

The Assistant Pastor

November, 1942

Family Devotions

It is a sad fact that family devotions are being neglected in our day. Among those that are guilty there may be some who hesitate to take them up because they do not know just how to go about it, and are afraid they might not do it right.

Do not be afraid of that.

It is true, it was easier in former years for the young people to begin family devotions when they started housekeeping of their own. They had for years seen how their parents went about it, they had for years joined in their devotions. For them it was a simple thing to continue the custom in their own home.

Now things are somewhat different. Many a young husband or wife, and many a father or mother, may never have had the opportunity to take part in any family devotion. They naturally will feel a little awkward when they try to introduce the custom.

But again, do not be afraid to start.

You are children of God through Christ. Your heavenly Father loves you and will be pleased with you when you come to Him in your family devotions, although these, when measured by human standards, may not be of the most artistic form. Just start, and before long you will find a form that best suits your home.

The form, after all, is not the important thing. The important thing is that you and your family withdraw from earthly things to be with your God and Savior; or better, to draw your God and Savior into all the little affairs of your earthly life. The important thing is to nourish and strengthen your soul and the souls of your household by communing with God through the meditation of His Gospel.

So, just start.

Some one may ask, "What material should we use?"

There are many devotional books on the market, some large and expensive, some small and inexpensive. But in the opinion of the undersigned, these, fine though they may be in themselves, do not offer the best material.

God gave us His Word, the Bible. And He exhorts us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3, 16). The danger of devotional books ever is that we permit them to crowd out the Bible itself. We feed our soul on the thoughts and meditations of some fellow-Christian, instead of going directly to the Word of Life which God Himself has given us and in which He is speaking to us personally.

The Assistant Pastor

Published and edited by the pastor of the Jerico and Saude Lutheran churches, affiliated with the Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference.

Church Directory

N. S. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE CONGREGATION

Trustees: Carl Miller, Ned Borlaug, John Natvig.

Treasurer: Milton Boleng.

Secretary: Fred Steensland.

Cemetery Committee: Olis Borlaug, Juel Natvig, Miss Carrie Natvig, Mrs. John Natvig, Mrs. Otto Hanson.

Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Carlyle Natvig, president; Mrs. Nels Ellingson, Secretary; Mrs. Martin Borlaug, Treasurer.

JERICO CONGREGATION

Trustees: J. N. Anderson, Lloyd Roberson, C. O. Vigdal.

Secretary: A. N. Anderson.

Treasurer: Jeff A. Knutson.

Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Gilman Robinson, president; Mrs. Alvin Johnson, secretary; Mrs. Andrew J. Johnson, treasurer.

Cemetery Committee: Mrs. Carl A. Knutson, Mrs. M. A. Robinson, Mrs. C. O. Vigdal.

Services

JERICO

First and third Sundays 9:00 A. M.

Second and fourth Sundays 10:30 A. M.
(First Sunday Norwegian.)

SAUDE

First and third Sundays 10:30 A. M.

Second and fourth Sundays 9:00 A. M.
(First Sunday Bi-lingual Service.)

Fifth Sundays by special announcement.

NEW HAMPTON

Services, 9 A. M.

You may say, "But I do not fully understand the Bible."

No one does. Not even the most learned theologian does. Not even the apostles did. Peter, writing about Paul's letters, says: In which are some things hard to be understood (2 Pet. 3, 16). And Paul confesses, I know in part; for now we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13, 12).

God, who gave us His Word, fully understands our limitations and weaknesses. Yet He told us through the Psalmist: The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple (Ps. 19, 7). And again: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (Ps. 119, 105). And Jesus Himself said, Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me (John 5, 39).

When we read the Bible, though we do not fully understand, yet we have God speaking to us directly, and He will bless His words on our hearts. We may also rest assured that the more we attentively read the Bible the clearer it will become. What may have seemed dark today will receive its light in what we read tomorrow.

Hence, take the Bible itself for your devotions. Where should one begin?

First of all, the Gospels should be read, the story of our Savior's life and work, particularly Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Then the Acts of the apostles, the story of the victorious course of the Gospel of

life. Later, books of the Old Testament may be added, the first book of Moses (Genesis), the book of Ruth, the books of Samuel. These are among the easier ones to follow. But by all means read also the Psalms, the devotional book of the pious Jews.

J. P. M.—(From Northwestern Lutheran.)

"THY PEOPLE SHALL BE WILLING"

It was heartwarming indeed, to see the willingness of the Saude and Jerico Congregations, when their Synod came to them with a plea for generosity in the Jubilee Thankoffering. The willingness of our people shows that they have an affection for their Synod, and that they are grateful for the many benefits they have received from the church body to which they belong. Almost without exception, those who were approached gave gladly, and without murmuring, knowing that their gifts are employed in the service of the Lord of the church. Your willingness now promises well for the future of your church, and for the truths which it upholds and proclaims.

THE ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Annual Meeting of the Saude Congregation was held on Wednesday, November 18th, and the Annual Meeting of the Jerico Congregation was held on Friday November 20th. Both congregations transacted the routine business that came before them, and elected the officers that are to serve during the coming year.

Neither the Saude nor the Jerico congregation can be described as being anything like perfect. But as long as we continue as truly Christian Congregations, we shall try to improve where improvements are needful. In order to correct our shortcomings we need to be frank in discussing our faults. And since those faults and weaknesses are brought to light so distinctly in the annual reports, this would seem to be an appropriate time to talk about them.

A perennial disappointment has been the very small attendance at the annual meetings. This year only 17% of the Saude voters, and 14% of the Jerico voters were present to take part in the annual transaction of the business of the congregations. We simply refuse to believe that those percentages are a measure of the interest of the voters in the welfare of their congregations. It must be simply carelessness, and the thought that "my presence at the meeting will not help any". But you should know that often there are important matters before the assembly which the few who are present are reluctant to vote on because the congregation is so poorly represented. You may be one who does not like to speak in public, but you should be at the meetings for all that, because your vote is extremely important. We often hear criticisms of the management of congregational affairs. Those criticisms should be made publicly at the voters' meetings. Perhaps they are justified criticisms, and if so you can help to correct what is out of order by being at the meeting. Sometimes we hear the remark that "it is no use to attend the

meetings, because it is only a few who run the congregation anyway". But can you not see, that if that is the case, it is only because so many of you are not at the meetings. There is a small handful of people in each of the two congregations which is much interested in the well-being of their congregation. That is the reason why they are at the meetings, not because they have any desire to compel their opinions on anyone.

In defense of those who were absent from the meeting it may be said that the time of the annual meetings is one in which the members are almost invariably extremely busy finishing corn picking. It is certainly true that farmers become rather nervous and restless in the late Fall in their haste to get their crops harvested and fodder in before winter weather sets in. There are so many things that must be done before the snows come. Acknowledging this fact, both congregations resolved to change the time of the meetings. Henceforth the business year of both congregations will end on December 31st. The annual meeting will be held at Saude on the third Wednesday in January, and at Jerico on the third Friday of January.

THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

Although the financial reports presented by the treasurers of both congregations were not complete, they were most encouraging. Last year the weekly envelope system was given a trial by both churches, but the envelopes were not distributed until January 1st, so a complete financial report can not be made until next January 1st. The January issue of the Assistant Pastor will give a complete report of receipts and expenditures.

However, it is not too early to say that the system of weekly contributions was a marked success. Both congregations had heavier expenses this year than last year, and still the books showed approximately the same balance at the time of the annual meetings. It was resolved both at Saude and at Jerico to continue the use of the weekly offerings.

Your congregation invites you to make your contribution for its support each week at divine services. Even as the children of Israel brought their offerings every time they came to the temple, as a part of their worship, so your offering will add to your worship. You never leave your church empty handed, you always take spiritual blessings with you. Therefore it is most appropriate that you should bring your gift with you as you come to worship.

It is not strange that weekly contributions should be a successful way of supporting the church, for it was the procedure that was prescribed by God Himself in the Old Testament, and it is the procedure that was recommended by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. ("Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Cor. 16, 2.) Nor is it strange that methods which are successful in modern business enterprise are equally successful when applied to the business of the church.

Moreover the true Christian will be happy to make weekly contributions to his church if only for the reason that he is thereby enabled to do more for

the spreading of the precious Gospel than he can do when collections are made only once or twice a year.

THE PASTORAL REPORTS

Saude

Six children were baptized, and one was confirmed. Omer Ellingsen and Mildred Hildahl were united in holy matrimony. Two members of the congregation were laid to rest during the year, Mrs. Henry Ellingsen and Mr. Johannes Leifsen.

At the present time the Saude congregation is composed of 221 baptized members, 137 confirmed members, and 74 voting members. There were 35 Sunday services, and 7 special services in the Saude church during the past year. The average attendance at the Sunday services was 74, or 33%. The total communion attendance for the year was 227. The average communicant attended communion 1.7 times during the year.

11 communicant members of the congregation are serving in the armed forces of the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Natvig and family have recently been given a letter of transfer to enable them to join a congregation of the Missouri Synod in Waterloo, Iowa.

Jerico

During the past year eight children of the Jerico congregation were received into the Holy Christian Church through baptism. Six children were confirmed. Arnold Myren and Iola Dahlen were united in marriage at a church wedding held at the Jerico church. There were four burials during the year; Mrs. Alice Janet Knutson, Alton Gene Anderson, Ole O. Johnson, and an infant child of Mr. and Mrs. Olaf Roberson.

The Jerico congregation is composed of 400 baptized members, 309 confirmed members, and 139 voting members. There were nine special services, and 39 Sunday services during the year. The average attendance at the Sunday services was 131, or 32%. The communion attendance for the year was 532, for an average of 1.7 communions per person.

24 sons of the congregation are serving in the U. S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Mr. Otto Melfer, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Meyerhoff and family, and Edward, Gertrude, and Carol Ann Slindee were received into membership in the congregation during the year. Roy Roberson, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Knief and family, and Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Thompson and family were given releases to join congregations of the Missouri Synod.

CRUEL STATISTICS!

If we study these figures as given in the pastoral report, and compare the financial statement of last year as printed in the 1942 Annual Synodical Report we shall be able to make a composite picture of the average member of the Saude-Jerico parish. It is the picture of a church member who goes to church once a month, receives communion less than twice a year, and contributes eighteen cents a week

to support the work of his Synod and home congregation.

Figures and statistics are cold, cruel, and even ruthless. But they do present a picture that thinking persons should not ignore. It cannot be denied that something is very much wrong in congregations where the average member attends only 12 services a year.

However, on the opposite side of the ledger there are facts that belie the statistics above. The pastor has constantly found that the members of the congregations at Saude and Jerico are much concerned about the welfare of their children. They bring them to baptism promptly, they send them to Saturday School and confirmation classes regularly, and help them to learn their lessons. The pastor has no reason to doubt that his people are concerned about the welfare of their souls because they listen attentively to the sermons that are preached. Visiting pastors have often commented about the attentiveness of the Saude and Jerico congregations. When anyone becomes seriously ill the families concerned always call for their pastor, and the patients show beyond any question that they prize the Gospel comfort that is brought to them. The pastor is also pleased greatly at the fine spirit of cooperation that exists on the part of his members toward the work he is called to do.

The astonishing fact is that the membership of the Saude and Jerico Lutheran churches is not at all what one would expect of congregations that must confess to such sad statistical facts as are given above. Where then is the discrepancy?

We believe that the low communion attendance is partly due to the fact that there are too few communion services. That can be remedied, and we shall announce communion services more frequently than we have done in the past.

We believe that the low average of contributions is partly due to the fact that collections for church support has been made only twice a year. The weekly envelope system brought about an improvement in this matter during the past year, and we are confident that improvement will continue.

We believe that the poor church attendance is partly due to the fact that services are not held at the same time every Sunday, and are only every other week during the winter. Nothing can be done at the present time to correct this shortcoming, but we must all look forward devoutly to the time when arrangements can be made so that we do have a set and regular time for services on every Sunday of the church year.

John Leifsen who supported the Saude congregation so generously and loyally during his lifetime left a bequest in his will in the amount of five hundred dollars, the interest of which is to be applied to the current expenses of the congregation he so much loved. This is in addition to the sum of five hundred dollars which he left to the Synod, which will now be applied to the Jubilee Thankoffering. His thoughtfulness and generosity is highly appreciated.

Rev. Galstad, making his solicitations for the Jubilee Thankoffering reached practically every home in the Saude and Jerico congregations. How-

ever, it was unavoidable that a few of our contributors were missed for one reason or other. We hope that he will be excused for his inability to see everyone, and that those whom he missed will give their thankoffering either to the pastor, or to the treasurer of their congregation. We are very happy to be able to state that the Saude contribution is in excess of \$4,000.00, and the Jerico contribution exceeds \$2,000.00.

Our Communion Services are always preceded by the Service of Absolution. In that service the pastor reads, in behalf of the people, a confession of sin. At the conclusion he says, "From the heart let all say, Amen." Thus the people, by saying that Amen, make the confession the pastor has read their own. We have no doubt that within themselves the communicants are all saying Amen. But most say it so inaudibly that it cannot be heard, and the response is, at best, extremely weak. I would urge you to make that response audible; say the Amen firmly and strongly. It will add to the impressiveness of the service, and will help to strengthen your own faith in the forgiveness of your sins.

Redeemer Congregation at New Hampton has been served by student Ralph Danielsen of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, since September. However, he has now been released to assist Rev. Stephen Sande at Hartland, Minn. Rev. Sande has been seriously ill the past month. The pastor of the Saude and Jerico congregations will serve the New Hampton people temporarily while arrangements are being made to secure a more suitable place of worship than the American Legion Hall. The Church Extension Committee of the Synod has promised to cooperate with Redeemer Congregation in making a loan which will enable them to secure a suitable property in New Hampton. The time has come when no further progress can be expected in New Hampton so long as the present place of worship is employed, and we hope soon to provide a more edifying place to worship.

Thanksgiving Day Services at Jerico were poorly attended because of the early snowstorm. The service was cancelled at Saude for the same reason. Therefore we would like to give you here the main thought in the sermon your pastor had prepared.

Usually we thank God for good crops and our personal prosperity. When crops are poor, and prices low we are apt to complain as though we are deprived of everything. This Thanksgiving Day we were able to thank God again for bountiful harvests, and for an unexcelled personal prosperity which we all are enjoying. But this year our own personal prosperity does not seem quite so important to us. This year we realize that we are prospering because the world is at war. We realize that we would gladly exchange the worst of the depression years for the safe return of all our boys in service. We see now how many things are worth more than mere health and wealth. This year we have a glimpse into the meaning of a heavenly wisdom that exceeds our frail understanding.

Please do not fail to bring your Thanksgiving offering envelope to church at your very earliest convenience. Your Synod is in need of your Thanksgiving gift.