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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER - FEBRUARY 2008

### PREACH REPENTANCE AND THE REMISSION OF SINS



We now enter into the most solemn part of the church year, the season of Lent. The Lenten season begins with the solemn day known as "Ash Wednesday." There is a custom in some churches that on this day the pastor would apply ashes to the foreheads of the worshipers and say, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Ever since Old Testament times, ashes have been a symbol of repentance. In the medieval church, the forty days of Lent (excluding Sundays) were focused on special acts of repentance and self-denial (giving up something for Lent).

Our ministries do not emphasize the outward customs and the outward rituals of Lent. Instead most of our churches have six special mid-week Lenten services which focus our attention on Jesus and His cross. The Lenten season culminates in the special week we know as "Holy Week." It is a good custom to read the entire Passion history during the season of Lent. We also should not overlook the wealth of hymns which emphasize so clearly the cross and the suffering and death of God's Son. As I have grown older, I have more and more appreciated the opportunity for quiet meditation and solemn worship during these midweek services in the midst of the "busyness" of the world we live in. Sometimes pastors become overwhelmed by the extra sermons this season calls for.

Epiphany and Lent emphasize the serving attitude of Jesus. Epiphany paved the way by reminding us in no uncertain terms that this Jesus of Nazareth existed in the form of God. Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing that had to be seized because Jesus already was equal with God from eternity (John 1:1-3). Keep in mind who it was that was betrayed, arrested, horribly mistreated, rejected and found guilty. This Jesus willingly walked the way of the cross for us perfectly submitting to the will of His Father.

Jesus is Isaiah's "Suffering Servant." Paul reminds us, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. } And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:3-8).

It is a privilege to proclaim the Gospel of Christ crucified during this solemn season of the church year. As pastors we need to repent of those sins that especially beset us in our ministries. These sins include laziness or apathy in the exercise of our high calling, pride in our own abilities, a divisive attitude in dealings with each other in the CLC, depression over the external results of our ministries, and disappointments caused by our members. If allowed to fester in our hearts, these sins can suck the air right out of our ministries. Before we preach repentance to our members, we need to personally repent to God for our many personal sins. We also need the Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins to strengthen our feeble knees and lift up our drooping hands this Lenten season. Our message needs to center on the cross and the miracle of God's redemption during Lent and each day of our lives..

May Jesus bless your Gospel ministries,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Schierenbeck".

John Schierenbeck

NOTES:

CBP estimates need to be sent into Pastor Michael Roehl immediately.

The CC meets April 2-3 in Eau Claire, WI. We ask for your prayers as many important decisions need to be made this upcoming Convention.