

Faith & Religion

ON FAITH

Pastor Matt Kohl
Special to the Pine Knot News

When I was growing up, one of my favorite fall traditions was to get together with my family and friends at my grandparents' house for our weekly gatherings around their backyard fireplace. These get-togethers were joyous occasions that included hours of conversations, storytelling and laughter. But perhaps my favorite memory of bonfire times at my grandparents' house was all of the food. Large dinners when we got there and large snacks afterwards around the fire: s'mores, hot dogs and fire-popped popcorn flavored our laughter and conversation-filled evenings.

As we find ourselves coming out of the Labor Day Weekend, many of us have had weekends like this: time with friends and family, eating great food, and having great conversations.

For many, fall is all about time together with the people we love around the gift of food. Many churches and organizations will spend the fall hosting dinners and social functions as we gather around food and enjoy one another's company. Many of us will take these opportunities to spend time laughing together, sharing stories, cheering each other up, and getting to know one another better. Whatever the function may be — a church gathering, a community function, a fundraiser — most of us will leave feeling glad that we attended.

We can even take it a step further: for the Christian, food gatherings are Biblical. Now that may sound funny to you but it's true. As the nation of Israel anticipated the coming of God's Passover angel and their coming release from captivity, what did



Matt Kohl is the new pastor at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cloquet.

they do? They ate. When God delivered Israel into the promised land, do you know what they did? They ate. In fact, seven times a year the people of Israel would come together and celebrate the God who continued to walk with them always, through good times and trying times. These celebrations were designed so that every person from every tribe could participate as all of Israel was unified in celebration. And of course, they all ate.

The Old Testament isn't the only place where you find stories of God's people coming together around food. The four Gospels are littered with accounts of Jesus teaching time and time again, while He is at a table and eating. In fact, not only does Jesus spend significant time teaching while eating, many people seek out healing from the Son of God while Jesus and others are gathered around a table eating. Of course, perhaps the greatest example of food fellowship in the Bible is Jesus celebrating the Passover just hours before His own arrest and eventual execution. While many Christians today may disagree over just exactly what Jesus' Last Supper is for us today, it's clear that Jesus desired for this meal to unify repentant sinners in the good news of the forgiveness that His death and resurrection have achieved for all of us.

But the food stories don't end in the Gospels.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven, early Christian worship was very much defined by food fellowship and receiving the Lord's Supper together. And yet, unity wasn't always celebrated in these meals. In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul has to address a controversy where many people are showing up to church early and eating all of the food before the Christians, showing up late, can have a chance to eat any. In this controversy God makes it clear our eating together should unify us, not divide us.

Throughout my four years of ministry in the community, I have often marveled over the sense of community that we share. Whether we all realize it or not, we have a sense of identity and continue to work together to address needs and the needs of others. It is no secret that there will always be things that divide us and often do. But God desires for us to gather together in unity as we are fed by Him.

Physical food is not the only source of nourishment. God also feeds us through His Word. The bible is the means by which He proclaims forgiveness to the sin-sick soul and conforms into a new image. We could be content to spend our time reading this on our own at home, but God desires for more than that. He desires for His Word to unify His Church and bring us together.

CHURCH SERVICES

Our Savior's Lutheran Church
615 12th St., Cloquet
218-879-1535
email@oursaviorscloquet.org
oursaviorscloquet.org
Traditional Service 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Contemporary Service 10:45 a.m.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
1705 Wilson Ave., Cloquet
218-879-5956
stpaulscloquet@gmail.com
stpaulscloquet.org
Sunday service 9 a.m.
Coffee Fellowship 10:15 a.m.
Sunday School 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Family Night 6:30 p.m.

Northwood United Methodist Church
62 W. Hwy 61, Esko
Pastor Brian Cornell
briancornell@msn.com
Sunday service 9 a.m.
Fellowship 10:00-10:30 a.m.
Sunday School 10:30 a.m.
www.northwoodesko.com

Presbyterian Church of Cloquet
47 4th St., Cloquet • 218-879-8813
Pastor Gary Terrio
www.cloquetpresb.com
cloquetpresb@gmail.com
Sunday service 11 a.m.
Wednesday Bible study 9:30 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Church
1000 Washington Ave., Cloquet
Pastor CJ Boettcher
zlutheranchurch@msn.com
zioncloquet.org
218-879-4647
Sunday service 9:30 a.m.

Journey Christian Church
1400 Washington Ave., Cloquet
218-879-6765
info@cloquetchurch.com
www.cloquetchurch.com
Weekend services:
Saturday 6 p.m.
Sunday 8:30 & 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School for all ages 9:45-10:30
Wednesday Family Night 6:30 p.m.

St. Matthews Lutheran Church
4 Elizabeth Ave., Esko
218-879-3510
www.stmatthewsesko.org
Jeff Walther, Pastor
Tom Brinkley, Associate Pastor
Sunday Worship 8 & 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Study 9:15 a.m.
Totally Terrific Tuesdays 3-5 p.m.
Youth Group Thursdays 6-8 p.m.
Experience Recovery Thursdays 6 p.m.

River of Life Church
1002 Carlton Ave., Cloquet
218-391-6518
Pastor John Napoli
rolcloquet.com
rolcloquet@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/rolcloquet
Sunday service 10 a.m.

Queen of Peace Catholic Church
102 4th St., Cloquet • 218-879-6793
Father Justin Fish
Services:
Monday through Friday 8:10 a.m.
Saturday 5 p.m. • Sunday 9:30 a.m.
Sunday 8 a.m. at Holy Family
www.qopparish.com

Bethel Lutheran Church
1012 29th St., Scanlon
Pastor Doug Niesen, 218-879-3728
Church office, 218-879-9723
Sunday service 9-10 a.m.
Sunday School during church
Coffee and fellowship after church
Wednesdays: Quilting 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
515 Skyline Blvd, Cloquet
218-879-3380
ourredeemer@orlcp.com
http://www.orlcp.com/home
Sunday services:
Traditional service 9 a.m.
Fellowship 10 a.m.
Sunday School 10:30 a.m.
Contemporary service 10:30 a.m.