

2020 Church Theme: “Joy:Fully Lutheran”

The New Year of 2020 began at 12 midnight as the calendar turned from December 31 to January 1. It didn't wait for you to make up your mind whether you were ready for a new year or still wanted the old year to last a little longer. Isaac Watts, hymnist extraordinaire, in his beautiful hymn, “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” penned: “Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Soon bears us all away; We fly forgotten as a dream Dies at the opening day” (LSB 733:5).

Although time rolls on, we are never overlooked or forgotten by God. If His eye is on the sparrow, then, we're not just a face in the crowd or a number on a page. The Bible says that He has inscribed our names on the palm of His hand and we are personally known to Him.

In Isaiah, the Lord promises: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine” (Is 43:1). Indeed, He calls us to faith by the gospel and invites us to live confidently and safely under Christ's guidance and mercies throughout the length of our earth journey. He is nearby and stays close to us and goes with us into all our tomorrows.

Furthermore, Christ makes us joyful Easter Christians, even in the midst of earthly losses and sorrows. In Christ, we are thoroughly equipped due to His life-giving Word, which helps us make sense out of all the circumstances of life and enter AD 2020 confidently with Him by our side.

The phrase, “Joy:Fully Lutheran,” you might recall, was the LCMS Convention Theme in Tampa, Florida in July 2019. We have chosen those very words for our life together over the next 12 months and as our 2020 Church Theme.

With the theme, “Joy:Fully Lutheran,” we wish to encourage each other to meet every circumstance with joy and consider it with a fully Lutheran point of view. That is, one that takes the Word of God seriously and aptly applies Law and Gospel to the challenges that we will certainly meet in the coming days of 2020.

It is taught among us, “Joyfully, we receive God's Word and Sacraments as His means through which He gives to His children His love and mercy in Christ. We live joyfully, because though we cannot believe by our own reason or strength, the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith in Christ Jesus. We live joyfully, because the Father invites us to pray to Him as children talk to their dear father. We live joyfully, because Jesus has done it all for us.”

St. Paul also adds, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, ESV).

As we joyfully critique matters of life and death in AD 2020 as well as look at mundane things in our lives, such as the music we listen to and the movies we watch through the lens of His Word, we discover that a Christ-centered focus of life, centered in His Word and Sacraments, gives light and wisdom to us as well as to our neighbors. It brings real Easter joy!

God's love revealed in Christ's cross and resurrection, of course, is the reason for our Easter joy. Grace, faith, forgiveness, suffering, learning, repenting, washing (Baptism), eating, drinking (Communion), fellowship (worship), mercy, gentleness (strength under control)—all joyous gifts in Jesus Christ—give a new emphasis for our life together and the mission of St. Paul, Pipestone.

Have a blessed new year, live it boldly in the Lord Jesus, and be “Joy:Fully Lutheran!”

– Pastor Cliff Adair

JOY:FULLY
LUTHERAN
1 THESS 5:16-24