

First Hearts

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“Funeral Home Funerals” and “Love Chapel” Weddings

As a pastor in the latter years of my life, I have experienced some frustrations in the office of the ministry. To put it bluntly, weddings and funerals, for the Lutheran confessional pastor are a pain in the proverbial rear. This should not be the case. But the influence of the world – even on a liturgical and traditional and orthodox church such as the LCMS – is profound – especially on these two occasions. Emotions and pop culture would like to rule and change our solidly scriptural and doctrinal funeral services and marriage services – changing them into cultural testimonies – rather than the testimonies to Christ that they are and should be.

The Lutheran Service Book (our present hymnal) provides services for both weddings and funerals. Both are well done. Both provide for worship that is Christ-centered. Both services include opportunities for readings from Holy Scripture and sermons. Our wedding and funeral services are worship services – done in the church – done before God and man as a testimony to our faith in Christ as our Savior and to the Triune God as our God. Funeral home funerals have become a great cause for grief for me as a pastor. There are many reasons – but theologically – funeral homes present no tie to the faith that I preach and teach as a Lutheran pastor. There is no altar. There is no cross. Other denominations and religions use the same worship space to bury their dead. This gives the appearance to the world that it doesn't matter – really – what faith one professes – we all end up at the same place.

Are these funeral home chapels some of the “high places” of American culture – where all religions become one – where universalism and modern Baal worship occurs? If so, God will have no part of it. Are these – not so subtle – examples of the “unionism” and “syncretism” that we LCMS pastors are sworn to have no part of? I contend that they are. Therefore, I will have no part of it any longer.

In the funeral home, the pastor has no control over the so-called worship space. Besides the things

already mentioned, the pastor has no control over what the “so-called chapel” will be decorated with when he shows up for the funeral service. Will the front of the chapel be decorated with Masonic paraphernalia – military service items – sports memorabilia – pictures of family gatherings, etc.?

The family being in charge, the pastor has no control over the service itself. Many times the family of the “deceased Christian” will want to perform eulogies themselves to their loved one. This being the case, there is no control over what the loved ones might say. I am reminded of one eulogizing relative whose opening words of the eulogy were : “If there really is a God, then . . .” Other times the loved ones will want to have what are known as “Celebration of Life” ceremonies. These are atrocities to the Christian faith that idolize the deceased rather than portray him as a sinner saved by the grace of God in Christ as our Lutheran Worship Services show him to be.

Add to all this the fact that – as a pastor in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod – I received a call from First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, Tennessee. I did not receive a call from “John Doe” Funeral Home. I have no ties to a funeral home or a wedding parlor or another church or congregation. I was called to preach the Gospel in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments rightly at First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, Tn. I have no call in any other place as a called minister. (I do have the call as a Christian pastor to preach the gospel at every opportunity.) I cannot walk into a LCMS church in any other city and participate in their worship without an invitation from the pastor at that place. My call is here. Neither does my ordination to the LCMS require such service. In fact, I am called to avoid unionism and syncretism and universalism at all costs in order to make a clear testimony and confession to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World. Any participation in a worship service, call for that clear testimony to Christ as a first priority.

There is much more that I can say about these things. However, I think you can sense the frustration that I have in these matters. I give notice that I, Floyd

Smithey, will not perform any more funerals in funeral homes (The internment is a different matter. I will continue to perform internments at the cemetery to witness to the world the faith the deceased one professed.)

If your children or executors of your estate subvert your wishes to have your funeral at the church, then they will need to do the funeral themselves or find someone to do it. I am not speaking for other pastors at First Lutheran. They will – no doubt - speak for themselves on this matter by their words or by their actions of participation or non-participation.

Neither will I perform weddings in any other place than our sanctuary nor use any other order of worship than what we have in our Lutheran Service Book. Again, the other pastors can speak for themselves in this matter.

Sometimes a “no” can be a great blessing. I do not owe a favor by doing his/her funeral in a funeral home. He is dead. I can do no more for him as a pastor. However, his family and friends need to hear the gospel in its truth and purity. They don’t need to hear the gospel in a place that yields a “mixed” testimony – they need to hear the gospel in its truth and purity.

Neither do I do anyone a favor by performing their wedding in a “love chapel” using hymns and words that do not portray or teach the Christian faith. The world will soon enough consume the married couple. For a few minutes, let them be sheltered by the church from the world.

I am not called to do either of these things – not called by the Church – not called by God.

Will there be times when – due to circumstances – pastoral discretion and Christian love overrules and negates the above? Maybe. (Though I cannot imagine what these circumstances would be.) But let not the exception be the rule. Christians have your weddings in the Church. Christians have your funerals in the church. Do not be overcome by the world. These services are a testimony to the world of your faith. *In Christ Jesus, our Resurrected Lord.*

Pastor Floyd Smithey

July 1 – 6th Sunday after Pentecost: *Lamentations 3:22-33; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43.*

July 8 – 7th Sunday after Pentecost: *Ezekiel 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 23:1-10; Mark 6:1-13.*

July 15 – 8th Sunday after Pentecost: *Amos 7:7-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29.*

July 22 – 9th Sunday after Pentecost: *Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-44.*

July 29 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost: *Genesis 9:8-17; Ephesians 3:14-21; Mark 6:45-56.*

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SERVICES will continue at 6:30 p.m.

NO WORSHIP SERVICE Wednesday, July 4, due to the Independence Day holiday.

Prayer List

OUR PRAYER LIST SHOULD INCLUDE:

Serving Our Country: Brett Anthonijs, Robert Boatman, Isaac Davis, Chad Kaiser, Adam Smith, Jeff Stone, Neil Whitehead

Other Prayer Requests:

MEMBERS WITH SICKNESS OR BURDENS:

Brion Bissell (needs kidney)	Ed Niedens (knee surgery)
Margot Bridges (homebound)	Pastor & Mary Schmidt
Aven Flanigan	Carl Testerman (cancer)
Gladys Frankenberg (homebound)	Judy Testerman (cancer)
Gene Franklin	The Varner family
Pat Hinds	Don & Carolyn Weaver
Karla Hood	Kris Weaver
Mike & Mary Jones	Harold & Katherine Whitaker (homebound)
Dan Jordan (knee surgery)	Mary Ann Wheat
Don & Sandy Linde	Marilyn Wing (homebound)
Dottie Mertz (stroke)	Jerry Wing (nursing home)
Sharon Mueller	the Wolford family

NON-MEMBERS WITH SICKNESS OR BURDENS:

Charlotte Brothers (wife of Carla Poore’s co-worker), doing well; doctors believe they got all the cancer and she did not require chemotherapy. Praise God!

Jonathan Campbell (Diane Baum’s co-worker’s brother) fighting infection after an appendectomy to remove his ruptured appendix

Worship This Month

I pledge allegiance to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the faith for which it stands, one Savior eternal with mercy and grace for all.

Chloe Cross (a 12-year-old with cancer)
 Steven Dew (Carolyn Weaver's friend)
 Bill Flynn (Sharon Mueller's brother), whose cancer has returned
 Ken Hamilton (father of Anna Marie Hamilton, UT student from Alabama)
 Judy Hamrick (Shirley Watson's neighbor) with a tumor that is growing
 JoAnn Harbaugh (Kathleen Holliday's mother)
 Cheryl Hooks (Diane Baum's friend) undergoing months of chemotherapy after removal of part of her colon and intestines due to cancer
 Clara Janes (Kirk Tower's mother)
 Helen Linderfelt (Lynda Graves' friend)
 Joyce Lipscomb (Rick Elmore's friend)
 Annette Lotivio (Marc Blais's friend) with pancreatic cancer
 Landon Lutterman Wendy Slifka's friend) who has been hospitalized after medical tests
 Victor Marquette's family (John Mueller's former brother-in-law who passed away)
 Joanne Mattingly
 Joan Mincey (Shirley Watson's friend) with stage 4 COPD and breast cancer
 Karen Nall
 Mary Jane Nichols (Becky Marshall's sister) having open heart surgery
 Tom O'Brien (Marissa Wilson's co-worker's husband) with prostate cancer
 Travis Parrott (the Wolford's son-in-law) needing a kidney transplant
 Kallee Pittenger (mother of one of our 3rd grade students), having chemotherapy for breast cancer
 Tom Roberts (Sara's grandfather) with Alzheimer's
 Daniel Rule (the Slifkas' friend) suffering from RSD
 Kristy Shirk (Lynda Graves' friend) with cancer of the sinuses
 Barbara Thornton (Janice Kaiser's relative)
 Connie Warren (Slifka family friend), undergoing breast cancer treatment
 Sam and Alex Weaver
 Nikki Wiest (Phyllis Nall's granddaughter), who is very ill

us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

We celebrate this month because of the freedoms and liberties our country has afforded us. We are right to do this. We should be thankful for these liberties: the freedom to gather together to worship and to live out what we believe in our daily lives.

But freedom and liberty in our age has devolved. It has become a freedom from duty instead of a freedom for it. Indeed, freedom and liberty in our age has turned into licentiousness: a license to do what we want, when we want.

This license is a submission, again, to a yoke of slavery. For freedom as license to do what we desire when we desire it means we are slaves to our desires, slaves to our passions.

Christ died to set us free from our sinful desires. In Holy Baptism, our Old Adam is drowned and put to death along with all sin and evil desires so that a new man may arise and live before God in righteousness and purity.

In Christ, we are a new creation. We are set free from the passions of the flesh so that we are free to do our duty and bear fruits of the Spirit.

Our duty is what God calls us to do as members of a family, society, and the church.

God calls us to believe in His Word and gladly hear and learn it. He calls us to pray for all people. He calls us to live in faith toward Him and in fervent love for our neighbor. He calls us to put the gifts He gives to us in His service. God calls parents to provide for their children and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And God calls children to honor their parents and provide and care for them when they are no longer able to do so themselves.

God calls the government to punish those who do evil and to reward those who do good. He calls citizens to pay their taxes and honor the governing officials as God's servants. He calls pastors to preach and teach the Gospel as well as repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And He calls hearers to support those who teach them with every good thing.

Christ died to set us free from the works of our selfish flesh, giving us the freedom and liberty to do our duty. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

MISSION SERVE is at 9:00 A.M. Saturday, July

7.

Other News and Happenings

STEWARDSHIP – "For freedom Christ has set

DAY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING is 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 10.

BOARD OF ELDERS MEETING is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 10.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES meeting and workday at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 14.

CHURCH SUMMER POTLUCK PICNIC on July 15 after worship service, a great way to fellowship and enjoy being outdoors. The church will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, and buns. Please sign up for sides. A sign-up sheet will be on the bulletin board across from the mailboxes. Please bring a chair and a change of clothes.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP will meet at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 19.

ADULT CATECHISM CLASS – Pastor Smithey will be teaching an adult catechism class beginning on Saturday, July 21, 2018, at 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon at the church. If you or someone you know would like to join this class, please let Pastor know. We will meet weekly – as needed until the Small Catechism is exhausted. A couple of other documents like the Augsburg Confession and the Formula or Concord may receive some attention also.

PASTOR SCHMIDT – As most of you know, Pastor Edward Schmidt has resigned due to medical reasons. Let us all continue to pray for Pastor Schmidt and Mary - the Lord Jesus, the Great Physician of Body and Soul, would heal Pastor Schmidt - either through doctors and medicines or simply by saying the Word and thus heal Pastor. We pray for Mary as she continues to serve Pastor faithfully as his wife, the minister in marriage whom God has given his servant, Pastor Schmidt. May the Lord strengthen Mary and give her patience and love and trust in God during these trying days. The Lord of all Mercies be with the Schmidt family. (Copies of Pastor Schmidt's letter of resignation are available at the rear of the sanctuary.)

CHURCH DIRECTORY – Over the last several weeks Bobby Eisold and Kevin Booth have been working hard to get a Church Directory available for on-line use. Over the next few weeks, they will be

sending out invitations to access First Lutheran's Member Portal. The portal will be available only to First Lutheran members, and we must have your current e-mail address in order for you to access the portal. If you have not given us your e-mail address, you may do so by sending an e-mail to info@firstknoxville.org. Please be sure to include your name in your e-mail so that we know who you are. When you get access if there are any errors in the info for you and your family, please to update the data base email this info to info@firstknoxville.org. A printable version will be worked on next. Thank you!

School News and Happenings

CALENDAR

May 23-July 27 – Summer Day Camp

NEWS FROM FIRST LUTHERAN SCHOOL

Dear Friends,

Firstly, thank you to every one for their kindness and support regarding this change in position. I am looking forward to serving as principal and working with everyone to make the most of this opportunity. I want to take a moment to introduce myself. I attended Lutheran schools through 8th grade, and I graduated from First Lutheran after my mom received a called to teach here in 2000. As time goes on, it seems that God keeps calling me back. I worked in the ECE and as a substitute teacher; then worked as the Administrative Assistant before becoming a Middle School teacher. Last year, I began the Colloquy program which provides instruction in Lutheran doctrine so that I can be eligible for a Call. It has been an excellent opportunity to study and grow in my faith. In all these things, God was preparing me for the next step and teaching me to trust in His guidance.

I am excited about this year and the opportunities it will bring, not only for our school but for our church. Lutheran education is something I am extremely passionate about. Currently almost 2,000 Lutheran schools operate in this country serving more than 200,000 students. What an incredible blessings and ministry opportunity! And we have that opportunity right here at First Lutheran. In *Matthew 19:14*, Christ Says, "Let the little children come to me." Well, the children are here, filling our classrooms and our time, and we need to be ready to instruct them in Christ's love. We have an incredible staff working hard to do just that, and the support that

comes from the congregation only strengthens our mission.

I know from personal experience that Lutheran Schools can provide a foundation that will shape an individual long after they have graduated and moved on. How incredible is it that First Lutheran cannot only provide academically rigorous curriculum in a safe and loving environment, but we can aid families in providing a firm foundation in Christ? If that doesn't make you proud to be Lutheran, I have to say, you are missing out. So my hope this year is that we all can come together around the blessing that is First Lutheran School and through it reach out to students, families, and the community

*In His Service
Jessie Irwin, Interim Principal*

24 – Greg & Beth Buckner, John & Lindsey Hofman

31 – Mark & Debbie Fetting

DEADLINE FOR THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER IS FRIDAY, JULY 20

Floyd P. Smithey, Associate Pastor; Ceci Steele, Editor.

Worship Services are held Sundays at 10:30 a.m. and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Children's Sunday School and Adult Bible Classes are held on Sundays at 9:15 a.m.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Jacob Cloninger, Holly Flanigan, Nick Weideman
2 – Trevor Anderson, Joy Witt
3 – Steve Wheat
4 – Brett Anthonijs
8 – Abby Bushur, Bobby Eisold, Tabitha Lukens, Monika Rash, Tatum Smolter
9 – Cameron Brown, Angela Lukens
12 – Zachary Mueller, Brian Poore, Melissa Sanders
13 – Michleen Jones
14 – Lin Holloway Jr.
16 – Avery Anderson, Amy Keller
17 – Michael Veenstra
19 – Karen DeArmond, Shelia Wolford
20 – Martin Slomski, Nathan Wade
22 – Melissa Schell, Marilyn Waldeck-Wing
23 – Theo Anthonijs, Kim Smith
25 – Gianna Haun-Harshaw
26 – Jonathan Boatman
27 – Liz Etzel
29 – Elizabeth Smith, Jayda Turner, Lisa Wade
30 – Ron Mahs, Wendy Slifka, Drew Slomski

ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 – Lawrence & Ingrid Capparelli
12 – Scott & Karen Spaid
17 – Seth & Rebecca Nutter
21 – Fred & Melissa Schell

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July 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:15 SS & Bible Class 10:30 Worship w/communion	2 6:00 New Testament Books	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY NO WORSHIP SERVICE	5	6	7 9:00 Mission Serve
8 9:15 SS & Bible Class 10:30 Worship w/communion	9 9:30 Quilting 6:00 New Testament Books	10 <i>6:00 Day School Board</i> 7:00 Board of Elders	11 6:30 Worship Service	12	13	14 9:00 Workday
15 MITE BOX SUNDAY 9:15 SS & Bible Class 10:30 Worship w/communion 12:00 Picnic	16 6:00 New Testament Books	17 7:00 Board of Stewardship	18 6:30 Worship Service	19	20 DEADLINE FOR AUG. NEWSLETTER	21
22 9:15 SS & Bible Class 10:30 Worship w/communion	23 9:30 Quilting 6:00 New Testament Books	24	25 6:30 Worship Service	26	27	28
29 9:15 SS & Bible Class 10:30 Worship w/communion	30 6:00 New Testament Books	31				