



Super-imposed onto these tragedies was the season of Lent. As the families of Brandon, Allison, Cody, and Nicholas were grieving and dealing with funerals and burials, life on campus had to carry on. Students, classmates and friends were coping and trying to stay focused.

And at Wittenberg Chapel, like many other campus ministries, students gathered and prayed. Our Lenten theme during those rough weeks was "God's Gift of Forgiveness". The assurance of God's presence as we struggle with death was brought home again and again, as several Pastors from local LC-MS congregations delivered His message of mercy and grace. Our Lord Jesus is "*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" [Isaiah 53:3]. He hears our cries and our weeping. He responds when we call to Him.

And the culmination of that dark season of consciously addressing our sin and the price Jesus had to pay to redeem us from the power of death, the climax of that brief time of restrained joy that we call Lent, is Easter!

There can be no better message for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, or simply wrestling with the reality of death, than the proclamation that Christ is risen, and He has conquered death for us! He gave His life freely on our behalf, so that we would have the gift of for-

giveness and eternal life with Him in heaven! Even though our entrance into the paradise of Heaven will be through the portal of our own death, we know that because Christ lives, we too will live!

Now March has given way to April, and we currently find in our campus community students who are busily preparing for the end of the spring term. Even though the sting of death may still linger for many, we know where we can find the strength to carry on. Life no longer seems so "ordinary".

On the contrary, we have learned a very valuable lesson, from outside the classroom: "*The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.*" [Isaiah 50:4] We've learned ways to show compassion and express sympathy while offering hope for those who may not know the Way. And as we prepare to turn another page, we're humbled at the great love our God has for those who He created.

The Lord God bless and keep you,

PastorBill

From PastorBill:

The month of March was a rough one for our campus community. Early on, we received news of the death of a freshman student after a weekend frat party. Within two weeks of that tragedy, two students, a freshman and a sophomore, died sleeping in their dorm rooms in separate, unrelated incidents.

Just four days later a junior also died off-campus the same way. Though we try to stay prepared for the unexpected, we can't expect to be immune to the effects these tragedies have had. When death occurs among our peers, it really can rattle our sense of stability. We're shaken.

Many students mention having thoughts of their last encounter with one of those who died. Some struggle with how ordinary life seemed just before death interrupted everything. We are often at a loss to try to make sense out of deaths that sometimes seem so... random. We may even ask, "Where's God when death occurs?"