

# THE SERVANT

The monthly newsletter of Servants of Christ Lutheran Church, a congregation of The North American Lutheran Church serving the Cedar Rapids area

Meeting at Robins City Hall Community Room, 265 South Second St., Robins, Iowa 52328  
Worship: 9:00 am; Fellowship & Coffee: 10:00;  
Bible Class and Sunday School: 10:15  
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\*\*\*\*\**March 2021*

## Lead Us Not Into **Temptation**

Dear Servant of Christ,

“Mommy, read it again!” Ah, that is a recurring statement from a child who has a favorite book. Though possessing many different books, the child wants to hear the same book over and over again, often much to the parent’s consternation. Why the repeat? Perhaps delight in the story, maybe security and comfort in knowing what will be heard or the “happy” outcome. Possibly it’s just the contentment found in the familiar cadence as mom or dad or sister reads aloud.

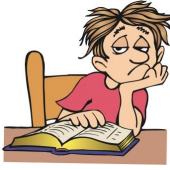
We are in the midst of the season of Lent. And, like the child, we have heard this story many times. At Servants of Christ, we include a reading of the Passion History at each mid-week Lenten service. And that reading does not vary from year to year. Same story, same format. And that is one of the joys of Lent (or any season in the church year): the familiarity . . . no surprises. There is a beauty and security in that familiarity . . . . but perhaps also a danger, a **temptation**.

**Temptation** is defined as “the desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise.” We all know this definition, and each of us could provide general or personal examples of **temptation**. A person is tempted to shoplift; that is wrong. Another person cuts a third piece of pie; that is unwise. Artists have even created an image for temptation: a smiling devil, sitting on one’s shoulder. So, with the definition and examples, how can hearing again the Passion History, the account of Jesus’ sufferings and death become a **temptation**?



Consider three **temptations** that can apply to our Lenten journey. These **temptations** are often overlooked, perhaps not even acknowledged. First, the **temptation of arrogance**. As a pastor, I’ve been reading the Passion History for decades. I probably even have parts of it memorized. As a worshiper, perhaps you can say the same thing. This familiarity spills over into other parts of our worship life, into our devotional life. Have you ever prayed the Lord’s Prayer and when finished, not even remembered that you prayed it?  
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Do you ever start reading the Bible passage assigned for the daily devotional reading only to find yourself reflecting, "Oh, I know this passage. I don't need to read it again."



It's great that worship, scripture, hymns are familiar; it is **arrogance** to assume we can learn nothing new. It is **arrogance** to discount what new insights, surprises the Holy Spirit might have for us. And there's that little devil whispering in your ear, "Come on, you know this. Tune it out, think of something else, close your eyes and rest." Seems reasonable, right? But let's not fool ourselves; the **temptation of arrogance** is an affront to God, an insult to the Savior who died for our sins; that includes the **sin of arrogance!**

Or how about the **temptation to give up**, to "throw in the towel?" The pandemic has now smothered us for an entire year, and it's not over. Experts tell us that many people have given up; they talk about "Covid19 Fatigue." Businesses that have been hanging on by their fingernails are permanently closing doors. Residents of nursing homes languish in perpetual loneliness. If a church is holding onsite worship, attendance is down 50% or more. Return to normal??? What a joke. And once again, we hear our "friend" whispering, "Give it up, man. There is no hope! Just try to survive and think of yourself." The **temptation to give up** shrinks when we belt out the hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less that Jesus' blood and righteousness!" Take that, you tempter!!

A final **temptation** for our consideration: the *temptation to live in the past*. Now, recalling positive experiences from our youth is fine, reminiscing is indeed a gift from God. Love and laughter are part of the goodness God wants for us. But we've all heard of (perhaps known) the 42 year old man who is still living his high school football career. Occasionally wearing his old jersey (assuming it fits), he is constantly regaling you with bygone exploits. Reminiscing becomes retreat . . . retreat into a past long gone. Memories are not meant to mire us. St. Paul writes to the Philippians: "Forgetting what lies behind, I press on toward the goal of the *upward calling of Christ*." That little fellow on your shoulder is **tempting** you to **live in your past glories**, not rejoice in the God who is the "same, yesterday, today and tomorrow."

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are but did not sin. We remember that Jesus' earthly ministry began with His **temptation** after 40 days of fasting. In the middle of His ministry, Jesus growls at Peter, "Get behind me, Satan" as Peter suggests Jesus not go to Jerusalem. And 18 hours before His death, Jesus is sweating drops of blood as He prays to the Father for an "out." Jesus could have squashed Satan like a bug (He is the Son of God) but Jesus chose humility over arrogance. The fatigue He felt in His ministry was tempered by His desire to do the Father's will as He scolded Peter. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus did not reminisce about His heavenly glory but instead, "for the joy that set before Him, endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

So, listen again to the Lenten story. Sit up, take notice. And by the grace of Christ's Spirit, let's push the tempter off our shoulders. Let's not risk succumbing to arrogance, resignation, and "the good old days." Christ offers us so much more!

In the name of the eternal Christ,  
Ron

**Lead us not into temptation.**

## The NALC 2020 Vision: a 10-Point Plan

The NALC is a mission-minded, mission committed church.

The following represents a 2020 Vision for the North American Lutheran Church. The development of this Vision has included input from NALC Staff, Executive Council, Mission District Deans, the NALS President and Board of Regents, and other appropriate parties. This was approved by the NALC Convocation this past August.

This plan supports the Four Core Values of the NALC. It also represents the commitments we are striving to accomplish withing the nest four years. By the year 2023, we see . . .

**3. A denomination in which every congregation receives regular and consistent pastor support.** The goal is to provide pastoral support for: active ordained pastors serving multiple parishes; retired pastors serving part-time; providing employment for pastors serving in new

starts and/or tent-making ministries; partnerships with LCMS and ACNA congregations.

### Mission Giving for February

NALC General Fund: \$667 (2021 support for this outreach is \$8,000)

NALC Seminary: \$1,000

Our 2021 Mission Spending Plan has been expanded to \$24,550, a \$10,000 increase from 2020.

## The Gospel of Mark

Study continues in March

### Topics include:

*The Messiah Arrives  
Who Speaks for God?  
Fruitful and Unfruitful Soil  
Fear and Faith  
The Training of the Twelve  
Unclean?  
The Unexpected Mission  
The Right Question  
The Fruitless Tree  
What Matters Now  
Betrayal  
End and Beginning*



Join us following worship each Sunday.



**Lent Continues through March**  
**Theme for 2021: Living in the Forgiveness of God**

- ◆ Midweek Lenten worship is held **TUESDAY** evenings beginning February 23 at **6:30 pm**. All services will be held at the **Robins City Hall**, 265 Second St., in Robins.
- ◆ Lenten devotional booklets are available on the information table.
- ◆ Midweek Lenten offerings will be directed to Water Mission.

**LENT**

- ◆ 40 days preceding Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending with Easter Sunday.
- ◆ Holy Week commemorates Christ's last week of life on earth. It begins with Palm Sunday, moves to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and culminates in the resurrection.
- ◆ The focus is on penitence, prayer, meditation.



**2,800**  
Safe water &  
sanitation  
solutions  
built.

**WATER  
MISSION**

For several years Servants of Christ has included the global ministry of Water Mission in its outreach budget and designated our special offerings to this caring ministry. Water Mission is a nonprofit Christian engineering organization that designs, builds, and implements safe water, sanitation and hygiene solutions. To date, 3,600,000 people have been provided with safe water, 137,000 now benefit from sanitation, and 550 more projects are underway.

Our congregation has been generous in its response to this need. But perhaps in our current situation in America, we can become even more sensitive and committed to providing basics for others. Americans are richly blessed with everything at its fingertips, that “everything” often taken for granted. As we shopped for basics in 2020 (like toilet paper!), hopefully we became more aware of how blessed we are . . . and hopefully more thankful. Feeling the loss of some food and paper products, feeling the frustration of limited gatherings and entertainment pales in comparison to having little or no water and sanitation.

Christ gave His all on the cross. Let us show His love through generous support of Water Mission.