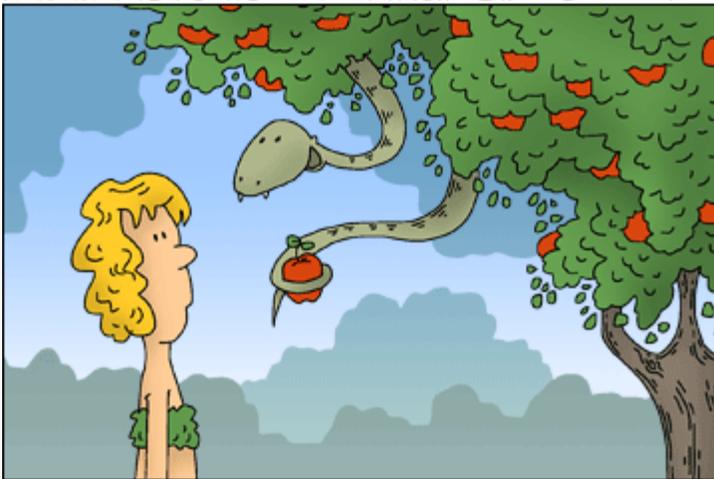


# GOOD SHEPHERD NEWS

January 2015

## God's Steadfast Love

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(See Genesis 3)

12-30-2013

REMEMBER THAT NEW YEAR RESOLUTION YOU  
MADE TO TRY NEW THINGS?

The Muir Woods of giant redwood trees in California are said to be “one of the true amazing natural wonders of the world.” These trees are believed to be among the oldest living things on earth. They are found nowhere else.

Besides the giant redwood trees, mountains also symbolize permanence. But God by far antedates even them, and Moses declares in Psalm 90: “Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God” (v. 2).

That would be little comfort if He were forever present to call us to account for our sins. But how different to be assured of His unending love. God states through Isaiah: “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet My unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor My covenant of peace be removed” (54:10).

The steadfastness of God's love – and the steadfastness of God's Word, proclaiming and conveying it to us – is so meaningful because we, frail creatures that we are, are so in need of it. As Moses describes us in this psalm, people are like grass that is fresh in the morning but dry and withered in the evening.

God's steadfast love to us rests on the sin-atoning, death-destroying work of reconciliation performed by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Father is, so is the Son – eternal in the heavens, given to enduring love, and the same yesterday, today, and forever. And that's good news as we begin the new year.

The giant redwoods and the mountain peaks, pointing heavenward, remind us also that our help comes from the Lord who sent His Son, our loving and beloved Savior.

God's richest blessings for 2015,

*Pastor Dan*

# Revisiting the Augsburg Confession:

## Article XVIII: Of Free Will

Few things confuse Christians (and people in general) more than the idea of free will. Most people look at themselves and say something to the effect of, “I choose when to wake up, how to dress, how to work, who to love, what to drink... who’s to say I don’t have free will?” On the surface of that observation, it seems quite true. I seem to have freedom to choose what kind of food to eat, when I go the gym, and even who I vote for. The trouble is that this observation only remains true at the surface.

Most of us also know, when we are honest with ourselves, that we have compulsions we can’t control. There are secret lusts in every heart, and private addictions we hide even from those closest to us. We harbor hatreds and malice against others, often refusing to forgive in them what we are guilty of ourselves. Even if we can muster the strength to avoid the physical acts of adultery, murder, idolatry, and theft, the underlying urges toward lust, hatred, pride and covetousness are still there. So, while we may be more or less free to stop at red lights, we acknowledge that we still have the desire to run them.

From the Scriptures, we know why this is. Despite having been made good, rational creatures, formed in the image of God, we are fallen and twisted things. We have fallen in such a way that we are no longer holy, and that broken image runs all the way down to our core. We might be able to plaster over the outward signs of that broken image, but like wallpapering over a crack in the wall, the structural damage is still there. This cracked house of ours is falling down, no matter how much paint and wallpaper we put on it. Others might look at it from the outside and think it’s in great shape, but inside, we know how broken it is.

The Confessors of Augsburg stuck with the truth of Holy Scripture, against those who tried to deny our fallen nature. Some folks liked to believe that they really weren’t that fallen... that with enough effort and a divine kick in the pants, they could be holy on their own. Against that error, the Confessors presented St. Paul and St. Augustine, who together with the whole witness of Scripture, declared that man is only free in a civil sense and in some part to reasonable things, but his heart is not free to love God or to do truly righteous works on his own. Because all truly good and God pleasing works are works of faith, and faith was destroyed when we chose evil over God in the Garden, our natural freedom is only skin deep.

But on the other hand, this is actually good news for mankind. It means that God doesn’t give man a command to save himself, but rather, that God does everything necessary to save mankind. The Law of God continues to show the world how far we’ve fallen and to what we

should aspire, but the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ is that He has satisfied the Law on our behalf, given His Word and His Spirit to us so that we might believe in Him, and live in Him forever. This work of God for man’s salvation is something that man cannot do—it is grace, a free gift, and as such can only be received by faith.

Formally, we call this doctrine of Scripture, Monergism. It means that God alone is our savior, because we cannot save ourselves. It takes the pressure off of mankind to do what he cannot do, and puts the work of salvation squarely in the pierced hands of the only One who can: Jesus Christ.

Here’s the actual text of this short, but incredibly important article:

*Of Free Will they teach that man’s will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word.*

*These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his Hypognosticon, Book III: We grant that all men have a free will, free, inasmuch as it has the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby capable, without God, either to begin, or, at least, to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life, whether good or evil. “Good” I call those works which spring from the good in nature, such as, willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn divers useful arts, or whatsoever good pertains to this life. For all of these things are not without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their being. “Evil” I call such works as willing to worship an idol, to commit murder, etc.*

*They condemn the Pelagians and others, who teach that without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching “the substance of the act.” For, although nature is able in a manner to do the outward work, (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder,) yet it cannot produce the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.*

Christmas blessings be to all y’all. Amen.

*Pastor Brad*

# Music in God's Ears

One question occasionally asked in many congregations is "How loud should the organ be played when it is accompanying the congregation?" That question, of course, presumes that said congregation has not already permanently turned off the organ, but that is another column entirely.

It is a difficult question to deal with because "loud" and "soft" are only part of the answer. To quote again from the October issue of *Lutheran Witness*:

Different hymns must be played different ways. [sic] The selection of stops in the organ will be different for "Be Still, My Soul" than for "Praise the Almighty." The organist's job is to encourage and empower the congregation to sing of Christ and His grace. Playing with enough power and authority will boost the confidence of the congregation and their ability to sing heartily. On familiar hymns, organists can even drop out completely.

Let us expand on that brilliant answer in a few directions.

The fact that that different hymns beg for different treatment (even different verses of the same hymn!) is informative and this writer would extend that to music at different points in the service. Most organists will play hymns during the distribution of Holy Communion more gently than hymns during beginning or endings of worship. This allows those continuing to pray to do so undisturbed and allows the pastors at the rail to administer the elements without having to shout at the communicants.

The chief role of the organ is to encourage the congregational song. To this end, the question of "loudness" is very important. Hopefully all of us have experienced being in the pews when an organist has let loose and been thrilled by the sound and raised our voice more heartily. Unfortunately, it is also possible to have been accosted by an organ that was played indiscriminately. The opposite, experienced by this writer often, may also be true: your ability to sing along was impeded by an organist who played so softly on an unfamiliar hymn that you lost the confidence to sing, afraid that you would be "wrong" or "in the wrong place." This balance is difficult to find and remains the constant quest of the sensitive organist.

To that end, you may have noticed the slight change recently in the Presets on the organ at Good Shepherd. (Presets are the "default" stop selections that organists can program on an organ and use for most hymns and service music) This followed discussions with several parishioners, where it was learned that a few of our Senior Citizens were having difficulty with some sounds of the organ. (This has partly to do with the way certain organ sounds and frequencies interact with hearing aids, but, again, that is another column) This is information any sensitive organist welcomes, this writer included.

If you have any further questions, or simply wish to weigh in on the topic, please do! Our goal should always be worship God enthusiastically but this also brings with it concern and comfort of our brothers and sisters.

Your Humble Servant,

*DVP*

*(Dennis Van Parys)*

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**  
**Annual Voter's Meeting**  
December 7, 2014

Meeting called to order at 12:30 p.m. by President Julian Doyle. Opening prayer was done by President Julian Doyle.

Roll Call was held – there were no new members added. Total voting members was 34.

The **minutes** from the previous Voters Meeting were passed out. The minutes from the December 8, 2013 Voters Meetings were approved as written.

The election of board positions for 2015 were held.

**Elder** – expiring in 2015: Joel Wippich

**Elder** – expiring in 2017: Mike Dunn

**Trustee** – expiring in 2017: Paul Boule

**Fellowship/Stewardship** - expiring in 2017: Caron Long

There were no names submitted for Education or Youth

The **Annual Budget (Spending Guide)** was next – and available for review. There was a change in the line item amounts for utilities from \$14,000 to \$15,000 and fuel-natural gas from \$6,000 to \$5,000. The total budgeted amount stayed the same (total). After further discussion the 2015 Budget was passed as amended by voice vote.

The **Annual Mission Projects** were next. They included Jonathan Durkopp – Seminary Student, and Missionaries, Shauen and Krista Trump. Motion was made and passed to accept these projects.

The **Delegate to the District Convention** was next. The delegate will be Joel Wippich. The alternate will be Norm Gerken. Motion was made and passed.

The meeting was closed with a devotion by Pastor Dan Gerken at 1:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Joe Morton

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**Combined Epiphany Service**  
**Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm**  
**at Prince of Peace, Lakewood**

Epiphany is the Greek word for “manifestation” or “appearance.” Traditionally, Epiphany is the time we remember the manifestation of the Christ Child to the Eastern Magi – acknowledging that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world. Join with neighboring congregations in our Circuit as we praise God for His most precious gift – Jesus our Savior, the Light of the World.



# -Preschool News

[www.littlelambstacoma.com](http://www.littlelambstacoma.com)

## Sharing Christ, Feeding Lambs

May God bless you in this New Year of 2015. For our preschool It puts us halfway through our school year. We ask for your continued prayer support fo the school, students, and their families.

This month our Bible stories are Simeon and Anna seeing Jesus at the temple, Jesus visiting the Jerusalem temple at the age of twelve, Jesus calling His first disciples, and Jesus welcoming children with open arms. Jesus truly does love all people and all children. Please remember to pray for our student of the week.

Our amazon.com program is ongoing throughout the year, so if you are placing any orders at amazon.com, remember to use the link on our Littlelambstacoma.com website, and a portion of the purchase will be donated back to the preschool at no additional charge to you!

Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup> is Lutheran Schools Education Sunday. Please be mindful of all our Christian schools, including Concordia and Mount Rainier, and keep them in your prayers.!

*Bonnie Huset*  
Director / Teacher

## Operation Thanksgiving – OT

This past Thanksgiving, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church observed 29 years of serving a weekly hot free meal to the community. We are now in our 30<sup>th</sup> year of this ministry. Praise God. As we continue with this ministry, we are in need of your help. Continue to keep this program and its clients in your prayers. This program is not part of our budget. It runs totally by gleaning and your gifts. If you would like to make a contribution to purchase

needed proteins (like meat), we would greatly appreciate it. But even more important, we can use new cooks to help prepare the meals. We currently have a rotation of cooks, so you would be preparing/cooking the meal about every 6 weeks. Of course, volunteer help is always appreciated. May God continue to bless this ministry for years to come. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Church Office.



### FINANCIAL UPDATE

As we start a new year, we also start fresh financially. In 2015, we will need about **\$6,152.00** each week to meet all budgeted items. Your continued support and prayers are needed to accomplish the goals we as a congregation have set. We were able to pay the main bills for December. Thank you all.





# Women in Mission / Women's Ministry

- **Tuesdays:**  
**Bible Study** (9:15 am) **Quilting** (10 am)
- **Mites and Missions** –January 11<sup>th</sup>
- **Seafarers' Auxiliary** – January 27<sup>th</sup>

Quilters continue meeting and producing quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

Don't forget MITES!

Welcome to the Year of our Lord 2015!

Many thanks to the Altar Guild for all their beautiful work!

Tuesday Bible Study 9:15 am is beginning a Study of The Lord's Prayer. Join us as we look closely at this precious gift.

Serving the Lord with Gladness!  
*Jane Oberg*

## Lunch Bunch News

We have changed our meeting day to the **2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday** each month. So, we will meet in **January 8<sup>th</sup>**. Join us at **11:30 am** for a pot blessing meal. Bring a dish to share.

**Thank You!** to the congregation of Good Shepherd for the expressions of appreciation and love, cards and gifts this Christmas season! We all greatly appreciate your generosity and thoughtfulness very much!

Your Staff:

*Pastor Dan & Ruth, Pastor Brad & Melissa, Pastor David & Nikki, Denes, Bonnie Jean, Caron, Tammy, Debbie, Jerry, Matt & Jen, Sue, and Valerie*

## Men's Breakfast / Bible Study Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> – 8 am

Join us for a delicious breakfast, wonderful fellowship, and in-depth Bible Study. We are going through the series "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School." We will be discussing the chapter "The Bramble Who Became King" (Judges 9)



*Pastor Dan*