

# I-K Lutheran

A Newsletter of the  
Indiana-Kentucky Mission Territory

## Cross-Marked and Spirit-Sealed Children of God

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*  
Romans 6:3

In mid-January I experienced a distinct pleasure that I have had only a handful of times over the last six and a half years of ministry as bishop: I preached and presided at the baptism of Xavier Alan Burkholder, the son of two of this synod's pastors, Joshua Burkholder and Carolyn Lesmeister. Over the last half dozen years, I have presided at Communion and preached for countless worship services across and beyond this territory. I have presided at somewhere between 35 and 40 commissionings, consecrations, and ordinations. All of these experiences bring me deep joy as a pastor and bishop. But every time I pour the water and Word over the head of a new sister or brother in Christ, I am brought back again to the very essence of who I am and who we are as baptized and beloved, cross-marked and Spirit-sealed children of God. This is the foundation for all our worship, ministry, and service in the world.

Holy Baptism is not a quaint rite or empty tradition. It's not something we get done as a matter of ecclesial habit or do to fulfill family expectations. In fact, baptism is not something WE do at all. Holy Baptism, like Holy Communion, is nothing less than an act of God. It is a mighty, glorious, life altering act through which God puts us to death and raises us to life. Baptism is Good Friday and Easter morning. In the swirling waters and living Word God puts to death everything in

us that is contrary to God, self-destructive, and hurtful of others and God raises us up to new, abundant, and lasting life. Here's how Martin Luther summed it up in his Large Catechism (which is something like a leader's guide for the Small Catechism):

*To put it simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save... To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death and the devil and to enter into the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever... [Baptism] is simply the slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new person, both of which actions must continue in us our whole life long.*

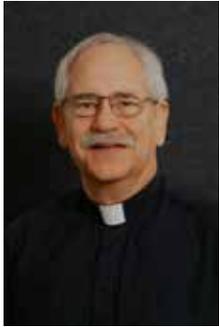
Did you catch that last phrase? Baptism is also not something that is done, recorded on a beautifully calligraphied certificate, and forgotten. This slaying of the old creature and raising up of the new in Christ is the daily work of God in us, "once begun and ever continued." It's "the daily garment which Christians are to wear all the time" (Luther again). In the power of the Spirit who seals us, every day we return to baptism by turning away from the enslaving trio of sin, death and the devil and are forgiven, set free, and raised to the new life of the Holy Trinity. And it's all God's work, God's transforming power at work, in us, God's beloved children.

Preaching for the closing worship of the ELCA Bishops' Academy in early January, Susan Johnson, National Bishop for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, encouraged us bishops and spouses to add a simple exercise to our daily morning routines this year. "Look at yourself in the mirror," she suggested, "trace the mark of the cross on your forehead and say out loud: 'I am baptized. I am a beloved child of God.'" I have found that to be a helpful way to remember the "daily garment" of baptism that I wear all the time. What other ways might we live daily into baptismal grace as individuals, families, and communities of faith?

*For we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.* Romans 6:4

+Bishop Bill Gafkjen

# Farewell & Godspeed



Health concerns and his desire to be back in the parish before retiring have resulted in Rev Rudy Mueller's resignation as Assistant to the Bishop. He will take an interim appointment at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, effective, Feb 1, 2017. Rudy has served faithfully and well as Assistant to the Bishop since 2001. We will miss his sense

of humor, ability to connect a song with almost any conversation topic, careful attention to rostered leaders and congregations in transition, worship planning and leadership, and his energetic partnership and support as a member of the synod's leadership team. I hope you will find ways to say "thank you" to Rudy and to bid him farewell and Godspeed as he transitions to interim congregational ministry over the next couple of weeks.

In light of Rudy's departure, a staffing reconfiguration is underway. We will then begin the interview and discernment processes toward shifting the responsibilities of current staff and adding the staff member(s) needed to continue moving forward in empowering, equipping, and encouraging one another to make Christ known across this territory. For the short term, Pastors Judy Follis and Karen Husby, who are both under synod council call to interim ministry, have agreed to serve as Interim Stewards of Call Process and Interim Ministry. As we transition, there will very likely be delays and glitches in call processes, as well as some of the other ministries that have been Pastor Mueller's responsibility. I invite your prayers and patience as we move into this next new thing that God is doing among and through us.

-Bishop Bill Gafkjen

# Synod Youth Gathering

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 18

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FORMED + REFORMED + TRANSFORMED

The IYC (Indian Youth Coalition) is hosting another synod youth day – this time at Resurrection Lutheran Church (445 E Stop 11 Road Indianapolis, IN 46227). The day is for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders and their Adult Faith Mentors. Representatives from Campus Ministry and Lutheran Outdoor



Ministry will be able to help answer questions about faith and college and summer camp including jobs. There will be opportunities to learn how to lead a Bible study, and develop new or renewing prayer practices. Adults will have an opportunity for their own session with other adults focused on ministry and parenting ideas related to teens. Bishop Bill will also be joining us for conversation and worship. We will also be creating school kits for local and global kids and teachers. As an offering for worship, please bring pencils, pens, tissue boxes, ruled loose leaf paper, erasers, glue sticks. Cost: \$25 for the first 10 participants; \$5 each additional person.

Register at [tinyurl.com/2018youthday](http://tinyurl.com/2018youthday) or by emailing [julie@rlcindy.org](mailto:julie@rlcindy.org)

Overnight housing is available with local congregations – please let us know if needed!



## I-K Synod Assembly

June 1-3, 2017

Northern Kentucky Convention Center, Covington, Kentucky

with Keynote Speakers:



Rabbi Dennis Sasso



Rabbi Sandy Sasso



Beth Lewis



Rev. Rick Rouse