



**Mission of the Cross  
Lutheran Church-  
LCMS**

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Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) serving people in the Brainerd Lakes area of Minnesota. We are a confessional and liturgical congregation called, gathered, and strengthened by Christ's Word and Sacraments. We are Biblical in doctrine and observe the historic liturgy of the Western Church which is notable for its dignity and reverence.



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### Paschal Candle

In thanksgiving to God for 35 years of His grace at Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church we have made plans to purchase several items that will adorn our sanctuary for years to come. This is a joyful time for our parish to not only thank God for the gifts he has given us in this place, but also to remember those who have come before us here. Many are with the Lord, but the building and everything that we now enjoy as a congregation were given, built, and prepared by them. Likewise, the items that we are purchasing this year will not only be enjoyed by us but, Lord-willing, by faithful Lutherans who come after us.

In the coming months articles in the newsletter will highlight these new additions and their use in our parish. The first of those articles is about the Paschal candle. It will not be ready for some time, but it is fitting for us to consider it now on account of its use and connection to the season of Easter also called Eastertide.

In many of our churches there is some confusion about the differences between the Christ candle and Paschal candle. The Christ candle is much more common in LCMS congregations than the Paschal candle, even though the Christ candle is a much newer innovation. The Christ candle is the short and stout white candle that is sometimes included in the center of an Advent wreath. Traditionally, wreaths didn't have a Christ candle since the wreath was used to mark the time of Advent and once Advent concluded so did the use of the wreath.

In some congregations where they have a Christ candle, but not a Paschal candle they use the Christ candle as they would a Paschal candle. This isn't ideal, but it certainly isn't sinful. In fact, this is what we will continue to do for the time being until our Paschal candle arrives.

The Paschal candle is a very tall thin candle used at the beginning of the Easter Vigil. At the beginning of the liturgy the pastor and congregation gather near a new fire. There the pastor traces the cross on the Paschal Candle saying, "Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever, the beginning of and the ending." Next, the pastor continues by tracing the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet

on the candle saying, “the Alpha and the Omega.” Then the pastor traces the year on the candle saying, “His are time and eternity; His are the glory and dominion, now and forever.” The pastor then puts five nails into the candle saying, “By His wounds we have healing both now and forever. Amen.” Finally, the Paschal candle is lit and the pastor says, “May the light of Christ, who is risen in glory from the dead, scatter all the darkness of our hearts and minds.” After a brief prayer everyone lights their candles from the Paschal candle and follows it into the darkened sanctuary with the procession stopping three times with a pastor chanting, “The light of Christ” and the congregation responding, “Thanks be to God.”

What is the meaning of the Paschal candle? In order to more fully appreciate the answer, we need to consider the liturgical context of the Easter Vigil which is summarized by the proper preface:

“It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places, with all our heart and mind and voice, praise You, O Lord, Holy Father, almighty everlasting God, and Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. For He is the very Paschal Lamb who offered Himself for the sin of the world, who has cleansed us by the shedding of His precious blood. This is the night when You brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt and led them through the Red Sea on dry ground. This is the night when all who believe in Christ are delivered from bondage to sin and are restored to life and immortality. This is the night when Christ, the Life, arose from the dead. The seal of the grave is broken and the morning of the new creation breaks forth out of night. Oh, how wonderful and beyond all telling is Your mercy toward us, O God, that to redeem a slave You gave Your Son. How holy is this night when all wickedness is put to flight and sin is washed away. How holy is this night when innocence is restored to the fallen and joy is given to those downcast. How blessed is the night when man is reconciled to God in Christ. Holy Father, accept now the evening sacrifices of our thanksgiving and praise. Let Christ, the true light and morning star, shine in our hearts, He who gives light to all creation, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”

In the Old Testament the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. The Lord sent Moses to bring them up from Egypt. Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go even after many signs, wonders, and plagues. After nine plagues the Lord commanded the Israelites to slaughter an unblemished lamb and spread its blood on their door. Then God’s judgment against sin and the angel of death passed over them, but everyone else in the land of Egypt suffered the tenth plague the Lord sent—the death of the firstborn.

The reason the Israelites and their firstborn didn’t die for their sins is because the Lord would send his only-begotten Son to die in their place, as was highlighted in the prayer above. The blood on the wood of their doors foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ and his blood on the wood of the cross. Thus, the Easter Vigil boldly proclaims that Jesus is that Son, our very Paschal Lamb. It makes a connection between the Old

Testament Passover and our Lord's suffering and death to spare us the wrath, death, and hell we deserve.

Once the Egyptians awoke to the death of their firstborn Pharaoh finally let the Israelites leave before changing his mind and chasing after them. You can read about it in Exodus 13:17-14 :29. The Lord led his people out of Egypt by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He saved them by taking them through the Red Sea on dry ground, but drowned their enemies who pursued them in the sea. The same pillars of cloud and fire, the presence of God, guided the Israelites through the wilderness into the Promised Land.

This is the necessary background to understand the significance of the Paschal candle. It is a new pillar of fire that symbolizes the resurrected Christ. It leads us through the dark wilderness of this world away from sin and the kingdom of death to the kingdom of God and the promised land of heaven. The pillar of fire guides us into the Church where we receive the benefits of Christ's death for us and rejoice in his resurrection.

Traditionally, the Paschal candle is placed near the gospel horn of the altar (the front left corner from the congregation's perspective). It is lit from the Easter Vigil until the celebration of our Lord's ascension as we remember His resurrection and glorious victory over sin, death, and the grave for us. A more recent innovation is to also light the Paschal candle for every baptism and funeral. This may detract in some ways from the Paschal candle's original purpose and use as a symbol of the resurrected Christ during Eastertide, but this may be tolerable considering what it may teach us about our union with the resurrected Christ in baptism and the hope of our very own resurrection and ascension with Him to heaven, just as we read in Romans 6:3-5,

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

At baptisms, a baptismal candle may be lit from the Paschal candle and given to the baptized to remind them that they have been joined to Christ who called them out darkness into his marvelous light which can't be overcome. It shows forth that while we have no life or light of our own that we are enlivened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit who teaches us to trust in Christ for our salvation. When we have taken our final breath and it appears that our lights have gone out forever the Church proclaims the truth of God. The words of Romans 6 are used in the funeral liturgy as a remembrance of baptism and the promise of the resurrection of the body from the dead. When our candles have out, the Paschal candle may be lit as powerful reminder that our life comes from Christ and his light is shining brightly and so too on the last day the bodies of all Christians will rise, be glorified, and shine forever.

## Schedule of Divine Liturgies for April

April 7	Quasimodogeniti (Easter 2)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
April 14	Misericordias Domini (Easter 3)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
April 21	Jubilate (Easter 4)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
April 28	Cantate (Easter 5)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service

## Birthdays, Baptisms, Confirmations, and Anniversaries

April 1	Jeff Tobias	Baptism
April 2	Darrel Palmer	Birthday
April 8	Tiffany Bosaaen	Confirmation
April 8	Garry McCreary	Birthday
April 10	Ruth Traphagan	Birthday
April 11	Bonnie Schlapkohl	Baptism
April 11	Bonnie Schlapkohl	Confirmation
April 11	Sandra Tiegen	Baptism
April 14	Judy Hansen	Birthday
April 14	Al Schewe	Confirmation
April 14	Al and Barb Schewe	Anniversary
April 14	Arlene Shogren	Confirmation
April 21	Abe Blake	Baptism
April 21`	Eden Blake	Baptism
April 21	William Blake	Baptism
April 22	William Traphagan	Confirmation
April 23	Buzz Fritch	Baptism
April 23	Carol Palmer	Confirmation
April 24	Ruth Traphagan	Baptism
April 25	Darla Panabaker	Confirmation
April 28	Ruth Harmdierks	Confirmation

## 35 for 35 Campaign

Our congregation has decided to repair the parking lot, and purchase new paraments, vestments, banners, communion vessels, a paschal candle, and processional crucifix ahead of the celebration of the 35th anniversary of Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church in September. Due to your generosity we have already raised over \$30,000 toward our goal of \$35,000.