



**“A Future with Hope: Loved”  
HONOR OUR PAST  
PLAN OUR FUTURE**

Sixth Sunday of Easter  
Saturday & Sunday, May 5–6, 2018  
All Services  
Pastor Ronald T. Glusenkamp  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

I bring you greetings from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. She is at the Minneapolis Area Synod this weekend and she sends her prayers and blessings to you.

I know that today is Choir Appreciation Sunday. This is what Martin Luther said about music. First of all, Luther used to take tunes that he heard in places where liquid bread was served. You know what I'm talking about. He would take those tunes and write Christian verses to those tunes. And when people complained about that, he said, "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?"

He had a great love of music in addition to his focus on justification by grace through faith that we heard in the lesson from First John. He was a lover and renewer of church music.

This is what he wrote about music. "A person who does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper, indeed, and does not deserve to be even called a human being. He or she should be permitted to hear nothing but the

braying of donkeys and the grunting of pigs." Of course, that sounds a lot more spiritual in German. And I don't think they have a Hallmark card for that.

My mission here this today is to say "thank you for letting your lights shine." I also want to inform, inspire and invite you to deeper levels of engagement and involvement especially in "**Honor our Past-Plan our Future- to Worship, Connect and Serve.**"

But first things first. I love this series you have as the sermons and preachers have focused attention and time on A Future with Hope- WITNESS, UNITED, BOLD and today LOVED. As the great theologian Yogi Berra once said, "you can observe a lot just by watching." I have observed "love" here in this holy place in your community. I love that you have a place in space for kids. How you are concerned about the seniors in your congregation and in your community. How you praise God with the gift of glorious music, both vocal and instrumental. How you are reaching out in the community, but also being focused on faith formation in the congregation.

I'm a bread baker and Father Dom in his book, *Bake and Be Blessed: Bread Baking as a Metaphor for Spiritual Growth* writes:

*"Jesus didn't come to take away suffering but to give it meaning. By becoming a fully human person, he united his suffering to that of the entire human race, so that when we inevitably experience pain and betrayal, we are united to God even more closely. Thus, Christ's suffering was redemptive.*

*In Jesus, suffering becomes inextricably linked to love. Love without sacrifice is merely affection, and he chose for himself a greater destiny.*

Now as I read these next words from Father Dom, I want you to look up here at the cross.

Father Dom writes:

*When Jesus was lifted up on the cross he gained a new perspective, and from that height he could see every person in history. He looked upon the vast sea of faces— generation upon generation of sinful, suffering, hopeful humanity—and realized that he loved them enough to die for them. And one of the faces he saw was yours."*

"And one of the faces he saw was yours."

You are showing your faces this holy day at Trinity Lutheran Church. And you show the face of Christ when you give to mission support of the Lower Susquehanna Synod. In 2017, you gave more than \$70,000 for the work and ministry of your synod. And in 2017, you also gave double that amount, more than \$140,000, in benevolences local, domestic, and international. You have to ELCA WORLD HUNGER, LDR, Missionary Support of the Troesters, support of Companion Synod, Konde Diocese in Tanzania, Fund for Leaders, United Seminary and so much more.

This capital campaign that you are embarking on, **Honor our Past, Plan our Future**, is really all about being loved. As the Director of the **Campaign for the ELCA - Always Being Made New** – which is a beneficiary of your generosity – I say "thank you." There are key four priorities in the Always Being Made New Campaign: Congregations, new

and renewing and people living with disabilities; response to hunger and poverty all around the world; ELCA World Hunger, Global Church sponsorship; Young Adults in Global Mission; scholarships, and then Leadership development for seminarians.

I been praying on what I could/should say to you this weekend and I want to draw the connection about being loved with making a promise and a commitment. Sometimes that takes place in the form of a wedding or marriage ceremony. One time as I was preaching a wedding sermon, my son Nate when he was just six years old said in a loud voice, so all could hear, "let's get to the kiss, so we can get to the cake." Which is pretty good theology when you think about it. Let's get to the sweet stuff!

We hear these words:

In the presence of God and this community,  
I, name, take you, name, to be my wife/husband;  
to have and to hold from this day forward,  
in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

That used to be called "the exchange of troths" an old English word for "truth." When people exchanged those troths, they would say "I plight thee my troth." And literally, figuratively, spiritually, and emotionally, they were promising to wrap each other up in love.

There are all sorts of reasons to give to a capital campaign. Some of you are thinking, "I'm going give because it's a good cause." Some of you are going to give because you say, "It honor's the past." Some of you are going say "It's about the future. Some of you are going to give to it because "I like the fact that kids, families, young people are engaged in this." May I suggest and underscore that all of the reasons to give are about being loved in the way that we've been loved by God.

In my first congregation, I was an associate pastor. And I know that next Sunday is a big Sunday for you as you vote to extend a call to another pastor. In this parish that I served in Wichita, Kansas, we were about three blocks away from a hospital. One day we got a phone call that there was a 90-year-old woman in the ICU unit. Her name was Helen. She thought that she was going to die, and she had never been baptized. So, she wanted to be baptized.

So, my pastor colleague and I went over there and gave her a dehydrated version of confirmation class that took about 20 minutes. We told her that when you are baptized you would have all the rights and promises and privileges of being a child of the heavenly Father.

And so, we baptized her in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, which is the best designer label that any of us is ever going to wear. We marked the cross of Christ on her forehead and prayed for the gifts of the spirit – the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in God's presence both now and forever. We gave

her little stole and said "Put on this robe, for in baptism Christ calls you to his great feast. However, we did not light the baptismal candle because of the oxygen and we didn't want to blow the place up. So, we baptized her, and it was all good and we went back to church.

The next day when we went into the office we found five of those "While you were out" notices. They were calls from the nursing staff which said that Helen, our newest member was very mad at us. I turned to my colleague and said, "is that how it goes? She's only been a member for 24-hours and already she's complaining about the pastors."

So, we went to the hospital. We went to the ICU. Helen was sitting up in bed, she looks twenty years younger, she had a new hairdo, and it looked like the baptism really took. She said, "I'm really mad at you guys." We said, "Why are you mad at us?" She said, "I'm really mad at you guys. Didn't you tell me yesterday that when I got baptized I had all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of being a child of the Heavenly Father." We said, "Yes." "And I'm a full member of God's family?" We said, "Yes."

She said, "I don't know as much as you guys, I've never been to seminary, and I've only been a Christian for 24-hours. But I do know this. Real church members get offering envelopes. And you guys didn't give me any offering envelopes yesterday."

I was young, I was foolish, and I said, "Well, that's because we thought you were going to die. I speak the truth in love. We didn't have you fill out a Time and Talent sheet because we it didn't look like you had much time. It didn't appear you had many talents to bring to the table." With that the senior pastor gave me a look that only senior pastors can give to younger pastors and I knew that I had to go back to the church to get a box of envelopes. I went and got the envelopes and brought them back to Helen. Helen taught me something very important that day. I had assumed, I had presumed who could, who should, who would make a gift. Helen taught this young pastor that that was between her and her creator.

Helen taught me then to never be shy to remind people, the children of God, that we have a responsibility, we have an opportunity to give, to make a pledge, a commitment in response to the love and the grace that's been shown to us.

Isn't that great! It comes down to the fact we are loved. And since we are loved there is a natural desire to respond. One way, as Pastor Guy said last week is to bear good fruit. Another way as Bishop Dunlop said is to love being united. Another way is as Pastor Bob said in the first week is to give financially.

Sometime people in campaigns say, "give till it hurts." But, other people say, "give until it feels good." I invite and encourage you to invest in this amazing plan your leadership has put together. It is concise. It is coherent. It represents the best thinking and envisioning that exists today. It is Spirit led.

So, I've taken the liberty to change/morph those wedding vows to giving vows: In the presence of God and this community,

I, name, take you, Trinity Lutheran Church - Camp Hill, Pennsylvania to be my congregation;

to have and to hold from this day forward,  
in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

I pray that these vows will percolate in you these next few weeks as you think about how you are going to be engaged in *Honor our Past, Plan our Future* in order to Worship, Connect, Serve.

And as Nate so prophetically spoke, "let's get to the kiss, so we can get to the cake." So, in the next few weeks you will have the opportunity to make your vow, your commitment. On behalf of the Campaign for the ELCA, all the people, families, children, communities that will be changed and transformed by your generosity, I say thank you and God bless you for knowing, believing and acting upon the Good News that you/we are LOVED!

Amen

Copyright © 2018, Ronald T. Glusenkamp. All rights reserved.



[www.trinitycamphill.org](http://www.trinitycamphill.org)