



**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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Agnus Dei Banners

The 35th anniversary of Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church is swiftly approaching. The items our parish purchased are arriving and preparations are being made for them to be put into the service of the Lord soon. The latest arrival is the beautiful liturgical banners from Ad Crucem.

Banners have been used from antiquity to modern times. They have often been used in procession and have symbols on them that identify those who follow the banner with a particular nation, military group, or church. Banners are also a symbol of strength and serve as a rallying point as we see in Numbers 2:2; Psalm 60:4; Isaiah 5:26, 11:10, 13:2; Jeremiah 4:21, etc.

A particularly good example of the idea behind banners is found in Exodus 17:15 where Moses built an altar and called it, "The Lord is my banner." The Lord had just promised Moses that he would wipe out even the memory of the Amalekites from the earth. The Israelites were frequently defeated by the pagans, except when the Lord went before them and fought for them. Then, even when greatly outnumbered, they never lost. In saying "The Lord is my banner," Moses is saying that the Lord is his strength, that the Lord fights for, protects, and gives him the victory over all his enemies.

Now with that brief introduction to banners in the Bible, let us consider the symbols on our new banners. In each color of the church year, we have a matching set of two banners. Each banner contains the chief symbol of Christendom, the holy cross. At the center of the cross there are two similar but distinct Agnus Dei symbols: the Lamb Slain and the Lamb Victorious. You may recognize the term, Agnus Dei, from the communion liturgy of the Divine Service. It is Latin and means "Lamb of God."

We could sing the Agnus Dei at any point, and it would be an excellent Christian hymn and point our hearts to Christ. Its particular use at the beginning of the distribution of the holy communion confesses Christ and teaches us what we are receiving in the Lord's Supper in, with, and under bread and wine—the very body and blood of him who was crucified to take away our sins. These banners will add a visual representation of the same thing. This seems fitting for us at Mission of the Cross since we love our Lord and celebrate the Lord's Supper with great zeal and gladness every Sunday.

We have been learning more about the title Lamb of God in Bible class as we study the Old Testament feasts and learn how they are not only fulfilled by Christ but make a significant contribution to our understanding of the Lord's Supper. In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament that God gave through Moses, he commanded various sacrifices, most often with a lamb. This helps us begin to understand what St. John declared concerning our Lord, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The term, "behold," doesn't simply mean to look at something. It means to look at it, but to consider it beyond what the physical eye can see. Everyone could see the man Jesus with their eyes, but that is all they could see. St. John implores them to not only see Jesus, but also believe that he is the promised Christ to take away the sins of the world by his own blood. He wants them to consider Jesus, especially with regard to the Old Testament sacrifices that required a lamb.

All of the lambs offered in the Old Testament were provided by men, but the Lamb St. John testifies of is a man. He was provided by God and is God (John 1:1). This is precisely what was foreshadowed by Abraham's sacrifice of his only son, Isaac. Abraham confessed to Isaac that God would provide a lamb and even called the place of the sacrifice, "The Lord will provide" (Genesis 22:8, 14). Indeed, he has, for on the same mountain God the Father sacrificed his only Son on the cross to save us from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Every sacrifice in the Old Testament pointed to Christ. The most prominent sacrifice of lambs within the sacrificial system the Lord gave to Moses was the Passover Lamb. The Lord instituted the Passover in Exodus 12. He instructed his people to sacrifice a lamb, spread its blood on the door posts of their homes, and eat its flesh. Then when the angel of death came to kill the first born in all of Egypt, he saw the blood on their doors, and God's judgement passed over them. Then the Lord brought them up out of Egypt through the Red Sea, guided them through the wilderness, and finally led them into the Promised Land.

The blood of God's Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, was poured out on the wood of the cross, so that we who live under it are spared from eternal death and hell. Thus St. Paul writes, "For indeed Christ, our Passover lamb, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). We too, have passed through the waters of salvation, being baptized into Christ. We also are led by God through the wilderness of this world until we reach the promised land of heaven and fully enjoy eternal life with our Savior.

The Lamb of God is a very rich and powerful image of our Lord and his salvation throughout the Scriptures, but we have only begun to scratch the surface. It is very fitting then that these banners with the Lamb Slain and the Lamb Victorious hang next to the crucifix, so that all may behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world by his own blood. These two symbols represent not only the Lamb of God but are also symbols of his death and resurrection inviting us to contemplate these events in a new way.

The Lamb Slain not only reminds us of our Lord's crucifixion, but it also portrays blood flowing from his side into a chalice. This beautifully ties together our Lord's death with the Holy Communion. It is a clear testimony that from the chalice we receive nothing less than the blood of he who died to save us and said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

The Lamb Victorious is a symbol of our Lord who rose on the third day in victory over our enemies sin, death, and the devil. However, the symbol has a very particular eschatological (end times) and eternal aspect to it as it a common image throughout the Book of Revelation, especially 5:5-14,

And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

It is notable that Lamb Victorious holds a banner. It signifies triumph and strength. This is a great comfort for all Christians who in this life must bear their cross and suffer the effects of sin in their body as well as the hatred of the world. It won't always be this way. In eternity, we will not suffer, and our bodies will be glorified. We take heart, because the victory has already been won by Christ on the cross and he graciously gives this victory to us (1 Corinthians 15:57). Therefore, we constantly rally here to receive the Lord's Supper together, because as it was for Moses, so it is for us that the Lord is our banner. Here we are publicly identified with Christ as the world rages all around us, but the Lord is our strength and fortress. He fights for us just like he did for the Israelites in the Old Testament, and in Christ we will never lose.

Schedule of Divine Liturgies for June

July 7	Sixth Sunday after Trinity	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
July 14	Seventh Sunday after Trinity	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
July 21	Eighth Sunday after Trinity	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
July 28	Ninth Sunday after Trinity	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service

Birthdays, Baptisms, Confirmations, and Anniversaries

July 3	Carol Palmer	Birthday
July 4	Al Schewe	Baptism
July 7	Brooklyn Berg	Birthday
July 8	Louise Burley	Confirmation
July 11	Jerome Christiansen	Birthday
July 19	Diana Ulring	Baptism
July 20	Darrel Palmer	Baptism
July 21	Darrel and Carol Palmer	Anniversary
July 22	Erin Diedrich	Birthday
July 25	Paula Juracek	Baptism
July 29	Richard Radintz	Birthday
July 29	Kevin Brand	Baptism
July 30	Mark and Diana Jabs	Anniversary

VBS

Save the dates for August 19-22nd. The theme will be Holy Baptism. Please invite any families you know and let Pastor know the names and ages of any children that plan to attend. If you are able to help please let Colleen know and she will be in touch soon.

35th Anniversary of Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church

Please mark your calendars for Saturday, September 28th. The Divine Service at 10:30 a.m. will celebrate 35 years of God graciously giving us his Word and Sacraments at Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church. Rev. Rolf Preus will preach. Greetings from Rev. Brady Finnern, our district president, and lunch will follow. Please RSVP for lunch by September 11th by emailing Carol at motc@crosslake.net or calling 218-692-4228. If there is someone from outside the congregation that should be invited, please give Pastor their name and address and we will get a formal invitation out to them along with our former pastors, visitors, and friends.