

The Shepherd's Staff

Christ Lutheran Church

January 2019

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Three Ways to Fail Well in 2019

Chad Bird

(chadbird.com)

We will all be failures in 2019. We don't need prophets or crystal balls to reveal this to us. Just stand in front of a mirror. Is the image staring back the same image that's always been there? Well, there's the evidence. New year, same you. The same you that's failed, in ways big and small, your entire life.

The sooner we embrace this realism, the better. Sure, we may drop a few pounds. Make a few extra dollars. But 99.9% of who we are will remain unchanged—including our uncanny ability to fail.

What we might do, instead of making resolutions about how we're going to succeed, is to resolve how we might do well at failure. If it's going to happen anyway—and, unless you're drunk or high or delusional, you know it's true—then let's learn how to

fail successfully.

● Embrace Your Failure

● Learn from your

● Be Humble

mistakes



What we might do, instead of making resolutions about how we're going to succeed, is to resolve how we might do well at failure.

Three Ways to Fail Well in 2019 (continued)

So, here are three ways to fail well in 2019.

1. **Embrace your failure as a vivid reminder of why God doesn't believe in you.**

God doesn't trust you. He doesn't believe in you. He has less-than-zero faith in you. It's not as if your life inspires him. He's well aware of your pettiness, childishness, and irrational fears. He knows how mean and petty you are about the smallest and stupidest things. No one is applauding your moral virtuosity in heaven. If, as the Bible says, you shouldn't put your trust in princes, in mortal man, then why in the world would God put his trust in you?

So, when you fail, embrace that failure as a reminder of why God doesn't trust you. What he does do, however, is this: he shows mercy to you through that failure and despite that failure. The Lord doesn't believe in you but calls you to believe in his Son. His love never fails. His mercy never flops. He will never fail you.

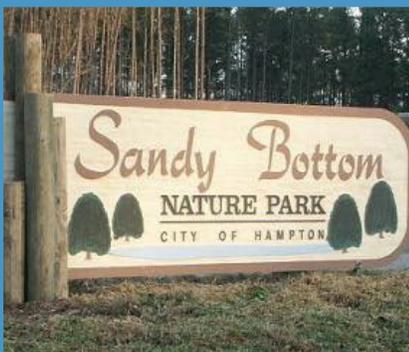
2. **Take advantage of your failure as a golden opportunity to eat humble pie.**

We all have a sweet tooth when it comes to the cake of pride. Pride in our accomplishments, yes. Pride in how well we've done for ourselves, yes. But mainly pride in the fact that we've outperformed others. Our house has more square footage. Our tastes are more refined. Our life a little less screwed up than that total loser two cubicles down. That is, until it's not.

Some of you will divorce this year. Others will lose their jobs and maybe their homes. Your honor roll child will get a DWI. Something will happen that will reveal the cake of pride is a biohazard. It poisons your soul. When that happens, when failure falls like midnight upon your once bright life, take advantage of that opportunity to dish up a big piece of humble pie. Eat it willingly. Humility, C. S. Lewis reminds us, is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of

LWML Updates

The Winter Zone Retreat has been rescheduled to January 26th. This is the last Saturday in the month. The cost is \$20, which is needed to be turned in to Shirley Parsley by Sunday, January 20th. The cost includes breakfast and lunch.



The ingathering for our Winter Retreat will benefit Fish, Inc., which is an all-volunteer not-for-profit agency providing help to residents of the greater Williamsburg area. We are collecting hygiene and dental hygiene items for them.



Our annual planning brunch will be held February 2nd. This is an important meeting, where we will discuss how we will be a blessing to others with our treasure, time, and talent. Please let our President Bev Sweeney know if you will be attending.



Three Ways to Fail Well in 2019 (continued)

yourself less. As the pie digests, remember that you are not God's gift to humanity. You, like everyone, are rather a recipient of God's gift to humanity—and that gift is named Jesus Christ. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble," James tells us (4:6). And the grace of Christ is a feast divine.

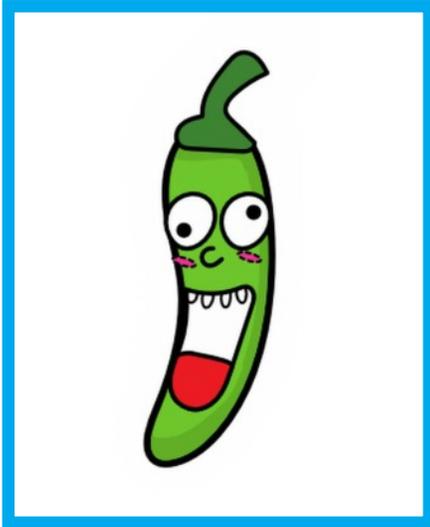
3. Learn from your failure that everything you are and have is solely by grace.

Success, as enjoyable as it is, as good as it makes you feel, also gradually blinds you to the fact that everything you are and have is nothing but pure gift. The more successful you are, the easier it becomes to buy into the lie that you earned your place, you deserve respect, you got where you are by your own doing. There is no more dangerous time than when everything is going well in your life. Because it's then that the little god within you, the idol of self, waxes stronger, breaking his arm patting himself on the back for how well he's done in crafting such a fine life for himself.

So God comes along to crush that puny god. And he often uses the sledgehammer of failure to do it. Your fine life crumbles. Your idol of self is unmasked as a demonic lie. As much as this unveiling hurts, it's also an extraordinary gift. Because it's our Father's way of reminding you that every good and perfect gift falls from heaven into your lap. It's by grace you live, breathe, work, marry, have children, and do anything right or noble or good. Look around you: whatever you see that's good, thank God for it. It's his gift, not your entitlement. And when you fail, cherish that moment as a reminder that everything you are and have is solely by grace.

Chili Cook-Off

Our annual Chili Cook-Off is coming soon! The date and time will be announced soon, so get your recipes perfected!



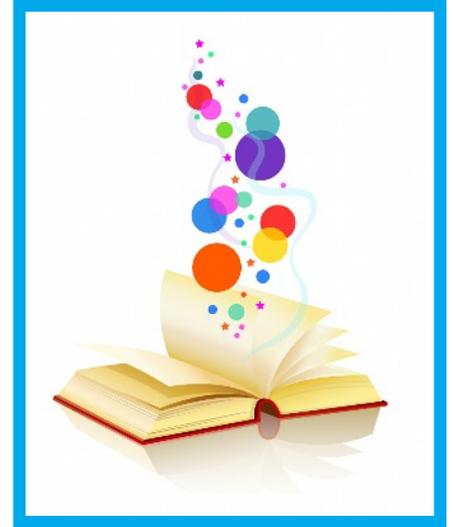
A New Organist (Finally!)

If you were in church on December 30th, you heard how talented he is! Say hi to John when he starts on January 27th.



The Faces of Christ Lutheran

Watch for the stories shared by your friends, you might learn something about them you never knew! If you'd like to participate, see Browyn Tietze.



Happy birthday to the January babies!

3 Cheryl Barr

4 Matthew Wright

10 Sarah Prince

13 Ruth Bradberry

15 Sara Martin

18 Jim Hester Sr.

20 Laura Kiletico

24 Doris Meise

25 Maxine Poston

27 Al Condon

31 Joni White

Happy Anniversary

19 Al & Linda Condon

The Faces of Christ Lutheran



John Lange
Congregation President

When did you first attend Christ Lutheran?

We actually attended Christ Lutheran Church in 1969, after Ann and I got married. We came a couple times, and then that was it. My first impression was that it was a friendly place. We liked the church, and the people were friendly, and the Pastor, Pastor Scaer, made us welcome. But when we moved to Virginia Beach, going to church wasn't important. We were in the Navy, and I was stationed in GITMO for a while, and when we came back, we decided to come back to church

in 1976 after my dad was killed in an automobile accident, it was a life-changing event. I remembered a lot about dad's faithfulness, and how even in his days when things weren't going so well, but we always went to church. So Ann and I decided we would bring the kids because they were getting older, and it was important for us to go to church. The reason we came back to Christ Lutheran was because Pastor Scaer baptized Tony (even though we were not members) before we left for Cuba. We had a private ceremony in the middle of the day. It was

something I felt we needed to do because I was raised Lutheran, so we had Tony baptized before we went to GITMO. In the fall of 1976, we became members. Pastor Gabrim was here, they still had 2 services, the church had a school, and there was a lot going on. Ann was raised Baptist, so she went to an adult class, and she became a member in 1976, too. We've been here a while, not as long as some, but a lot longer than others.

(Watch Christ Lutheran's Facebook page for more stories from John this month.)

The Vineyard

Unity Lutheran Church

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Our Initial Prayer Walk

At the end of our iNeighborhood training in August, the members of Unity attending the session with Rev. Travis Guse, our trainer, and Rev. Dennis Rhoads, currently serving as our vacancy pastor, concurred that a good first step in getting our congregation outside of our doors to do ministry would be a regular (monthly chosen) prayer walk in our community. This plan was announced at our Community Thanksgiving Dinner in November, tentatively planned during Sunday school sessions with Rev. Rhoads and firmed up at our December council meeting.

On December 22nd, about an hour before

our planned Christmas luncheon, we were ready to go out for our first walk. We were equipped with a prayer for God's guidance and protection as we went out, bottles of water with a message of greeting from Unity along with John 3:16, our prayer box for collecting prayer requests, and cards (thanks to our guardian angel, Tarrah Turner) that identified our congregation and its mission. Though our adult walkers were limited (5), we had seven children who joined the trek.

Our first stop was at a corner within two blocks of the church, where a light pole serves as a temporary memorial for the family of twelve-

Please join us next on our next Prayer Walk! The date and time will be announced soon. If you are unable to attend, you can still pray for the community, the church, and those who are walking.

Almighty and everlasting
God, who governs all things
in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the prayers of

Your people and grant us the
blessing of Your presence
and peace through all our
days; through Jesus Christ,

Your Son, our Lord, who lives
and reigns with You and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now
and forever. AMEN

Happy Birthday

▶ 5 Aiden Miller

▶ 22 Leon Oliver

▶ 15 Tarrah Turner

▶ 25 Michelle (Diane)

▶ 20 Frank Turner

Fuller

Happy Anniversary

Willie & Shirley Butts

January 31st

Our Initial Prayer Walk (continued)

year-old Gregory Bateman, Jr., whose life was lost when he was struck by a car on September 21 st . This was the perfect place for our first prayer for our community – for safety from all of the many ills of a community that rob families of this blessing. We also prayed for God’s comfort for Gregory’s family. Before leaving the site, we left a plastic bag with a child’s storybook of the first Christmas, along with two seasonal mementoes, to be given to a child in Gregory’s memory, and a letter addressed to Gregory’s parents, letting them know of our prayers for them and our community. We

continued walking toward Spartan Market, where we expected to encounter persons who may be receptive to prayers with or from our congregation. We met two men near a parked truck on Vincent St., who agreed to pray with us for the community; one of whom was an elementary schoolmate of one of our walkers and the other, who agreed that our community needed prayer, since he had lost a son to gun violence. At other encounters, we were given prayer requests for our Sunday service -- for the health of a grandmother and for the comfort of a family whose

requester had just lost his sister. A woman standing in a parking lot declined to pray with us or to accept our prayers for her. I am sure that she received a number of silent requests for God’s blessings.

Upon returning to church, we took a few minutes before lunch to share some experiences and thoughts from our walk with plans for future walks. We thank God for all the blessings of this journey into our community and pray for His continued blessings and guidance as we walk on.

Our Christmas Luncheon

Though we decided to have a Christmas fellowship meal as has become our custom, this year the Unity membership opted for an early meal since it has been so evident that darkness comes quickly. Another change was making this a potluck meal rather than a planned one. As usual, the variety of items made an enticing smorgasbord where everyone found a number of favorites, including tasty desserts. Some friends and family members had been invited, but we were also delighted to have out-of-town guests — Terrell, Anjetta and Aniyah Davis, visiting family and friends while taking a break from the harsh Indiana climate — who joined us for this meal. Almost like old times! We were thankful that the meal and fellowship felt like a perfect ending for this special day in our ministry.



Our Special Guest

Unity experienced a very uplifting service on the first Sunday after Christmas, as we welcomed a friend from our sister congregation, Christ Lutheran, as an honored musician, who greatly enhanced our worship. Thanks to Mr. James Hester, our singing of favorite Christmas carols was livelier than usual because of the soulful sounds of his saxophone during the service. He was accompanied by our Elder Mike Giles on the keyboard, and periodically interspersed his playing with singing of a verse of the hymn along with the congregation. Not until he sang “The Lord’s Prayer” as a solo, following the congregation’s prayer, did we hear the full richness of his voice. A saxophone solo of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” was a true blessing. Mr. Hester’s sharing of his musical talents was a true inspiration to us all, as we look forward to a new year of opportunities to serve our Lord with gladness. We are sincerely thankful to Mr. Hester for honoring us and wish for him God’s continued blessings as he serves with music.