

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Issue 04 – April, 2021 928-535-9575 2750 Mogollon Drive, Overgaard, AZ 85933

www.faithlutheranovergaard.org

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES — 9:30 am

Life, Death, COVID, and Catechumens

It may be the death of me (it almost was once already) ... but it's looking like I might NOT be taking the COVID vaccine. If I finally choose NOT to receive the vaccine, my decision will be informed by my faith in God, and what He says in His Word about evil and how we are to separate ourselves from it ... even if it means we lose our life in the process. Am I saying that something capable of saving the lives of millions ... even BILLIONS, could be evil? Perhaps. Read on, and see why I am currently wrestling with this ... and please be assured that what I am sharing with you is **MY** struggle; it does not have to be yours. While the questions which follow are for everyone, how **you** answer is up to you and your conscience.

How important is your faith in God to you?

By the time you read this article, that is a question that will have been asked on Palm Sunday of a young confirmand (person who is publicly “confirming” their faith before the congregation after two years of biblical instruction). One of the questions that will be asked of this young person is, “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, **even death**, rather than fall away from it?”

To the passer-by, that question may seem just a little intense ... especially for a young person only 14 years old. But the question gets to the very heart of what it means to be a Christian (Christ-follower). To say, “I would rather suffer death than stop trusting in Jesus Christ or deny him.” is, itself, making a bold public statement about how important it is to a “Christ-follower”; to actually *follow* Christ.

Why should “going to church” be more important even than remaining alive?...

Because, according to the Bible (which the ***authentic and true*** Christian believes to be the actual, inerrant, and infallible Word of God Himself), faith in (following) Christ is the **only** way to live eternally in the Kingdom of God. **This** present life is transitory and will end in death one way or the other. Therefore, the Christian sees **this** life as of immeasurably less importance than LIFE to come through Christ in the Kingdom of God, so that the loss of *this* life through death is ***nothing*** compared to what it would mean to lose **eternal** LIFE by denying Christ, or separating oneself from Christ.

Of course, like many things in life, to live the idea and public confession of fidelity to Christ and His Word is often easier to say than it is to do. That is why the question is prefaced with “Do you ***intend*** ...”. Knowing how important the statement is, the Christian’s *intent* is to remain faithful, but the Christian also knows he or she has an upward battle against the devil, the world, and his or her own sinful nature to accomplish this, so the answer given to the question is, “I do, ***by the Grace of God.***” Only by God’s gracious help can a Christian live in this life without faith completely evaporating ... because even faith in God is a *gift* from God.



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Pastor's Office Hours

Mondays - 10am - 4pm *In the Office*
Tuesdays - 10am - 12pm *In the Office*
Wednesdays - Visitation Day
Thursdays - 10am - 12 pm *In the Office*

Call for appointment -
928-535-9575 or 323-717-4390
revnwirtz@yahoo.com,
or just drop in, or call anytime



Women's Ministry

**Open to ALL women who attend
Faith Lutheran Church!**

- Met March 15.
- No Easter Breakfast due to COVID
- Rummage Sale 2021 was discussed with possible a second sale due to large inventory.

MONTHLY MEETINGS & EVENTS



Apr 19 - Elders Meeting 9:00am
- Women's Ministry 1:00pm

Apr 27 - Council Meeting



CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE

- Met March 23
- No actionable items
- General Health of the Congregation is good. Financials are doing well. Attendance is beginning to pick up as Covid decreases and Spring has arrived.



Birthdays

Anniversaries

Apr 2 Don & Jenny Grotberg
Apr 12 John & Linda Chackerian



Funding Recipient Campus Missionary: Pastor Eric R. Andræ

This campus ministry is centrally located and is only a 10-minute walk from Pittsburgh's flagship schools Pitt and CMU. LSF (Lutheran Student Fellowship-International Student Ministry) is a place for creating, nurturing, and proclaiming faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The students and leadership of (LSF) come together as one Body, wonderfully united as the liturgy of the Divine Service connects them to Christ, to each other, and to the Church of the ages. The students of this diverse educational community have a home here to live and belong, grow and thrive! LSF provides excellent opportunities for students to gather together regularly as a true community of believers, serving and abiding among each other through the Sunday Divine Service, mid-week evening prayer, the diligent study of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, local and international mission and service projects, congregational leadership, dinners, social activities, regional retreats, and much more! This campus ministry serves the vital purpose of connecting local college students with a vibrant Lutheran community while they study at area colleges, strengthening their faith and while connecting them to other Lutheran youth.

Bible Studies & Sunday Services

Bible Studies

Sundays – 8:00 am: Revelation

Thursdays – 9:30 am: 1 Kings

Sunday Services

9:30 am

*Sunday Services can be viewed and listened to on the website either **live** or archived.*

www.faithlutheran.org/worship

(recorded audio and video usually posts by 1:00pm Sunday)

Apr 01 – Maundy Thursday Service 6:00 pm

Apr 02 – Good Friday Service 6:00 pm

Apr 04 – Resurrection Sunday

So, when might someone's faith be stacked up against death? Certainly, in the past, history records Christian martyrs being thrown to the lions, or being tied to poles and lit on fire as street lamps. There is also the Biblical accounts of Daniel willing to risk his life with the lions rather than deny God. Also, his friends, who were willing to be thrown into the fiery furnace rather than deny God. Both them, and Daniel were delivered from death by the God they trusted; a picture of all Christians' ultimate delivery from (or through) death into eternal life by trusting in Christ. (See Daniel Chapter 3, and yes, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were all "Christians" as their faith was in the Christ who was to come)

But Christian martyrdom didn't stop with Old and New Testament times. People, even children, continue to be martyred today rather than deny Christ ... but *"surely not in the United States?!"* you say. Well, maybe not yet, but even within the last year, the governor of one state wrote law by executive order that in-home Bible studies are now against the law. While this was with regard to COVID, once government sticks its nose into the tent by restricting faith and worship in some ways, how long until the rest of the camel forces its way into the tent?

There is, however, an even more immediate juxtaposition of fidelity to God, the truth, and what is right against evil and, quite possibly, death. It places the Christian in a literal life or death moral dilemma. That is the decision as to whether or not to make use of the incredible life-saving vaccines available thanks to truly heroic and herculean a-partisan efforts of science, medicine, government, and private enterprise over the last year.

There are now at least THREE vaccines that are life-savagely effective against the COVID virus produced by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. Wide spread vaccination is the only way this virus will be effectively neutralized, and these vaccines seem to be a wonderful (almost miraculous) answer to prayer. There is just one problem; ALL of them used aborted fetal tissue in some way in their development.

According to Newsweek (Mar 22, 2021) Johnson & Johnson use the fetal strand labeled "PER.C6" (cloned from the lung of an elective abortion) "as tiny 'factories' that produced the active ingredient in its vaccine." That means that anyone benefiting from that vaccine would be benefitting from the murder of a pre-born child. The ethical dilemma for the Christian who knows God's

opinion on the sanctity of life created in His image quickly becomes more sharply focused.

"Thou shalt not commit murder." (Exodus 20:13)

If J&J's product presents a moral dilemma for the Christian, Pfizer and Moderna's products are somewhat less clear. While neither of them used aborted fetal tissue to produce their vaccines, they DID use another strand of aborted fetal tissue called "HEK 293" to test the effectiveness of their products. In addition, HEK 293 is derived from a 1973 fetal tissue sample from an abortion that could have been from a miscarriage instead of a willful termination.

The question before Christians, in this case, (not unlike the question I gave my catechumen) is, "How important is your faith in God to you? Are you willing to die for it?"

Because, should the Christian arrive at the conclusion that any participation with a particular vaccine is participating in the evil of abortion ... is that Christian willing to risk his or her own life rather than participate in that evil. And if so, is that Christian even willing to risk the lives of those he or she loves through his or her exposure to them rather than participate in the evil?

I still have more research to do, but, at the end of the day should I see only evil according to Christ and His Word, how can I ask any less of myself than I do of my confirmands?

"Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, **even death**, rather than fall away from it?"

I do, by the Grace of God.

"Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (Daniel 3:15-18)