



# ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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## From the Pastor's Desk

*"{Jesus said}, 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'" John 13:34-35*



Soon the sun will bring its warmth and the rain will be warm and we will begin to see signs of new life. The snow has melted away to once again reveal the browns of last fall. But slowly we will see the different shades of green the color of new life awaking. The grass will start to turn a deep green. The tulips will grow and we will see brilliant colors of yellow and red. The tractors will head to the fields to stir the earth to prepare the earth to receive the seeds. Gardeners will follow the farmers' example and stir the dirt and plant seeds. We will wait in hope as we diligently look for rows of corn and soybeans sprouting to life. When the wind blows through the trees, there will be a rustling once again from new leaves that have sprouted on the branches. We will see the newness of life all around us.

Our Lord's Creation will be one of the witnesses of new life. We will also witness newness of life as major stepping stones in life are achieved during the month of May. In the beginning of the month, Lunder confirmands will affirm the vows of their baptism, beginning a deeper commitment in their discipleship to our Lord Jesus and our Heavenly Father. Later on in the month we will witness our Seniors in High School walk across the stage to receive their High School Diplomas, marking a major achievement in their life and opening new doors of new opportunities for new adventures for their lives. We will also have some college students, who will have completed their advanced course of study opening the doors to new careers, new beginnings in their life.

This year as we begin May, due to the lateness of Easter in the calendar year, we will still be singing the "Alleluias of Easter", celebrating our Lord's victory over death. Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James and Joanna go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body only to hear two angels asking them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen. He is not here." Jesus lives. Jesus lives as the Resurrection and the life. Jesus gives us the gift of eternal life, a new life in which we live in God's perfect love. Jesus recreates us and we for the first time will be able to love God and one another with God's perfect love and we will never sin against each other or against the Lord ever again. It is the gift of eternal life.

Jesus also gifts us with newness of life here and now. Now that we have received the gift of grace of Jesus' victory over sin and death, being reconciled with the Father, Jesus calls us to live out his love and grace. Jesus gave us a new commandment, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus gave us this new commandment as he was seated around the table in the Upper Room with his disciples before he faced the cross. Jesus had

left his place of honor, while the disciples were talking about the people being excited about Jesus' teachings and Jesus' success at defeating the various religious authorities' attempts to discredit Jesus before the people. Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of Jesus pouring water into the water basin with a towel wrapped around his waist. The disciples were stunned to silence as Jesus, the Son of God, washed their feet, the job of the lowliest servant in the house. When Jesus has washed all their feet and returns to the table, he teaches the disciples that he has set an example for us to follow; that is, we are to serve one another. Jesus follows this teaching with the new commandment to love one another.

A number of weeks ago, I taught my confirmation class about Martin Luther's teaching of the Freedom of a Christian. One of the famous quotes from Luther's writing on the Freedom of a Christian is as follows. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." The gist of Luther's teaching derives from our Lord's victory on Easter morning defeating sin and death and Jesus' commandment to love one another. Basically Luther writes, that Jesus defeated the power of sin and death to separate us from God's love. Through grace, Jesus has given us the gift of forgiveness, salvation, eternal life and newness of life. Jesus has made us children of God. So as children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of God, we are not subject to anyone. At the same time, by the grace of God's love Jesus recreates us into children of God as a gift, something we could never strive to become, we are free to be children of God. As Children of God, we are to love as we are loved, to forgive as we are forgiven. We are free to follow our Lord's example to serve one another.

Serving one another in Christ's love is fun. It is a gift of love, like a hug. When you give a hug, you receive a hug in return. When you serve someone with Christ's love you give Christ's love to the person. At the same time you receive Christ's love back. Jesus said, when we serve one another, even those considered the least among us, it is as if we are serving him. So when we serve our neighbor, we are serving Jesus. Jesus blesses us with a thank you, the gift of his love. So as we love and serve one another, as we love and serve the neighbor who may not know Jesus, we are giving the gift of Jesus' love. Jesus becomes present to those we serve. Jesus brings life and hope and love to those we serve. We receive newness of life as Jesus in turn blesses us with his love and loving presence. Thus, Jesus gives us his commandment to love one another and his example to serve one another. Jesus gifts you with eternal life and newness of life here and now. So enjoy the new life of spring and the newness of life of serving and loving one another, you Children of God.



*Pastor Randy*

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# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS

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I'm sorry, but I can't help myself – it is SPRNG! And with spring comes two thoughts – time to plant and baseball. So I've dug out an old favorite – the message and the game – they both tug at my heart strings.

## THE LORD'S BASEBALL GAME



Freddy and the Lord stood by to observe a baseball game. The Lord's team was playing Satan's team.

The Lord's team was at bat, the score was tied zero to zero, and it was the bottom of the 9th inning with two outs. They continued to watch as a batter stepped up to the plate named **'Love'**.

**Love** swung at the first pitch and hit a single, because "**Love** never fails."

The next batter was named **Faith**, who also got a single because **Faith** works with **Love**.

The next batter up was named **Godly Wisdom**. Satan wound up and threw the first pitch.

**Godly Wisdom** looked it over and let it pass: Ball one. Three more pitches and **Godly Wisdom** walked because he never swings at what Satan throws.



The bases were now loaded. The Lord then turned to Freddy and told him He was now going to bring in His star player. Up to the plate stepped **Grace**. Freddy said, "He sure doesn't look like much!"

Satan's whole team relaxed when they saw **Grace**.

Thinking he had won the game, Satan wound up and fired his first pitch. To the shock of everyone, **Grace** hit the ball harder than anyone had ever seen! But Satan was not worried; his center fielder let very few get by.

He went up for the ball, but it went right through his glove, hit him on the head and sent him crashing on the ground; the roaring crowds went wild as the ball continued over the fence for a home run!



### **The Lord's team won!**

The Lord then asked Freddy if he knew why **Love, Faith** and **Godly Wisdom** could get on base but couldn't win the game. Freddy answered that he didn't know why.

The Lord explained, "If your **love, faith** and **wisdom** had won the game, you would think you had done it by yourself. **Love, Faith** and **Wisdom** will get you on base but only **My Grace** can get you Home:

*<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not the result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*