



## DP Vantage Point

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*For Christ and for His world SWD magnifies partnerships,  
multiplies ministries, and maximizes resources.*

February 16, 2017

Graveside Burial of Joan H. Wille

January 6, 2017

The Epiphany of Our Lord

The Lutheran Cemetery, Watertown WI

### **Dear Brothers in Christ:**

What follows is the graveside homily which was preached by Pastor Chris Raffa at the internment of my mother. I share it with you as an example of a powerful funeral message focused on our Lord Jesus, the Christ. In the darkening haze of her dementia, she often referred to Pastor Raffa as “the archbishop”. My family and I express our heart-felt gratitude to Pastors Raffa and Joe Fisher for their ministry to my mother!!

Beloved in Christ, John, Lynn, family and friends of Joan, on this bitter cold Epiphany morn, the light has gone away. Darkness shrouds the earth in death as we lay Joan into the grave. For 85 years, her light shined as reflection of the Light of all lights. She traveled the earth, near and far, teaching the Gospel to little lambs; faithful wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother. She crafted Lutheran devotional booklets to catechize those who lived in darkness, in unbelief, into the Lutheran light of justification by faith alone. She saw herself in those booklets, sinner and saint, even as she invited visitors to embrace those pages of honest confession and the light of love that shines in the face of Jesus for all.

As our Lord would have it, I got to know Joan when her light was flickering in the darkness of dementia. Despite this debilitating disease, she took me, her arch bishop, and many others, on exciting adventures as she weaved stories both true and fanciful, which gave light to each darkening day. In her final days, among the many others, she had her son by her bedside, reading Luther, who when speaking of true comfort, would have the grieved in heart focus on what happened to Christ, for what happens to Him, happens to all who are baptized into Him. “Just as Christ also, though he lay in the grave, yet in a moment he was both dead and alive and rose again like a lightning flash from heaven. So he will raise us too in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, out of the grave, the dust, the water, and we shall stand in full view, utterly pure and clean as the bright sun.”

Arise then. Hear and receive the Light of resurrection, for He has come. The New Israel shines as if she swallowed a liquid sun. Today, amidst death and grave, is the birth of new light. Nations travel to this light. From You, Father, comes your Son-light who will shepherd Your people into the light knows no darkness. The lost sheep of the house of Judah, of America, of Africa and Arkansas, the lost sheep of West Bend and Watertown, the lost sheep that roam the far corners of the earth.

Joan, once a lost sheep herself, now hears her Shepherd's voice. He is born in Bethlehem, manifested to wise men from afar to be the light of all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, the root of Jesse, the slayer of sin's death.

The Light of Christ enlightens Joan alive beyond our eyes. Even as she lay sleeping in death, she worships Him, for there is no other to worship. All other gods are devils. All other ways are pits. All other truths are lies. He is the gold of the Father. He is the frankincense and myrrh of heaven. His sacrificed body is the incense that fills the nostrils of the Father, who happily receives Joan, and all His new born sons and daughters.

On this Epiphany morn, even as the light has gone away, your heavenly Father holds and keeps your mother in heavenly peace. Even as the light has gone away, your heavenly Father listens while you pray, hope, and long for that joy-filled resurrection reunion, that eternal eighth day. Though the light has gone away today, death doesn't rule the day. Epiphany does. The Light of all life does. Resurrection does. Jesus does.

So, we lay to rest, Joan, our dear mother, friend, and cherished love one. We lay her to rest here in a Lutheran cemetery, of which Luther would say of cemeteries, "They should be a fine quiet place, separated from other places, a place where the living can go and reverently meditate upon death, the Last Judgment, the resurrection, and pray. Joan wouldn't have it any other way. She wanted to make me Lutheran, and she succeeded in that endeavor. For I stand here, a Lutheran pastor, burying a Lutheran woman, in a Lutheran cemetery. Her light shines brightly today, for God's epiphany has enlightened her grave.

So, we pray the ancient prayer, at the close of the day, at the close of earthly life, at the close of the grave. "Guide us waking O Lord/and guard us sleeping/that awake we may watch with Christ/and asleep we may rest in peace." This prayer, this song of dismissal in the peace of Christ is for us at all times, waking, sleeping, day to day, and night to night. It's also for us living in this world, while we are awake in this life, in the body as we watch with Christ, and when we are asleep in our beds or in our graves, that we may rest in peace. Peace not simply because the final day of earthly life has come, but because in Christ, His final day is a manifested eternal day to us. It is for us a new world that will never end, never to be subject to the sufferings of this present world. The psalmist tucks us in into bed, even as he tucks Joan into her grave, as we confess with all the saints in light this Epiphany day, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

### **A Word from Walther:**

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PIOUS LIFE OF A PREACHER | Concerning how important our faithful fathers regarded the blameless life of a preacher alongside pure doctrine for a blessed administration of the office, let the following testimonies be included here. Luther writes as follows: Each preacher should demonstrate these two points. First, [he should demonstrate] an innocent life, so that he can defy [his opponents] and no one has a reason to slander his teaching. Second, [he should demonstrate] irreproachable doctrine, so that he misleads no one who follows

him. In this way he would be in the right on both sides: with his good life against his enemies, who look much more at his life than at his doctrine and despite the doctrine for the sake of the life; and with his doctrine among his friends, who pay much more attention to this doctrine than to his life and will bear with his life for the sake of his doctrine. ([ Church Postil]; 11: 776) AE 76: 409 The same [Luther]: “Where a person’s life is not good, it is rare that he preaches correctly; he would always have to preach against himself, which he will hardly do without additions and foreign doctrines” ([ Church Postil]; 11: 111).

Walther, C.F.W. (2017-01-31). *Walthers Works: Pastoral Theology* (Kindle Locations 10890-10896). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

### **SWD News and Tidbits:**

#### **1) Update on Search for new SWD Mission Executive:**

Mr. Byron Buss who heads the call committee for the new SWD Mission Executive reported to the February Board of Directors that the search is well underway. Interviews of four individuals, ordained LCMS pastors, begin Friday, September 17 and will end on Monday, February 27. The four candidates are, in no order of importance: Rev. Nathan Meador, Rev, Dr Carl Rockrohr, Rev. Jason Zirbel, and Rev. Peter Burfeind. After that point the call committee will bring one or more names forward for the Board’s consideration. From my perspective each of the four candidates under consideration brings something unique to the table. Each is an excellent candidate. Please keep the process in your prayers!!

#### **2) SWD Mission Intentions:**

As we ended our fiscal year January 31, 2017 it is important to note that we missed our congregational intentions by \$119,000.00; which means LCMS did not receive our full intention of 25% of every unrestricted dollar. In spite of that, the unaudited numbers show that SWD ended the year in the “black”. We are grateful for God’s blessings! As we enter the new fiscal year, we are still receiving mission intentions from congregations. Many are in; but we are still waiting for some. As in the past, some of the numbers are down while others are up. That said it appears that our mission intentions will be lower than the previous year. Slipping numbers means fewer resources for missions, sadly. If your congregation can see its way to increase your intention in some way; that would be greatly appreciated by the missions and ministries which we support together. If your congregation hasn’t submitted a mission intention yet, please do so as soon as possible. That way we have a better handle on what to expect, and don’t have to “guess” or project what that number might be.

#### **3) SWD Board of Directors action December 2016:**

As the SWD Board adopted a new budget for 2017-2018, they also graciously moved that SWD write a check for an additional \$50,000.00 to LCMS.inc; above and beyond the 25% of every unrestricted gift which is received from congregations. President Harrison and his staff are very grateful for SWD’s generosity. It is still my hope and prayer that someday soon, SWD will be able to up our yearly commitment to at least 30%. We will make that journey together.

**4) Updates from the Council of Presidents' Meeting, February 2017, in New Orleans LA:**

- a) The COP was led in a discussion of a paper titled "Above Reproach: The Integrity of the Pastoral Office", by the chairman of the Clergy Call and Roster Committee. After that, there was an examination of various case studies with discussion. An important point from that paper:  
*Walther states in his Pastoral Theology: (3) A preacher must arrange all his actions so that his congregation recognizes that his only and true purpose is their salvation. Whoever thinks only about how he may collect something of temporal goods or indulge his comfort will very soon lose the trust of his congregation.* Pastoraltheologie], pp. 330ff.
- b) One of the salient parts of this COP meeting was a discussion of the ecclesiastical supervision which is highlighted in CCM Opinion 16-2791, which reinstates the right of the Synod President to exercise ecclesiastical supervision and discipline for all members of Synod. That was the center piece of Floor Committee 12 from last summer's LCMS convention in MKE; especially Resolutions 12-01a and 12-14. The consultation with the COP which is mandated by 12-14 will probably end in April, 2017 at which point the new bylaws will be drafted and taken to the LCMS Board of Directors for approval.
- c) As part of his report the COP President Harrison presented a paper, "The Basis for Luther's theology of the Office in the sola gratia and the sola fide". Matt prefaced his reading of a paper with the principle: you don't diminish the office of the priesthood in order to elevate the pastoral office.
- d) Herb Mueller led a discussion on the LLD Colloquy process. Herb walked the Council through the "Colloquy Manual" and spelled out the definitions and steps involved in the process. Questions specific to definitions were answered and explanations given. The LLD to Pastor Process will begin in June 2017.
- e) Ken Hennings asked Dean Nadasdy to update the group on the "Preach the Word" initiative. Dean commented that marketing is needed to make this initiative successful. Dean is looking to the DPs to help. A drafted letter will be emailed to the DPs for distribution to their constituents. The letter invites Pastors to participate in this continuing education opportunity. By the way, Districts need to have a continuing education portfolio on each pastor.
- f) As of February 2017, the LCMS Vacancy totals are as follows:  
Sole Pastor 350  
Senior Pastor 33  
Associate/Assistant Pastor: 101  
Total: 484  
Being served by Pastor part-time: 347 [This is a growing number; an indication of what is happening in our rural and small town churches, and in our inner cities.]  
  
New Starts: 10  
Congregations Closed: 3

### 5) **Circuit Visitors Winter Retreat:**

Winter Retreat is scheduled for February 20-21, 2017 in conjunction with NWD at Holiday Inn Stevens Point. Dr. Stephen Saunders, head of psychology at Marquette University, has agreed to serve as our plenary speaker on the subject of mental health concerns in the parish. Dr. Saunders is an LCMS layman, and has recently published a book titled: The Christian's Guide to Mental Illness: Recognizing Mental Illness in the Church & School. I am about 75% finished reading the book. While it is some 400 plus pages, it is a great read. Dr. Saunders explains mental illness in a way that is easily understood, talking about ways to help and minister to families and individuals who are affected by mental illness. As I read it, he helped me better understand my parents' journey through the shadowy valleys of dementia. It is published by NPH, available on Amazon.

### 6) **Congregational Visitation continues.**

In the weeks ahead I will be visiting the following:

- Good Shepherd Sheboygan,
- St. Bartholomew, Brillion
- Trinity Milwaukee
- St. John's Mayville
- Circuits 6, 4, and 14. Part of these circuit visitations includes sharing the "Above Reproach: The Integrity of the Pastoral Office" paper

If you would like me to come preach at your congregation, to talk about our common mission and ministry as we "Confess Christ for the next generation", please give Karen a call. There are a few dates available in March and April.

Visitation is one of the responsibilities that comes along with the office of district president, and it continues to be an important aspect of our "life together".

### 7) **Spring Pastors' Conference:**

The Spring Pastors Conference will be May 8-10 at the Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells. The committee has arranged free onsite biometric health screenings through Vitality wellness program for those enrolled in Concordia Plans. Karen recently sent out the information but here it is again. To schedule a screening follow the steps below.

Concordia Health Plan members can sign up for a free onsite biometric screening through the Vitality wellness program. Getting your screening will help you better understand your health status, present a more accurate Vitality age, and reward you with Vitality points. Your results will be automatically uploaded into the Vitality platform in 10-14 business days.

To schedule a screening, follow the steps below. You can also watch a video tutorial at [ConcordiaPlans.org/screening](http://ConcordiaPlans.org/screening) to walk through the steps of setting up an appointment. You must sign up two weeks prior to the screening to secure a spot. **Registration closes April 25.**

Sign in to Vitality through [BeWellServeWell.com](http://BeWellServeWell.com). Select "Click here to schedule a Vitality Check through Quest" from the center of the home page. Accept the terms and conditions on the

Quest website and enter your remaining personal information to register. Click on Get started > Schedule now > At event. Then choose your location and select the time for your screening.

In order to get accurate readings, you'll need to fast (no food or beverages beside water) for 8-10 hours prior to your screening. But be sure to drink plenty of water. If you have questions or need help scheduling your screening, call the Quest support line at [1-855-623-9355](tel:1-855-623-9355).

More information on the conference will be sent out soon.

**8) Another example of a fine message was delivered by Pastor Doug Stowe to the December 2016 Board of Directors' meeting.**

It is attached for your reading. Perhaps you might keep it for reference during Advent 2017. It is thought provoking. Thanks Doug!! As an aside, my intention was to share this sooner but with my mother's journey through the valley of the shadow of death that didn't happen.

**9) SWD Board Encouragement:**

During the SWD Board of Directors' meeting, Thursday, February 16, 2017, it was moved and adopted that the congregations of SWD be "encouraged to consider displaying the Lutheran flag" especially during this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

**10) Congregational Vacancies and Pastoral Calls:**

**Pastor calls & vacancies**

- Berlin – St. John (evaluating)
- Brookfield – Immanuel (associate)
- Franklin – Risen Savior
- Janesville – Mt. Calvary (evaluating)
- Menomonee Falls – Grace (senior)
- Milwaukee – Mt. Olive (senior)
- Milwaukee – St. Peter – Immanuel
- Sheboygan – Luther Memorial (evaluating)
- Sheboygan – St. Paul (associate)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)
- West Bend – St. Andrew (sole)

**Pastors considering a call**

- Zachary DeArmond – Redeemer, Manitowoc to Risen Savior, Franklin
- Kurt Wenzelburger – Divine Redeemer, Hartland to St. John, Grand Have, Michigan
- Jason Zobel – Mt. Olive, Madison to St. Luke, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

**Pastors accepting a call**

- Robert Goodwin – Grace, Menomonee Falls to Our Savior Community, Palm Springs, California

**Pastors declining a call**

- Jonathan Vierkant – Lutheran Life Communities, Arlington Heights, Illinois to St. Peter-Immanuel, Milwaukee

**11) Prayer list:**

- Peter Kelm as he continues to battle cancer
- Petrea McMahon a teacher at Christ, West Bloomfield who is recovering from major surgery nearly dying.

May our Lord bless!!

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***"Confessing Christ for the Next Generation"***

*This our time:*

- 1. to be distinctly Lutheran,*
- 2. to plant new congregations,*
- 3. to honor our Christ-centered vocation,*
- 4. to embrace our communities.*