

## Dancin' in the Light of God

Rev. Timothy L. Knauff

*We are marchin' in the light of God!  
We are marchin' in the light of God!  
We are marchin' in the light of God!  
We are marchin' in the light of God!  
Marchin', we are marchin',  
We are marchin' in the light of God!*

-- ELW 866

A tall man stands behind the altar and raises the host, prays to God and with that action invites a sad soul to the table.

This same tall man takes a guitar in hand and sings a silly song with the Vacation Bible School children, bringing joy and giggles to the youngest members.

This man's infectious smile transcends his height and welcomes children to join him at the end of the worship services to give the final blessing.

This man and his sons attend a birthday party for an 87-year-old member and light up her day with laughter and hymns.

He is willing to share how God has blessed him and raised in him a passion for his brothers and sisters in South Africa.

This thoughtful man listens more than he speaks during small group sessions, as he learns the history of our congregation. He listens to the joys and sorrows that are a part of any flock. He is willing to partner with us in God's calling us to action.

With Pastor Erica, this tall man leads us to express the joy of God's forgiveness and to become the hands of Christ.

He is an answer to prayers that our congregation will be strengthened in ministry and outreach.

What a man to march with us!



Timothy Knauff was destined to be a pastor: there are pastors in his heritage going back five generations on both sides of his family. Our Pastor Tim is the big brother to Jereme, Kära, and Cajsä. Their father Tim was an ELCA pastor, and their mother Holly was a teacher.



He tells the story of "preaching" as a five-year-old from a pulpit he made of Pampers boxes when his mom was given a Pampers shower at the birth of his younger sister Kära. Hopefully, folks at Christ Lutheran have had a chance to meet Tim's parents, Tim and Holly. Oh, the stories they can tell!

*How oft, in making music,  
we have found a new dimension in the world of sound,  
as worship moved us to a more profound  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

-- ELW 851



Tim has always been interested in music, and apparently has always been quite gifted. In high school he was chosen to be part of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, and played French Horn with that group at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Although Tim had always thought he would become a pastor, his father gave him some advice he took seriously and still recalls: “You should only be a pastor if you can’t **not** do it.” So instead of following in the shadow of his dad, aunts, uncles, and several generations of grandfathers, Tim pursued his passion: music. He attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, graduating in 1993 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Music. Tim didn’t stop at Carnegie Hall; he went on to study French horn in Austria for a time.

While music was his love, Tim wisely saw a need for a career that would be a more secure source of income, so he also majored in Computer Science. As with his music, Tim became highly successful in his computer career. He went on to get a Master’s Degree in Computer Science at the University of Illinois.

*We are dancin’ in the light of God!  
 We are dancin’, we are dancin’,  
 We are dancin’ in the light of God!*

The big-city lifestyle was great fun for a young man in his 20’s. Living with his brother Jereme in the Chicago area, he was making enough money that he could enjoy the night life, going often to the various swing dance clubs that were popular in Chicago in the 1990’s.

Tim also liked to go rock-climbing with his brother Jereme – until he fell and broke his ankle! This was a serious impediment to a social life that revolved around dancing!



Lucky for Tim, in one of the swing dance classes that the brothers attended, they met three young women, Kim, Cissy, and Amy. The class was such that the participants danced all night and didn’t really have a chance to get acquainted. But Amy had a kind heart and was not too timid to ask Tim out to dinner after he was incapacitated.

*You need my hands, my exhaustion,  
Working love for the rest of the weary -  
A love that's willing to go on loving.  
Sweet Lord, you have looked into my eyes:  
Kindly smiling, you've called out my name ...  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat:  
Now with you I will seek other seas.*

-- ELW 817

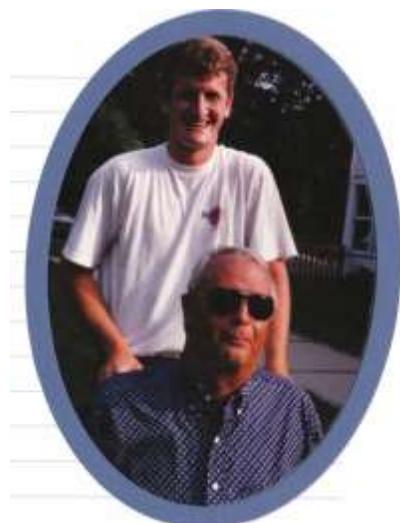
Tim soon fell in love with Amy, but at the same time, he was falling out of love with his high-powered job. He says,

*"I was graced enough to realize that no amount of income would make up for not living a life I could be proud of, invested in, and feel was worth living. I realized that the times when I have been my best self – and happiest – have been when I used the widest variety of gifts God has given me."*

So while planning a future with Amy, he threw her a bit of a curve: instead of advancing to partner in his lucrative job, he was going to be a pastor! Within a week of their wedding, Timothy Knauff entered the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

*Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

-- ELW 574



Tim was answering God's call, but God had already been forming Tim! One distinct formative event in his youth was the summer job he began as an eighteen-year-old, living with Tom Rogers, a quadriplegic man. He recounts:

*"I worked and lived with Tom for seven summers, and we became fast friends. ... From him and this experience I was shaped in many ways, not the least of which was that one should never underestimate the beauty and quality of a life well-lived and well-loved, whatever form or shape it may take."*

One of the profoundly formative experiences in Pastor Tim's early career in the ministry was his experience in the Wabash Pastoral Leadership Program. According to their website, this program strives *"to enhance excellence in ministry of a group of talented young pastors in Indiana and to raise the professional and social status of ministry appropriately by expanding their circles of contacts and influence."*

As part of this program, Pr. Tim and his colleagues were able to participate in a study tour to South Africa in 2012.



Pastor Tim often reminds his flock that God is always present in our lives. He saw the joy and happiness in the people he met in South Africa, in conditions that those of us in comfortable Valparaiso would consider abominable. He sees the events of our sheltered lives as opportunities for witness and for sharing the Gospel.

Constant prayer is a major theme in Pr. Tim's message. As he welcomes visitors at the beginning of every worship service, he tells them, even as strangers to us, that we have been praying for them. And we do! God always – always! – answers our prayers. Sometimes we don't hear that answer; sometimes we don't like it, but there is always an answer. Sometimes that answer is "Sure!" Sometimes that answer is "Not yet." And sometimes that answer is "Oh, but I've got something better for you!"

Those of us sitting in the congregation on a Sunday morning may take for granted the hours of preparation that go into the excellent sermons we hear. Our pastors are most conscious of the liturgical church calendar that Lutherans follow, and closely script their messages to fit the Scripture readings for the season and the Sunday. On Monday before he is to have the Sunday sermon, Pastor Tim begins studying the relevant texts. He likes to spend enough time then to get it “in [his] head” for the week, so that he can connect thoughts and events of the week to those texts and his upcoming message. Area ELCA



pastors meet Tuesday mornings for a joint study of the texts, looking for a unique perspective. Wednesdays are spent in study and research. The “zero” draft is the goal for Thursday; Friday is more percolating. On Saturday, Pr. Tim does write out his sermon, but on Sunday he leaves the script on the lectern and wanders the chancel, speaking from his heart and the Holy Spirit. His aim is to share with his listeners what the texts say to him, to the congregation, and to the world, ... now.

Much more goes into a pastor's day in addition to writing sermons. Pastor Tim's weekday mornings are often devoted to administrative tasks, such as staff meetings, planning church programs, leadership responsibilities, communication (emails, emails, phone calls, emails, and more emails). Afternoons may find him visiting our members and loved ones in homes, hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities. These visits often include offering Communion, lots of prayer, and often just peaceful conversation. Pr. Tim refers to this as "faithful socializing." Due to HIPAA restrictions, the church office is no longer notified of members' hospitalizations, so the pastors rely on phone calls from family to inform them of visits that would be appreciated. Calling the church office – day or night – can connect members and the pastors in urgent situations.

One of the most intimate occasions for pastoral care is that of a death in the family. Pastor Tim drops whatever is on the agenda and makes himself available to the dying person and the family. When he gets such a phone call, he starts praying for them and doesn't stop: he prays in the car on the way to see them, he prays with them, and he keeps praying as he finally leaves them. He is there to support the family, following their wishes, not telling them what they have to do.

Of course pastors participate in many more joyous occasions in the life of a congregation. Our beautiful sanctuary attracts a number of couples in the community who would like to be married at Christ Lutheran, even though they may not be members of our congregation. Pastor Tim meets several times with the couple, to plan their ceremony, and to discuss their union and the joys and challenges it will bring.

It is obvious to anyone in attendance that our Pastor Tim loves children! He takes preparation for a Baptism very seriously, encouraging the sponsors also to be an active presence in the baby's spiritual life. The children in the worship service are delighted when Pr. Tim holds the infant with them in his children's message, reminding them and the adults that we all have a responsibility to this new child of God.

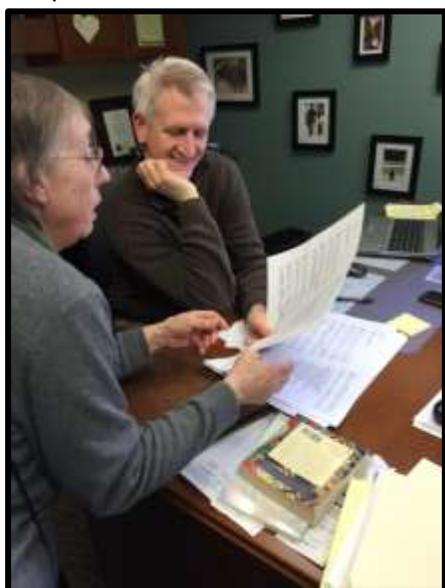
When Pastor Tim became an ordained pastor, he knew he would need to attend meetings, but did he have any idea how many? His CLC calendar alone would make one's head spin!

**Meetings** Our staff meets twice a month; of course Pr. Tim leads the meetings. The agenda consists of coordinating calendars, sharing exciting events, and discussing frustrations that take place in their various roles. They also spend time dwelling in the Word. These meetings lead to spiritual growth, both personally and as a staff.

**Meetings** The church council meets monthly, and the pastors and executive committee get together prior to each meeting to plan the agenda and discuss any sensitive issues.

Our two pastors share responsibilities regarding the standing committees of our congregation. Pr. Tim meets as often as possible with the Social Ministry, Stewardship, Worship & Music, Hospitality &

## MEETINGS



Outreach, Property, Finance, and Youth Committees. He feels that it is his role to empower leaders within our congregation to demonstrate their own gifts and to increase ministry to fit in the bigger picture of the congregation.

There are weekly meetings with Pr. Erica, Jenny, and Karen Stingely to preview the upcoming worship services. They coordinate music with the Scriptures for the day. Baptisms, "Together in Faith" presentations, two completely different worship styles, and other special events that need to be blended into meaningful worship experiences.

**Meetings**

Pastor Tim is very conscious of the place of Christ Lutheran, Valparaiso, in our greater church body. He holds the elected position of being Dean of the ten churches of the Northwest Indiana Conference of ELCA churches. These men and women gather with the Bishop several times a year at the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. They keep abreast of activity at the synodical and national levels of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. They also share congregational concerns, offer pastoral care for each other, and share dreams of what could be happening in our churches.

At the end of the day, spending time with family is one of Pastor Tim's greatest joys. Tim and Amy have three sons: Conley, Asher, and Jonah. From very early in each boy's life, the boys have been introduced to beautiful music.



Pastor Tim wrote in the blog he created on his South African trip:

*What I experienced in Khayelitsha and Gugulethu "townships" or slums around Cape Town was a stark reminder that our world is not the kingdom of heaven. The brokenness of our world isn't abstract; it has the face of beautiful children, lonely teens, desperate women. And that same brokenness traps me, too, just not in the same ways. ...The real question for us as followers of Jesus is, once we've noticed brokenness, once our heart's been moved with the Lord's compassion, now what? ... I think we might begin at two different levels. First, our hearts should go around the world, because that's what God loves. ... Find an outlet for your compassion that makes a difference. ... Find a way that sharing your blessings can make a difference. ... And second, let's do something together right here at home. There are hungry children in our own neighborhoods, elderly men and women despairing in loneliness right next door, desperate teenagers right around the corner. We know that, but we probably don't know them. Perhaps that's a place to start? ... To meet them with an expectation of learning from them, and praying to see them through God's eyes? What would that be like as a first step?*

### ***Hope on the Lord***

*My heart is not lifted,  
My eyes are not raised too high,  
Oh Lord, Oh Lord!  
My heart is not lifted,  
My eyes are not raised too high,  
Oh Lord, Oh Lord!*

*I do not worry,  
I do not worry about things too wonderful,  
Things too marvelous for me, for me.  
But I have calmed -  
But I have quieted my soul, my soul,  
Like a child, like a sleeping little child,  
A child, a child, like a baby with its mother.*

*Hear, oh people,  
Hear, oh people,  
Hope on the Lord.  
Hope on the Lord,  
The Lord forever,  
Blessed be our God,  
Blessed be our God.*

-- Tim Knauff, 2006