

ST. JOHN'S NEWSLETTER



BUILT ON CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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GROWING IN CHRIST'S FAMILY

**-In God's Grace
-In God's Service**

THE MEANS of GRACE PART V: "WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?"

Previously, I have written about God's grace, which is His underserved love that He expressed in the giving His Son.¹ Through Jesus' perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, He earned for us the complete forgiveness of all our sins,² which has the further benefits of a new life now freed from the rule of sin and Satan, which will culminate in eternal life in the new creation, since He has defeated death and hell. I have also written about how God has chosen to give the gifts of forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation, which Christ won, by His Spirit working through His chosen means of grace, the Gospel Word and the Sacraments. This article will touch on the question "Why?" the means of grace are so important for the life of the Christian.

III. The Means of Grace Are Where God Offers the Gifts Christ Won for Us

As already written, the Holy Spirit brings God's gracious gifts through the means of grace. Therefore, an obvious importance for the Christian is that we know *where* to seek God in His grace and mercy. For example, God is omnipresent, which means He is present everywhere.³ For many, this means that when they spend time in nature, whether hiking, fishing or whatever, they are with God. For others, it can mean sleeping in, vacationing, or even working. But are these thoughts accurate?

The most dangerous lie is a half-truth. It is true that, since God is present everywhere, everyone, whether believer or unbeliever, is always in the presence of God. And Jesus Himself promised that He would be with His people to the very end of the age, a promise that extends to all locations.⁴ But here's the critical point: when did Christ ever say, "Go hunting for the forgiveness of sins," or "view the Grand Canyon to receive the Holy Spirit"? The fact is (as we well know) that such words never crossed the mouth of our Lord, nor the mouths of His apostles or prophets. If we desire to receive God's gift of forgiveness, the only gift that leads to our entering the gates of heaven, we must go where God has placed that gift to be received by us, the Gospel Word and Sacraments. *Nothing else, no matter how amazing, breathtaking, worldly necessary, etc., gives forgiveness!*

II. The Means of Grace Bring Comfort

For those who are not facing a great spiritual struggle, the means of grace can seem so common and boring. Sinful human beings are "enthusiastic" by nature. That means that they want to speak about the Holy Spirit coming to them through things *other than God's chosen means*, such as surging emotions, "spiritual" experiences, or anything else. By nature, humans look for signs of the Spirit's presence through their "personal communion with Christ" and by their new

¹ John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-9.

² This is the "justification of the sinner" (c.f. Romans 5:18). That is, we are declared fully righteous by God because of Jesus, being forgiven our sins and covered with His perfect righteousness.

³ Cf. Jeremiah 23:24.

⁴ Matthew 28:20. God's omnipresence brings us great comfort in times of trial, but also should remind us that no sin we commit is so well hidden that God does not see it (e.g. Psalm 90:8).

life in Christ, i.e. their life of fighting sin and doing good works.⁵ Such thoughts may seem plausible when life is going well, our emotions are up, and we seem to be living a life pleasing to God. But they don't take long to crumble when things go wrong.⁶

It is at these times of trial, temptation, and doubt, when despair is beginning to build within our souls, that the means of grace really prove themselves a great comfort. Why? Because, during such times, our experiences and our emotions seem to be telling us that *God is angry with us*. In no time at all, our faith will begin to waver and our Christian life will waver with it, since it is faith that empowers the believer's life. And now the "red alert" is signaling, because all the things our confidence was built upon are crumbling around us, leaving us with the seemingly logical conclusion that God has rejected us.

But then the Spirit brings the Gospel Word of Christ who says, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."⁷ Again, as we feel that we are drowning under the problems that we face, God reminds us that He has drowned our sins in our Baptism so *we are saved*.⁸ Again, when it seems that God is so angry with us that He wants our blood, God reminds us of Jesus whose body hung on the cross and whose blood was shed to appease God's wrath, by giving us that very blood and body of Jesus in the Lord's Supper *to assure us that we are forgiven children of the heavenly Father*.⁹ And again, when it would seem that God is speaking condemnation upon us, we hear, "I forgive you all your sins" in the Absolution, giving us peace.¹⁰ It is through these concrete means that the certainty of God's love and forgiveness is both proclaimed and given to us, and our fears and doubts are put to flight, because our sins, which cause God to be angry with us, have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.¹¹

III. Conclusion

It is my prayer that you have found this series on the means of grace beneficial, for it is truly for our benefit that the Holy Spirit has promised to work only through the Gospel Word and Sacraments. God wants us to know where to find His gift of forgiveness and He wants us to know that His grace and mercy *is a guarantee* when we find Him in His chosen means. So the next time you feel yourself being overwhelmed by the trials of the world, the temptations of the devil, and the weakness of your own sinful nature, cry out with the father of the demon possessed boy, "I believe; help my unbelief!"¹² And then turn to God's means of grace, His Word and Sacraments, and there hear His certain promise, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out."¹³ *This is most certainly true!*

For the preservation of Christ's Church,
Pastor Nerud

A LOOK at the LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS:

To rightly understand Christ and His work, the Holy Spirit and His work (especially conversion and preservation of faith), and the Means of Grace (Gospel in Word and Sacraments), one must rightly understand Biblical anthropology, that is, what God's Word says about mankind. The Scripture is clear, sin is much more than thinking, desiring, speaking and doing what is wrong, but is also failing to think, desire, speak and do what is right,¹⁴ with right and wrong defined by God in His Holy Law.

Yet, this still does not say enough, though it gets us closer to the truth. The truth that sin is a complete corruption of our nature, the loss of the image and likeness of God for the likeness of sinful Adam, which we receive at the moment of our conception.¹⁵ It is a terminal disease that we cannot in any way save ourselves from and, honestly, without God

⁵ This is the "sanctification of the believer" (c.f. Romans 8:9; Ephesians 2:10). While it is true that this working of the Holy Spirit within us does show that we are believers (e.g. 2 Peter 1:10), there are two dangers. 1) Our sanctification is not always very impressive as sin is still a potent force within us, thus we may not see His working very clearly and so doubt it and, consequently, doubt our faith. 2) External "good" works can (and are) done even by unbelievers. Thus we might think of ourselves doing fine works but be nothing more than Pharisees, good externals with a sickly internal, i.e. "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:27)!

⁶ We often think that our Christian life is pleasing to God at those very times that life's experiences and our emotions are positive. Then something goes wrong, and we immediately wonder what we did wrong! Satan works this to lead us either to despair, thinking that God no longer desires us as His child, or into a hatred for God who would let something bad happen to someone who is such a good Christian. Either way, the end result is a loss of faith in Christ and eternal damnation.

⁷ John 16:33, ESV.

⁸ Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21.

⁹ See Matthew 26:28; Colossians 1:22; 1 John 1:7.

¹⁰ Matthew 18:18; Luke 10:16; John 20:23.

¹¹ John 1:29.

¹² Mark 9:24.

¹³ John 6:37.

¹⁴ This refers to *sins of commission* and *omission* respectively, what we call *actual sins*.

¹⁵ This is *original sin*. Thus original sin is not the "inside sins" like thoughts and desires, for such, like external sins in words and deeds, are all the rotten fruits of the corruption we have inherited from Adam.

diagnosing us with it in the Law, would not even recognize. This lack of recognition of original sin, which then leads to giving too much credit to the spiritual abilities of an unconverted person, is a major aspect of what separates Biblical Christianity as confessed here with heterodox, erring Christianity as found in other denominations.

Augsburg Confession Article II: Original Sin¹⁶

Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is a disease and original vice¹⁷ that is truly sin.¹⁸ It damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit [John 3:5].

Our churches condemn the Pelagians¹⁹ and others²⁰ who deny that original depravity is sin, thus obscuring the glory of Christ's merit and benefits. Pelagians argue that a person can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.²¹

APOLOGETICS 'ATHEIST ATROCITIES FALLACY'?²²

Some atheists have talked about what they've dubbed the 'atheist atrocities fallacy'. What is it? It's not a standard logical fallacy (either formal or informal). It's a name some atheists have given to a common response Christians give to the common atheistic complaint that much evil has been done in the name of Christ (or 'religion').

How does it work? Atheists often say that there must be something rotten at the core of Christianity because so much evil has been done in the name of Christ. Christians then often retort that as much or more evil has been done by atheistic regimes (e.g. the Communist dictatorships of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot).

Is this a fallacy? It depends. If this sums up the exchange, then the Christian's response commits the *tu quoque* fallacy. This is the 'you too!' fallacy. It looks like this:

A: You cheated on your taxes last year!

B: But you cheated on your taxes the year before!

Even if B's response to A's charge is true, it's irrelevant to the truth of A's charge. Rather, it seeks to disparage A's character to avoid having to deal with the charge. It's a bad way to argue.

Transposed to the 'atheist atrocities fallacy' it looks like this:

A: Christians have done a lot of evil throughout history: the Crusades, the Inquisitions, the witch trials, etc., which shows Christianity is rotten to the core.

B: But atheists have killed millions as well, like Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot.

It's the same issue. All B says is, 'You're guilty of the same thing too!' B's response may be true, but it doesn't address A's charge, so it's irrelevant to their charge.

However, depending on the context, even the straight *tu quoque* response may be cogent. If the atheist is arguing that Christian atrocities show that atheists are better people than Christians, the *tu quoque* response is directly relevant because it shows that atheists can behave just as badly, if not worse, than Christians.

But is it relevant to the charge that Christians behaving badly shows that Christianity itself is bad? It is, but only *after* we deal with the charge first. And the charge is easy enough to deal with, in three basic steps:

1. Christians have done bad things. The charge is correct, as far as it goes.
2. Christians behaving badly isn't relevant to the truth of Christianity. Christianity's truth is based on metaphysical matters like God's existence, and historical matters—Jesus' deity, death, and resurrection.
3. The *goodness* of Christianity is determined by what it teaches, not by what its followers do. Since it teaches us to love our enemies and care for their needs, anyone who professes Christ and is systematically brutal, violent, or otherwise nasty is clearly a hypocrite.

¹⁶ *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, 2nd Edition*; Paul McCain, Ed. CPH, 2006.

¹⁷ Indicates *hereditary* nature of sin, i.e. the passing of sin from our first parents (Adam and Eve) down to and through all their descendants.

¹⁸ This inclination towards sin, which we all know too well through personal experience, was, and still is, often denied as true sin since "It's just natural and cannot be helped." But there in lies the problem. Such inclinations *prove that our nature is corrupted*.

¹⁹ Follower of Pelagius (c. 360-c. 420), who taught that one can be saved by an act of the unconverted will without grace.

²⁰ Included later scholastic theologians who argued that people would begin the move to God and then God would give them grace to help complete their conversion (known as semi-Pelagians). A third group, known as syncretists, stated that God gave the first movements but that man must complete it by accepting God's grace (faith as a work, making a "decision for Jesus" for example). The Bible, however, teaches *Divine Monergism*, that God does all to save us and that we do nothing, not even minutely. Mankind can *reject* the Gospel, but can never accept it except by the Holy Spirit's working in us (enlightenment and conversion).

²¹ Reason here means "free will," thus showing that the Lutheran Confessions agree with Scripture in denying that humans have a free will *in spiritual matters*.

²² By Shaun Doyle, 17 November 2020; <https://creation.com/atheist-atrocities-fallacy>. Underlined texts are hyperlinks to other articles in the online format.

And that answers the charge. But once we've done that, we can turn the charge back around on the atheist to put some pressure on his view. And that's when we bring up the atrocities of the atheistic regimes run by Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot. But we shouldn't just say atheists have done bad things. Rather, we should point out that Stalin, Mao, and Pol pot were acting *consistently* with their amoral atheism, whereas any professed Christians who did similar things were *violating* Christian teaching. As such, Christians have a firm foundation from which to condemn bloody tyrants who name the name of Christ, but atheists have no foundation to condemn their bloody tyrants from.

So, I would respond to their charge with something like this:

You're right, Christians have indeed done bad things. But what does that prove? Not much. Christianity's truth rests on God's existence and Jesus' deity, death, and resurrection. Christians behaving badly doesn't disprove any of this. Besides, Christians who did such things clearly *violated* Christian teaching, so their bad deeds don't show that Christianity is bad. We're to love our neighbor, and even our enemies. Does that sound like it condones mistreating people? Of course not. We should measure the message by the *message*, not the messengers.

But if you want to measure the message by the messengers, what about atheistic 'messengers' like Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot? They killed millions in service to an explicitly atheistic ideology. And unlike Christians who had to *violate* Christian teaching to do such atrocities, Stalin and co. were acting *consistently* with their amoral atheism. On atheism, everything is permissible. So, atheists don't have a solid basis to condemn their own bloody tyrants from. But Christians do; we have Jesus as our standard.

Even though I mentioned Stalin and co., the skeptic can't (legitimately) claim my response is a *tu quoque* fallacy *because I didn't ignore their charge*. In fact, I showed that their charge is irrelevant to the truth and goodness of Christian teaching *before* mentioning Stalin and co.. In other words, I answered their charge, then showed that they have a similar problem of their own to face (which I suggest their atheism doesn't have the resources to answer). My answer was basically:

Yes, the charge is true (to a certain extent). But it's irrelevant to the truth and goodness of my ideology. But your ideology has the same problem, but it can't solve the problem like my ideology can.

For more on this approach, with some historical details on specific charges of 'Christians behaving badly', please see [What about bad things done by the Church?](#)

SPECIAL WORSHIP TIMES

- Advent services will be held Wednesday, December 2nd, 9th, and 16th beginning at 7 pm.
- Christmas Eve Worship service will be December 24th beginning at 6:30 pm. This evening's offering will go to Cristo Rey Lutheran Church.
- Christmas Day Worship/Communion will be December 25th beginning at 10 am
- New Year's Eve Worship we will join together at Concordia Lutheran Church beginning at 6 pm.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Celebrate a special occasion with flowers for our Sunday worship services. Sign the flower chart, which is on the bulletin board next to the rest rooms. Put \$20 in a yellow envelope (found by the chart). Fill in the date you want to provide flowers and the occasion/memory and place envelope in the offering plate. The rest is done for you.



The sanctuary will be decorated with poinsettias for Christmas. Cost of each plant is \$8. Orders are due by Sunday, December 6. Please give your order and pay Terri Hock.

PASTOR ON VACATION

Pastor Nerud and his family will be on vacation December 27th (leave after worship) through January 3. If you are in need of pastoral assistance, please contact Pastor Mueller (989-928-6603) as he will be covering for Pastor Nerud.

BIBLE STUDY OPPERTUNITIES

All high school age and adults are invited to participate in any or all Bible studies offered at St. John's. We are thankful we can gather together around God's Word. You are welcome to attend anytime.

- Sunday morning Adult Bible class – 8:45am in the Fellowship Hall. Topic is the book of Ecclesiastes.
- Men's Bible Study – 7 pm the first Thursday of each month. Topic is, "Christianity, the First Three Centuries".
- Adult Bible study – 1:30 pm the third Thursday of each month. Topic is, "Christianity, the First Three Centuries".



OFFICE

- Please call the office or Pastor if you desire private communion during this time.
- Please call the office when someone is ill, hospitalized, or homebound.
- Please use the email addresses below.

Terri Hock – churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org

Website address – www.stjohnsgeneseo.org

Facebook pages: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> (church page)

All Sunday services are ‘Live’ streamed at 10am on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/>)

These streamed services are posted to our church website (churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org) the following day.

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

23 Jaimie/Kirsten Jorgensen (1995) - 25 yrs

28 Rev Tim/Heidi Nerud (1996) – 24 yrs



30 Dale/Linda Aper (1970) - 50 yrs

31 Peter/Janice Neeld (1995) - 25 yrs

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Jack Magerkurth

2 Trey Blank

2 Paula Mooney

5 Cathy Schillinger

5 Marilyn Woods

9 Alan Magerkurth

10 Jim Stonehouse



11 Bailie Bachmann

12 Michele Barry

15 Robert Esterlein

17 Jaime Werling

19 Janet Bertson

24 Faye Piepho

24 Lucas Thompson

24 John Wickwire

27 Cooper Freeman

27 Alex Miller

30 Conner Helke

31 Heidi McKibbon

31 Carolyn Wildermuth

DECEMBER BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

1 Wanda Rahn

4 Joyce DeFauw

7 Heidi Nerud

9 Kaleb Rahn

9 Stacie Rahn

10 Olivia Loenser

10 Autumn Raschke

11 Dakota Grant

12 Jaelyn Lambin



13 Teresa Firch

13 Rollin Miller

15 Patricia Johnson

17 Brooklyne Houghton

17 Maxx Hermann

17 Dylan Slonecker

18 Stephanie Mosher

22 Drew Schillinger

23 Lynne Daniels

23 Don Hickenbottom

23 Jerry Hickenbottom

23 Robert Wechsler

24 Kathy Curry

26 Zane Roberts

27 Trey Blank

27 Jonathan Barry

28 Keagan Daniels

30 Lincoln Mosher

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who have been so kind to “take care” of me since my fall. The food, visits, rides, cards, and calls have been very helpful. Your love is showing! Karna Hollatz

The Stewardship also wishes to thank those who helped decorate the church building and pack gifts bags for SS children and our Elderly/Shut-Ins. Your willing service was much appreciated.

LWML NEWS

St. John’s LWML met Tuesday November 10, 2020 at 1:00 pm. There were 7 members present. Liz Neumann opened our meeting in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



Lutheran
Women
in Mission

Our praise verse for this month is: *I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful. (Psalm 139:14)*

Liz Neumann read the devotion, based on Matthew 5:16, Letting our light shine. Liz led our Bible study, “Inspired to Share HIS Story”, which was in our Fall Quarterly.

Margo shared information on our National Mite Grant project, “Preparing Leaders For Tomorrow” receiving, \$80,000.

Minutes from our October meeting were approved as written. Correspondence received; came from Christian Care and Phil’s Friends. Christian Care has quite a ‘needs’ list and Phil’s Friends are having a ‘Giving Tree’. After some discussion, **Terri Hock moved that two Thrivent Action Plans be obtained help purchase some of the items needed by both organizations. All members are encouraged to donate to the purchase of items as well. Sherry Wechsler seconded the motion. It passed.**

Liz shared some information about ‘Keeping Christ on Campus’. Donations to this will receive matching funds until July 1, 2021. There was also a large explosion in Beirut near a facility with over 22,000 quilts from LWR. Not one quilt was destroyed because of God’s mighty protection as to where they were during the blast.

The treasurer's report was given and will be filed for review. See attached report.

OLD BUSINESS

- Homebound members are being contacted by phone calls, cards, or letters.
- Confirmations Friends are contacting their confirmation students.

NEW BUSINESS

- Wanda has requested to be released as Treasurer. Bev Peterson volunteered to take her position effective immediately.
- **Officers for 2021 will be: President - Elizabeth Neumann, Vice President – Margo Schillinger, Secretary – Terri Hock, Treasurer – Beverly Peterson.**
- Liz asked everyone to come up with some suggestions for using our Christmas Sock money.

We closed our meeting joining together in reciting Mite Prayer #3 together. This month Heidi Nerud and Betty Firch celebrated birthdays.

December 8th will be the annual Christmas celebration with Officers in charge of the event. Sherry Wechsler had individual treats for us to enjoy today. Fellowship time was shortened so all could get home safely as a large storm approached.

Respectfully submitted by, Terri Hock, Secretary

STEWARDSHIP

Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14)! We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.



God's people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deuteronomy 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them (Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas but throughout all the year. We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us. Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.

EVANGELISM

Matthew 22:34-46: Love! The greatest love story ever shared was God sending His Son to fulfill every requirement of the Law of God on our behalf and the shedding of His blood on the Cross for our redemption. We now have the opportunity to reveal the will of God through love in action as we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves. The cross is a symbol of redeeming love fulfilled for God and for mankind. As we bear witness, share the love of Jesus which is always a perfect love through the Cross. Source: LCMS.ORG

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Being back together is a true blessing which we thank God for. The Christmas Eve Program is right around the corner. We are discussing how to proceed with the program. It will probably be different from what we are used to, but our worship and praise will be no less important. We will keep you informed of our decisions.



We have several new teachers for the 7th/8th grade students. Joel Werling (teacher) and Larry Kane (back up) have agreed to teach this class. Heidi Nerud is now leading the High school students. We are so grateful to our Heavenly Father for providing these willing people. We are currently looking for several back-up teachers. Please contact Sandy Rahn if you are interested in helping out

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Each week there is a small group of women who gather for prayer. They pray for the needs of their families, this congregation and its members, our community, nation and world. All are invited to join them whenever possible. We also have a 'Prayer Chain'. All prayer requests can be made to the office and a special prayer will be sent to those prayer warriors.



'What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer'!

Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b

Our Infrequent Attendees –pray the Holy Spirit bring them to the understanding of their need to be in regular worship in church on Sunday and that we as their brothers and sisters in Christ would reach out to them.

Our LWML Chapter– that God would continue to bless their work.

Sunday school – pray the Holy Spirit would direct and guide the students to a better understanding of God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ and that all parents would be diligent in bringing their children each Sunday.

Women's Ministry - we pray that a ministry would begin which would speak to the needs of all women.

Youth – pray the Holy Spirit would provide the means to work with our youth to keep them faithful to their confirmation promises. Bless and increase their numbers.

Elderly/Homebound - pray that this congregation would continually remember our Elderly and Shut-ins and minister to their special needs.

Stephen/Care Ministry – pray that God would guide us to the needs of others and supply willing people who will reach out to help provide for those needs.

Confirmation Students – pray that they will be eager to study, learn and grow in the teachings of the Lutheran church and their faith. May they see this is the beginning of a life lived for Jesus.

REMEMBERING THOSE IN NEED!

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy these members of St. John's:

Drew Schillinger
Arlyn Helke
Derek Helke
Jim Dahl
Linda Aper

Jim Rahn
Bob Esterlein
Lynne Johnson
John Erdman

Carolyn Wildermuth
Lillian Hock
Carolyn Werner
Norma Daniels

Fred Magerkurth
Betty Firch
Paula Chapa
John Neumann

OUR EXTENDED FAMILY/FRIENDS:

Andrew, Sarah, John, Daniel Hill (seminary student)
Don Eggers (son of a friend of Marilyn Woods)
Mike Miller (friend of Bob & Sherry Wechsler)
Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)
John & Anita Causling (missionaries in Kenya)
Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal, former LFC)
Pam Bennett (friend of Dan/Roselyn Maeltzer)
Karen Wright (wife of Pastor Gary Wright)
Virginia Miller (mother of Jamie Werling)
Casey Powers (husband of Lisa (Bear) Powers)
Kelly Wechsler (cousin of Bob Wechsler)

Kathleen VanDe Rostyne (friend of Bob/Sherry Wechsler)
Joseph Baamonde (friend of Paula Mooney)
Clinton Kane Family (son of Sandy Kane)
Jim Neumann (father-in-law of Brad Gehn's son)
Harley Hepner (cousin of Sarah Hock)
Claris Anderson (mother of Sarah Hock)
Delores Gonion (mother of Michele Barry)
Glen McAdam (friend of Bob/Sherry Wechsler)
Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders (Pres. Of IA East District)
Donald Gilbert (uncle of Pastor Nerud)
Justine Fowler (son of Kathy/Kurt Gehn)

MILITARY, THOSE SERVING & THEIR FAMILIES:

Mandy & Richard Davila (daughter & son-in-law of Dale & Linda Aper)
Luke & Nicole Thompson (son & daughter-in-law of John & Kindra Thompson)
Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)

Tyler Hynes (nephew of Mark Ague)
Karl Flynn (son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Flynn)
Zachary & Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Bob & Lois Esterlein)



YOU SHINE LIKE LIGHTS

The Shadwells walked to church. Every Sunday. Their neighbors, the Kyles, watched them. For weeks, maybe months, maybe years. Then Royal and Lois Kyle made a decision to follow their neighbors to St. John's. They took instruction from Pastor Zimmerman, had their children baptized and catechized, and stayed members of the congregation. Two weeks ago, their great grand-daughter was confirmed here on Reformation Sunday. On November 2nd the funeral pall covered Lois' casket and she

made her final entrance into St. John's, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

The Lord accomplished a lot through the Shadwells' three-block walk in the 1950s. We're not living in the '50s, and neighbors are less likely to follow you to church now, but think about the reverse side of it. If you don't go, neighbors -- including your own children and grandchildren -- will surely not go to church with you. So, go. Walk or drive. Every week. In-person, or virtually for a little while longer. God can accomplish a lot. Christ gives you His light, through His Word and Sacraments. You shine with borrowed light. Let us not give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:24-25), but let's shine in this fearful and dark world.

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life....” (Philippians 2:14-16). **Shine!**

- Pastor Mike Burdick St. John's Lutheran Church, Effingham

Pray For Our Central Illinois District Missions supported by your church's Mission Dollars to the District.

“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored.”

- † Please remember in your prayers, Rev. Jacob Hercamp who is prayerfully considering the Call to Immanuel Lutheran Church (Macomb) and to provide Campus Ministry at Western Illinois University-Macomb.
- † Please remember in your prayers Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church, East Moline, and Pastor Pablo Dominguez. The “fields” in the Quad Cities are “ripe” unto harvest.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO SHARE

Planning a Mission Festival? Find help on the CID website. Our Mission Festival Toolkit offers a suggested sermon, a listing of CID missions and contact information on CID mission speakers, PowerPoint presentations on some CID missions, an archive of Mission Stories, suggestions on funding a Mission Festival, and more. Go online to <http://www.cidlcms.org/missionfestivaltoolkit.html>

Central Illinois District Youth Bible Bowl (April 2021)

Introducing the 2021 Central Illinois District Youth Bible Bowl: The Exodus. As, God willing, we have our own exodus from home confinement to meeting together as God's church in our various congregations, we seek God's guidance for our exodus by studying the historical portions of the biblical book of Exodus (chapters 1-20, 24, 32-34, & 40). Whether or not we can have an in-person District Bible Bowl. (or via Zoom?), we can study God's word in our homes and/or churches in the Christian hope of God's freeing us from the shackles of this world into His promised paradise through Jesus Christ. Contact Pastor Mark Eddy at zionlcms@juno.com if you would like more information about how your congregation's youth might participate in this year's Bible Bowl.

Through the Old Testament in a Church Year

“Through the Old Testament in a Church Year”- audio resource by Issues, etc. with Ken Schurb

You can find resources that survey the Old Testament in a year. Here, however, is one that does so in a *church year*. Going through Old Testament history in chronological order, it correlates various Old Testament incidents with the church year's themes and emphases.

This audio resource will consist of a series of *Issues, etc.* interviews with CID staff member Ken Schurb during the 2020-2021 church year. The typical interview will run about 25 minutes, closer to 20 minutes if listeners fast-forward through various announcements. The interview recordings will be available on demand at <https://issuesetc.org/archive>

The series will commence on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 2020, with an hour-long premiere that will highlight the biblical teachings of Creation (appropriate for Thanksgiving) and of the Fall and first prophecy of the coming Deliverer (for the First Sunday in Advent). In each succeeding week, God willing, you will find at least one

interview, occasionally more than that, to unfold the story of the Old Testament through the church year. The series will end on the Sunday before Thanksgiving in 2021.

After listening to each of these interviews, you can ask yourself:

1. Now, how did that go? – What was the Bible story on which the interview centered?
2. Now, what is the Lord saying to me? – What was the Law in this biblical account? Where was the Gospel?
3. Now, how does this apply? – What applications to life did this interview state? Or which others might be suggested by it?

Listen for these interviews week by week. Dig into the Old Testament. At the same time, renew your acquaintance with and appreciation for the church year. It all centers in Christ!

ACROSS OUR DISTRICT

Keeping Christ on Campus: The Central Illinois has important campus ministries at University of Illinois-Champaign, Illinois State University, Eastern Illinois University, and Western Illinois University. You can help keep Christ on these campuses by donating to their new formed Endowment Funds. So far people have contributed nearly \$13,000 to the endowment funds. If you would like additional information or to donate please visit

<http://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-missions-campus.html>

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Events that have been canceled or postponed can be found on the CID website <http://www.cidlcms.org/events-calendar.html>*
- *Looking for a way to connect with your online visitors- visit our Website <http://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-witness-ministry.html>*
- *November is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's "Freedom of A Christian".*

Stay Connected with your District

Looking for additional information visit <https://linktr.ee/cidlcms> or <http://www.cidlcms.org/> connect with the following items:

- † CID's GatePost (newsletter)
- † Subscribe to the E-GatePost/Semimonthly "*News That You Can Use*"
- † Stay connect with us on Facebook and Instagram

ACROSS OUR DISTRICT

YouthLead Training: February 25-28, 2021 – St. Louis, MO

YouthLead (formerly Lutheran Youth Fellowship) has equipped teens to develop and use their leadership skills as they serve Christ within their congregations and communities. The Synodical annual leadership training event in St. Louis is led by our teen Executive Team and gives teens the tools they need to mature in their faith, become leaders in their congregations, and reach out to their peers with the love of Christ.

Who is Invited Any high school youth who is an active member of an LCMS congregation can join us. We encourage you to contact your district before you register as some districts have supports for those attending this training. (CID has budgeted limited scholarship funds). We prefer teens attend with an adult leader from their congregation. Arrangements can be made for them to come unaccompanied.

Registration for youth and adults is \$375. This covers your food, housing, supplies and a shirt during the whole training. You will need to also cover your transportation to and from St. Louis. REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW. GO TO LCMS.ORG/YOUTHLEAD FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Responding to Idols- Book Discussion (Zoom format)

Identifying idols stands out as important in evangelism. When the church brings the Gospel to people around us, we should understand the idols we are up against. And we need to recognize the idols in our own hearts and lives.

Idolatry lies at the heart of all sin, so our dealing with it cannot be superficial. For when we sinners fail to fear and love and trust in God, we all find substitutes. We look for substitutes not only for God as Creator, but also as Redeemer and Sanctifier.

As a theologian and a preacher, Martin Luther had much to say about idolatry. Even when he wasn't using the word "idolatry," he was engaging with the subject. He did so regularly as he expounded God's Word in pulpit and classroom.

The book *The Unholy Trinity: Martin Luther against the Idol of Me, Myself, and I* by Michael Lockwood (CPH, 2016) lays out Luther's multi-faceted case against idolatry and for the one saving God. This book applies the reformer's biblical insights to our times today. For our idolatrous culture takes even good things and casts them as ultimate things. It coaxes us to do likewise. Against this, Dr. Luther provides stimulating spiritual help, centered on Christ.

Starting on Thursday, January 14, CID Evangelism Executive Ken Schurb will conduct one-hour Zoom discussions of this book every other week, with a break in February. Sessions will be live on Thursdays at 3:00 p.m. on: Jan. 14 (Introduction and chapter 1), Jan. 28 (chapters 2 & 3), Feb. 25 (chapter 4) Mar. 11 (chapter 5), Mar. 25 (chapter 6), Apr. 8 (chapter 7), Apr. 22 (chapter 8), May 6 (chapter 9). Any “make-up” session that proves necessary would occur on May 20.

These conversations are open to all members of CID churches. Pastors and other rostered church workers are especially encouraged to participate. Send an e-mail expressing interest. We will take that as your registration, and reply with the appropriate Zoom link.

The sessions on the above dates will be recorded. If you cannot participate live, you can view the session later.

There is no cost for the sessions. In fact, CID will provide the first 25 registrants for these sessions a *gratis* copy of the book *The Unholy Trinity*. (Please reimburse the District \$3.00 for shipping costs.) If you register by January 3, 2021, we can mail a copy of the book early enough for you to read the introduction and chapter one before the first session on Jan. 14. Be sure to include both your e-mail address and your postal address in your e-mail message to kschurb@cidlcm.org

THE LUTHERAN HOUR

The Lutheran Hour can be heard each Sunday on the following Stations at the listed times.

WGEN	Kewanee, IL	1500 AM	5:30 am
WKEI	Kewanee, IL	1450 AM	5:00 am
KCLN	Clinton, IL	1390 AM	9:30 am
WMT	Cedar Rapids, IA	600 AM	6:30 am

You can receive Daily Devotions to your computer. Go to lhmin@lhm.org



LISTEN TO:

Music of the Church, Morning Chapel, and Issues, Etc.
Christ Centered, Cross-Focused Talk Radio anytime at:
LUTHERANPUBLICRADIO.ORG

Dear St. John's,

Things are going good at the seminary and I am about to finish my first official quarter in just over a week. While it has been a lot of work, it has still been extremely enjoyable. I have learned all about the history of the worship service as well as more than I thought possible about the book of Matthew. I also got assigned a field work church which I have been helping with some singing as well as helping with the youth ministry. Thank you for all your support and prayers.

God's peace,
Matt Carlson

Note: Matt is a first-year seminarian. He received some of the money given by the John/Ann Raschke Endowment. Matt indicated in an earlier letter that this gift has helped him greatly.

Here are the addresses of our adopted student and Matt.

Andrew Hill (Sarah, John, Daniel)
7932 Westwick Place
Fort Wayne, IN 46835

Matt Carlson
6600 N. Clinton St. Box 126
Fort Wayne, IN 46825

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

AND

JOYOUS NEW YEAR!



DECEMBER

2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<u>ELDER</u> Mike Dahl	<u>USHERS</u>	1	2 Confirmation 5 pm Advent Worship 7 pm 	3 Elders 6 pm Men's Bible Study 7pm	4	5
6 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am 	7 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	8 LWML 1 pm Council 6:30 pm	9 Confirmation 5 pm Advent Worship 7 pm 	10	11	12
13 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am 	14 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	15	16 Confirmation 5 pm Advent Worship 7 pm 	17 Bible Study 1:30 pm	18	19
20 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship/Comm 10 am 	21 <i>Pastor's Day Off</i>	22	23 	24 OFFICE CLOSED Christmas Eve Worship 6:30pm 	25 OFFICE CLOSED Christmas Day Worship/Comm 10 am 	26
27 SS/Adult/Youth Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10 am	28 <i>Pastor on Vacation—</i>	29	30	31 OFFICE CLOSED New Year's Eve Service @ Concordia 6 pm		



ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
8948 N 1900 AVE
GENESEO IL 61254-8941

Sunday school/Adult & Youth Bible Class - 8:45 am

WORSHIP SERVICES 10 am
(Communion -1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays
of each month)

**Live Streaming each week on
Facebook**

Advent Services
Dec. 2nd, 9th, 16th @ 7 pm

Christmas Eve Service
Dec. 24th @ 6:30 pm

Christmas Day/Communion
Dec. 25th @ 10 am

New Year's Eve
Dec. 31 @ 6 pm @ Concordia Lutheran Church

