

# **Announcements**

- ◆ A warm welcome to all our visitors and guests, friends both old and new. We pray that God has blessed your time among us with His Word and Holy Spirit. We cordially invite you to join us this morning for coffee and other refreshments downstairs following the Divine Service; and we ask that you please sign the guest book at the back of the church.
- ◆ Following coffee & refreshments this morning, and for the next few weeks, our Family Bible Class will consider and discuss what the Word of God has to say concerning marriage and family and their significance in the world.
- ◆ Emmaus will be gathered to celebrate the Feast of St. Bartholomew this Wednesday, August the 24th, the Divine Service beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- ◆ Please see Betty Shankle for pre-sale tickets to the PORT-A-PIT-CHICKEN fundraiser that Emmaus will be hosting on September the 17th.
- ◆ The Altar flowers this morning are provided by Lester & Betty Shankle to the glory of God, in celebration of their 57th wedding anniversary.
- ◆ COLLECTIONS FOR 14 AUGUST 2016: \$ 2,365.00  
In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of \$2360 is needed each week.
- ◆ IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS LORD'S DAY:  
(ELDER) Dave Smith; (USHERS) Aaron Seyboldt & Caleb Smith;  
(ACOLYTE) Stefan Horner; (ORGANIST) Deaconess Sandra Rhein;  
(GREETERS) Robert & Herta Johnston.
- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor                      Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

## ***On the Church Year***

*“Of the many elements which helped shape the church’s pattern of worship—the first day of the week, Easter, and the Jewish festivals—one is too often forgotten: the days of the martyrs. Persecution and martyrdom was the most massive test the young church had to face, and as the Roman authorities discovered, the blood of the martyrs really was the seed of the church.*”

*“From the time of the apostles until the time of Constantine, for nearly three centuries, Christians were subject to search and seizure anywhere, though most frequently when they came together for common worship. Ostensibly because they refused to worship the emperor, they were considered disloyal to the state and were therefore hounded from province to province.*

*“Tertullian complains that a favorite trick of the police was to round them up in the midst of their public worship, off in a cave or catacomb or cemetery, sometimes in the dead of night. And yet these faithful believers did not give up ‘the assembling of themselves together,’ despite the threat of destruction, for as they shared a common loaf and a common cup, they were assuring themselves of Christ’s presence. ‘Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.’ (Matt. 18:20)*

*“This kind of loyalty was contagious. By his death a man could make telling witness. Under Roman law, no one could be buried within the city limits, and the bodies of the martyrs therefore rested outside the walls. Each year the faithful gathered at the martyr’s tomb, usually on the anniversary of his death, to recall how great his faith had been—a ‘recollection,’ as they called it.*

*“To the ancient church the day of a Christians’ death and his heavenly birthday was far more important than the day of his earthly birth. This also helps to explain why the early Christians could celebrate Christ’s death and resurrection long before they ever thought of celebrating his birth.*

*“In general, saints and martyrs were celebrated only locally—even famous ones like James (Jerusalem) or Philip (Alexandria) or Peter (Rome). Seldom did the fame of any martyr, even of Peter or Paul, extend more than a hundred miles from where he had been buried.*

*“After the time of the persecutions the body was often moved to a church, or a basilica was built over the grave. But during the first three centuries, although the local ceremonies at the tomb may have been second only to Easter and Pentecost, the martyr was often unheard of even in the neighboring province.*

*“Just as the Christian world had adapted certain of its holy days from the people of Israel (Easter from Passover, and Pentecost from the Feast of Weeks), so it also had to confront the festivals of the pagan world. At first the faithful were so concerned with being distinct and separate from the rest of society that there was little concern for secular holidays, whether Greek, Roman, or Asiatic. Yet as the church gradually opened its doors to the masses and faced the difficult problem of educating them, without printing presses or any system of compulsory schooling, it naturally started to replace the pagan festivals with Christian ones.*

*“Often as not it retained the pagan name but sought to change the character of the original feast, as, for example, when the midwinter festival of the returning sun became the Christian Christmas, the birthday of the Eternal Sun. Pope Gregory I (540-604) openly championed this procedure. First win men’s confidence, not their enmity, and gradually begin to educate them, he argued. Pagan names were not to be discarded; they were to be filled with Christian meaning. This is in fact exactly how we got the English name for Easter, or for that matter, Sun-Day.*

*“Naturally the long centuries of transition from a church of the catacombs to a church of the empire, though already a decaying empire, were confused ones, especially in the West, where the political upheavals were worse than in the East. When being a Christian became not only safe but fashionable, the church developed new interests in elaborate ceremony and ritual. Christian celebration was no longer a secret affair in a barn or catacomb. Now it strove to be distinctive, with new rites, processions, garb, and ceremony, paralleling the glory of the imperial court.*

*“In the mosaics and frescoes Christ was now depicted as the great ‘Pantocrator,’ the Ruler of the universe, Christ the King. The church’s public worship was seen as the earthly counterpart to the glory of the heavenly court. Instead of focusing on the present reality of Christ’s redemptive victory and on our participating in it here and now, the church’s various celebrations were becoming a historical kind of memorial.*

*“In the church of the earlier days Christ had been thought of primarily as present. Every Sunday was a ‘little Easter.’ The normal Sunday service, the Eucharist, was a reliving of Christ’s total redemptive triumph, recalling and making present all that our Lord had done for us. The Christian was made a partaker of Christ’s death and resurrection in Baptism and was renewed and nurtured by it in the week-by-week Holy Communion. There was no need to have a separate Good Friday and Easter, nor Ascension and Pentecost, since all these events were a present reality.*

*“But now the mentality began to change. Now Christianity was big business. Now the pagan masses pouring into the church could not be properly catechized nor be expected to know what the new life in Christ was all about. They were primarily spectators, not participants in the ‘holy mysteries,’ the Sacraments. Therefore there was a new accent in the services on the events of the gospels, on Christian teaching, and on Christian celebration. The idea of historical anniversaries and of a systematic recalling of the fundamentals of the faith was introduced. This can best be seen in the development of the two halves of the church year, one accenting the major events in Christ’s life and the other His role as teacher and example.*

*“Helena, Emperor Constantine’s mother, is a good example of the new outlook. With her gold and her zeal, the faithful at Jerusalem began to seek out those sites closely associated with the life of Christ. . . .”*

**(From THE YEAR OF THE LORD, by Theodore J. Kleinmans, CPH 1967)**

