20-25 hours per week.

For more information, contact Tami Ulland at lcms.nd.busman@gmail.com or 701-360-1469.



Gloves for veterans families

Ladies from St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Niagara, have been busy this winter making mittens from discarded sweaters. The mittens are donated to the Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency in Devils Lake and are ultimately given to families with veterans.

Mercy Meals

Every 10 seconds a child dies of hunger

Pack Event
Saturday, April 9th
Grace Lutheran School, Fargo

Volunteers (age 7+)
& donations needed!

Sign-up here: 

Send questions to corey.isaak@gracefargo.org

Pasta With a Purpose will be held on Saturday, April 30, at Grace Lutheran School, Fargo. The goal is to make the spaghetti dinner an association-driven event. If your group is interested in becoming part of this event, contact Amy Hirsch, at 701-232-7747 or ahirsch@gracels.com.

Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads has a significant project that requires considerable volunteer efforts. We will have ongoing opportunities through the spring and summer. Contact Rev. Jon Bonine or Vern Hoggarth (701-220-8131 or vernhoggarth@gmail.com) for more details.

Pastor Bonine's contact information is at the bottom of page 4.

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



Support Martin Luther School at Mayfest

Mayfest '22 will be held from 4 to 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 7, at the Bavendick Stateroom of Bismarck State College. All proceeds benefit Martin Luther School (MLS).

Mayfest includes dinner, entertainment and live and silent auctions. Have an enjoyable evening in support of classical education at MLS! This is the biggest fundraiser for MLS, and it's even more significant this year as MLS will bring back sixth grade for the 2022-23 school year.

If you are interested in seeing the ever-growing list of auction items or would like to purchase tickets, go to bit.ly/Mayfest2022.

SHEPHERD'S HILL AT THE
CROSSROADS, ST. JOHN, ND
SHRETREAT.ORG

HOMESCHOOL RETREAT

April 24(6pm)-26(1pm)

Connect with other families from across North Dakota. Whether you are new to homeschooling or a seasoned homeschooler we would love for you to join us!

\$35/person (\$175 family maximum) includes lodging and meals! - To register visit Shretreat.org or call 701-244-5225

*Theology at this retreat is taught from the LCMS perspective

TURTLE MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR ARCHERY SHOOT

May 14, 2022

Shoot begins at 10:00 am
Range opens at 8:30 am



A fundraising
event Sponsored
by Shepherd's Hill
at the Crossroads,
St. John, ND



**SHEPHERD'S HILL
AT THE
CROSSROADS**

ST. JOHN, NORTH DAKOTA

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