

THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER



SEPTEMBER 2023
Volume 38, Issue 1



From Your Pastor

Why Should I Go To Church?

That's a great question! I am glad you asked! In this article I want to briefly address that question by pointing out that I assume the person (you?) asking the question is a Christian. If you are a Christian, you believe in Jesus as your Savior. Believing in Jesus as our Savior, we listen to Him, we hear His Word, and we want to live in the way that pleases Him.

The New Testament (the part of the Bible that starts with the birth of Jesus) often calls the church the "body of Christ." We read of this in Romans 12:3-6, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."

You see, believing in Jesus as our Savior is more than simply saying some facts about Him are true. It means we accept as true our involvement in those facts. With that in mind, we can go on talking about, how the church can be called the body of Christ.

When Jesus was living on earth, God was physically present with His people. They could see Him and touch Him. He spoke their language so they could learn from Him. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. He said, "I forgive you your sins." He loved them. But after Jesus died, rose again, and went back to His Father in heaven, it was all over, right?

Well, that was only the beginning! Jesus' life was not limited to the years He spent on this earth. When God gives you and me the gift of faith in Jesus, we become His children, and Jesus comes to live in us!

What are the implications of this truth? Well, in

addition to the fact that we will now live forever in God's loving presence, it means that we who believe in Christ are His body. Christ still loves all people, but now through us. He still shares the Good News of His love and what He has done to save us; He still heals; He still feeds; He still forgives. Christ is present in your home as you read this. He is in the hospitals where Christians visit the sick. He is in a home where parents teach and pray with their children. He is with the homeless as His people care for them. Jesus is wherever His people—and you are one of them!—try to help others.

Being part of the body of Christ means you receive what Christ has to give. One thing He gives a lot of His words—instructions, advice, some warnings, promises—lots of words. Do you want to know what God is thinking and what He has to say? Listen to Him in the Bible. I know, you can read the Bible by yourself. But the words in that book will lead you to Christ, and Christ leads you to people. Once again, you are not really alone.

The Bible can be more easily understood if you hear it and talk about it with other Christians. People learn from each other as they share the understanding of Christ's love. Finally, when you hear what Christ asks you to do, you know you can't do it alone. But when you hear Him talking to an entire body with many hands, many legs, and hearts, you know you and other people can get the job done.

You can't know all the others who are in the body of Christ with you right now. Of those you do know, you may not appreciate or even like some of them. That's why Jesus is the head, and we are the body, and we forgive and love one another as He first loved us. The church is the place where imperfect people meet the perfect Savior. There He gives us His perfection by forgiving us and sends us back into the world to bring more imperfect people back to the church to receive the same gift.

That's a start in answering the question—"Why should I go to church?" I'll be glad to visit with you more about this good question, if you like.

Your fellow servant for Christ.

Pastor Mahuken



September 1.....	Kevin Clausen Myla Streck Adam Vandevanter
September 2.....	Michelle Anderson Richard Hanlin Gerald Pedersen (98) Kathryn Sands
September 3.....	Suzann Ibach
September 4.....	Colten Rogers Tyson Stoppel
September 5.....	Leroy Fredericks Pastor Merle Mahnken
September 6.....	James Aldag Megan Ellerbeck Spencer Schultz Donovin Shafer Alan Weiss
September 7.....	Joel Bubke Shannon Henningsen
September 8.....	Carol Neddermeyer
September 9.....	Diana Schultz
September 10.....	Everleigh Mallinger
September 11.....	Jacalyn Petersen Matt Petersen Bobbie Weber
September 12.....	Travis Aldag
September 13.....	Gaylen Jepsen Landon Struble Cristine Velasquez
September 14.....	Lois Rothe
September 15.....	Linkin Beeck
September 17.....	Jill Andresen Tayten Kline Marie Peters
September 18.....	Anne Abbe Heather Aldag Stacy Lindgren Roger Walde
September 19.....	Tara Jepsen Marian Stockfleth
September 20.....	Karlon Bubke
September 22.....	Marlene Bachman
September 23.....	Tiffany Friedrichsen Neal Nahnsen
September 24.....	Larry Jensen Todd Schultz
September 25.....	Kyle Andresen Ryan Jepsen DeWayne Schultz Maverick Walker Brian Zavitz
September 27.....	Roger Schneider Sandy Wittorf
September 29.....	Beckham Caldwell Cody Segebart Cory Thies Troy Voss
September 30.....	Jazlyn Beeck Jeremy Jepsen

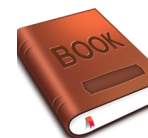


Ronnie & Evelyn Streck	September 2, 1969
Michael & Dianna Jepsen	September 4, 1971
Ross & Malory Wood.....	September 4, 2004
Ryan & Rhonda Kragel.....	September 5, 1981
Randy & Lori Segebart	September 5, 1987
Jeff & Sandy Hummel.....	September 6, 1980
Jason & Angela Nielsen	September 6, 1997
Jeff & Cori Kragel.....	September 7, 2013
Brad & Sarah Lundell.....	September 8, 2001
Curtis & Angela Korner.....	September 11, 1999
Brandon & Megan Cornelius	September 12, 2015
Leroy & Marlene Hight.....	September 14, 1968
Darwin & Julie Petersen	September 18, 1976
Scott & Stacy Lindgren	September 24, 1994
Brett & Julie Wigg	September 26, 1998

Please notify the office of any omissions or corrections.



From the Church Record Book



Deaths: "I am the Resurrection..."

Curtis Schultz, age 75, died July 27, 2023, and was buried August 1 in the Morgan Cemetery, Schleswig, IA.

Lois Ernst, age 94, died August 19, 2023, and was buried August 26 in the Grant Township Cemetery, Ida Grove, IA.



Thank you for sharing the Good News of Christ crucified for all people

Many thanks to you, dear members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for your bold and faithful support of the 2023-2026 National Offering.

The LCMS preaches Christ crucified for all people. Your contribution of \$735.00 in July of 2023 goes out alongside the generous offerings of your brothers and sisters in Christ. As the 2023 LCMS National Convention in Milwaukee concluded in early August, God's people in the LCMS had already given nearly \$315,000 to this effort toward an initial three-year goal of \$500,000. As of Aug. 17, that total had grown to nearly \$348,000.

These gifts will fund high-priority, high-quality translations of essential Christian teaching materials into various languages, beginning with Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese) and then moving on to others, as increasing total contributions permit.



Grace at Ground Zero:
*Hope and Healing as
Constants in Chaos*

Rev. Bill Wrede, intentional interim pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Denison, Iowa was a volunteer chaplain on September 11, 2001, in Lower Manhattan. Chaplain Wrede was four blocks away from the North Tower when it collapsed. After serving bystanders and first responders that day, Chaplain Wrede returned to the site one to three times a week through June 2, 2002, serving first at a respite center for recovery workers and then at the onsite morgue.

Chaplain Wrede will give a one-hour presentation on September 11, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. The presentation will be given in the sanctuary of Zion Lutheran Church. This event is free and open to all. This will be an in-person event only.

September 11, 2023
Zion Lutheran Church Sanctuary
1004 1st Avenue South
Denison, IA 51442
712.263.2235



Gary W. Thies

Gary Thies, Mission Development Counselor for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, will be coming to:

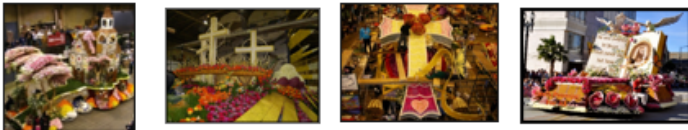
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Schleswig, Iowa

Saturday, September 30, 2023 at 5 p.m.
Sunday, October 1, 2023
Worship at 9 Bible Class at 10:15

Gary will give an exciting and interesting presentation on what is happening in the Mission field of your church around the world. Don't miss this chance to invite a friend.

You, too, are a missionary.

California Here WE Come



YOU ARE INVITED!

December 28, 2023 - January 4, 2024

WHY go on this mission trip?

- ✓ Act out your faith in a creative mission field with the Petal Pushers volunteers
- ✓ Decorate the Lutheran Hour and other floats in a unique life experience
- ✓ Be of service within the local community at LOT318 (mission)
- ✓ See the Rose Parade in person on Colorado Blvd
- ✓ Meet new friends and strengthen connections
- ✓ Gain a different perspective and utilize your personal gifts and talents

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." 1 Cor 12:4-6

WHO can participate?

- 18 years old and over (inquire about possible exceptions)

WHEN is the trip?

- December 28, 2023 – January 4, 2024

WHAT is the cost?

- \$2100 per person – Includes roundtrip airfare (from Des Moines), 7 days lodging, ground transportation, several meals, and 1 Petal Pusher tshirt/sweatshirt

HOW do you register?

- Complete the registration form
- Pay \$100 deposit
 - o This year's trip is limited to 24 participants
 - o Once you have been confirmed that you are on the trip (taken in order of deposit and registration form received), the balance may be paid any time before November 10
 - o Deposits will be returned if they arrive after the trip has been filled



Lutheran Family Service is blessed with an incredible team of experts with wide-ranging skills, passions, and experiences. Since God calls

us to share our gifts – especially our spiritual gifts – with others, we are launching a trio of timely and relevant webinars this fall. And, if there is continued interest, perhaps more to follow! These webinars are free and available to anyone in the world.

1. Your Life on Screens: Understanding the Seen & Unseen and What You Must Do About It.
 - September 13, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.
2. Affirming, Celebrating LIFE Post-Roe
 - October 17, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.
3. Healing People (and Yourself) in Times of Complicated Grief
 - November 15, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

For more information and to register for these webinars please visit the following site:

<https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/webinar-registration-fall-2023/>

~ **THE LWML INVITES
ALL LADIES** ~



We know fall is approaching when we start talking about Calf Show Dinner. It will be on September 16th and we will be serving Staley's chicken. A planning committee has been appointed.

The chairs for the church library have arrived and are already being used. We hope you will stop and check them out, along with a book.

Election of officers for our group will be in October. President and Treasurer will be needed as those terms expire.

Also coming up is the Fall Rally on September 21st. It will be hosted by Trinity Lutheran at Manilla.

Donna Harm, Secretary

From Your library . . .
"Have we got a book for you!"



California Quartet Series
By Elaine Schulte

We have in our adult library books 1 and 2 of the California Quartet Series by Elaine Schulte, detailing the fictional story of the Talbots, a Christian family, determined to penetrate the West with the story of God's love.

The two stories were first published in the Christian magazine, Guide Post. Ms. Schulte is a writer of children's books, short stories, and magazine articles. She is a graduate of Purdue University, a popular speaker, seminar leader, and teacher.

In the first novel, The Journey West, we meet Abby Talbot. She is wealthy and privileged, but as her graduation day from an exclusive finishing school approaches, she finds herself orphaned, bankrupt and dependent upon her Christian relatives who are moving west. During her hard journey she must learn to cope with the physical and emotional strain of a wagon train journey, but also try to adapt to the company of a family whose faith she cannot understand.

The second book, Golden Dreams, follows Rose Willmington, who was Abby's roommate at Miss Sheffield's School for Young Ladies in New York. The death of Rose's fiancé has pushed her towards his twin brother, but Rose knows this is not God's plan. In desperation she boards a ship sailing from Boston to California. Not only is she troubled by not knowing what strange experiences are awaiting for her in California, but realizes California is quickly becoming known for greed and gold.

Give a glance into our library—the LWML has so generously donated money for the purchase of six conference chairs and we are now shopping for an accommodating table, due to a congregational member's thoughtful donation. The board thanks the organization, the donor, and God for their generosity and thoughts.

Also, one of the board members has purchased a larger monitor for the library/Sunday School computer (the really old, non-supported computer) so if there is anyone in the congregation willing to donate their cast off computer to go with the new monitor, it would be another "God happening" and our library would glow! Thank you!

—Submitted by Karen Wood

Immanuel Lutheran Congregation
501 Glad Street, Schleswig

INVITES YOU TO THE ANNUAL

Calf Show Dinner

Saturday, September 16, 2023

After the Parade — until 1:00 p.m.

Schleswig Community Building



Age 10 to Adult: \$12.00
Children 4-9: \$5.00
Children 1-3: \$2.00

Serving:

**Staley's Broasted Chicken,
Mashed Potatoes & Gravy,
Green Beans, Coleslaw, Roll, Beverage,
and Homemade Desserts**

**Carry-outs can be picked up
in the City Building next to the Community Building.
For deliveries, please phone the Church Office before
Saturday, at 676-2235 during regular office hours.**

AFRICAN RADIO MINISTRIES—NEWS

Dear Mission friends,

Ethiopia Updates:

Through ARM ministries, 67 people declared their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. Currently, 518 inmates are attending Confirmation Class and learning how to follow Jesus. 134 listeners called in with 4 listening groups established.

Beloved radio pioneer Oswald Hoffmann remarked that he wished Lutheran Hour could have done more follow up with the new believers that respond to their broadcasts. ARM faces the same dilemma when new believers call to request Bibles, teaching and baptism. The ARM staff recruits evangelists and networks with local parishes to assist with the follow up work in prisons and villages.

When there are a number of listeners in an area and promising leaders available, ARM assists them to attend Bible school or seminary so that they can preach and teach people in their own region.

Liberia Updates:

While Linda Kurtz was in Liberia, we heard of a village church in Bomi County that was once thriving. We made plans to visit this tiny church surrounded by Muslim villages. In the 11th hour, our Gola contacts could not journey with us. Although none of our Liberian team spoke the dialect or knew the area, we decided to go as planned.

Uncertain of what we would find, we set out on our 4-hour faith journey, certain of God's goodness. Immediately upon arrival, a village elder greeted us. Knowing we were Christians from the truck logo, he burst into praise! This first person we met, was the pastor! He and the small church had been praying for reinforcements for years. He begged our group to come and see the church right away. He led us through outdoor kitchens, around latrines, under clothes lines, and over rice fields. We learned 10-20 villagers meet daily for prayer with a full worship service on Sundays. They pray for open doors to share the Gospel with their surrounding Muslim neighbors.

Later, there was a town hall meeting with church members and town chiefs. We discussed the need for a Lutheran pastor to share radio messages in the Gola dialect and lead follow-up evangelism visitations. The Liberian national Lutheran Church, ELCLS, has been praying over this idea for years. Launching the Gola radio program could be a powerful tool for sharing the Gospel with those who live in the surrounding Muslim villages. Let us pray for success in spreading God's love and grace throughout Liberia!

Your partners in the harvest.

John & Kathy Duitsman
and Missionary Linda Kurtz

¡AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Hola Hermanos y amigos! Once again, I am happy to share with you what God is doing in our midst around the District.

As promised, we are giving you the latest information about our RAGBRAI events at St. Paul-Carroll. We served over 1,000 tacos to participants from around the world who gather in Iowa to celebrate the bicycle ride. We had 7 churches represented and lots of friends from the community working together to raise funds in support of our Hispanic Ministry. Thanks to all the amazing volunteers!

The annual rummage sale in Denison took place. We did really good and were able to serve many low-income families. Thanks to all who donated items and helped with this event.

Our Bible Study at St. Paul-Carroll is going great. We have an average of 15 people coming together every Saturday to hear the Word of God, and some are also attending the English Worship service!

Our ESL program is taking place at St. Paul-Fort Dodge every Tuesday and Thursday night from 6:30-8:30 pm. We have 11 students and many volunteers making this outreach program a reality. Thanks to the many volunteers and friends. Our regular worship services in Storm Lake and Denison continue.

Also, in support of our ever-growing and changing ethnic communities, we are putting together an immigration information workshop at St. Paul-Carroll on September 27 and 30. We will be sending more information soon.

We are also planning to host a Hispanic outreach concert (Mariachi style-Mexican music band). We do not have all the details as of now, but we will surely keep you informed on this.

By the grace of God, we celebrated another baptism in Storm Lake. Baby "Lea Gonzalez" was born to her spiritual life. Her parents, a Cuban dad, and her mother, a Mexican-American, were blessed with this beautiful girl and now she is also member of God's family!

Other than planning future events, August has been a sort of recharging month. Activities should start or continue happening in September.

Like always, I would like to say thanks to our congregations and individuals who have made this Hispanic Ministry so strong. Thanks for your prayers and ongoing support.

Gracias and bendiciones,
Pastor Lopez



“.. Not by might nor by power,
but by my Spirit”
Zechariah 4:6

What comes to your mind as you read the above Scripture? Is it something physical because of the words might and power? Is it a challenge you are currently dealing with in your personal life? As I read it, I was thinking of the little people who will be joining us in this classroom next week.

I completed home visits this week. What a tremendous blessing it was to be invited into the homes of the families who will be attending preschool this fall! I returned home exhausted but very filled up! One thing hit me more strongly this year than others. Every family has their own way of “doing life.” What may seem foreign and strange to myself, is perfectly normal to them (and vice versa). It also opened a door to the importance of having the “whole story” per se. What do I mean? Well, I was at one family's home and we'd been visiting away when the little girl asked if I'd like to see their attic. Oh my goodness! I was cracking up on the inside, but I didn't want to make her feel as though her invitation was not appreciated. (It's just that I know what our attics looked like growing up. Can't you just picture it? The Christmas decorations stacked, dad's old train set from when he was a kid, empty boxes for wrapping gifts, etc. I was terrified of our attic when I was a child and was quite convinced icky and scary things lived in there.) I glanced at the parents to assess whether the attic was going to be part of my visit. Nope. It was not.

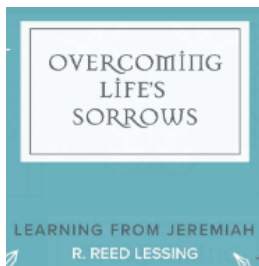
Having said that, the situation unfolded and more of the reality came to light. The attic in this home was a great big room. While I didn't see it, I can envision it because our friends have this type of attic. It's the type of attic which has a stairway and you walk into. (Did I mention our creepy attics that were short with tiny doors as a child? Scary!) It is a giant room with windows and carpeting. **And** it had just become this little girl's bedroom.

You see it, don't you? She said attic. I saw my childhood version of an attic. However, attic to her was a different word for bedroom. I was reminded again of the importance of asking questions and getting the whole story when someone speaks. We so often filter what we hear through our own life experiences. I need to remember that each little person arriving next week will be doing the same thing. While their life experiences will be fewer than mine (you know, because I'm older than three and four years old), they will still have them. As I share about expectations, stories, and Jesus, it is all going to be sifted through what they know. It will only be by the power of the Holy Spirit that they will be able to see Jesus clearly. And yes, it's only by His power that we get to see Him clearly. It doesn't matter how hard we try in our own strength, we do not have the ability to change lives. However, we can surrender to HIS power and HIS might and be an instrument HE uses to reach others.

If God so lays it on your heart, I ask for your prayers as we begin our year. Pray that as a staff we will get out of God's way. Pray that we continue to die to self so we may rise in Christ. Pray that we will very clearly hear His voice, have wisdom, and be filled with discernment. We want to speak a language that once sifted through life's experiences will find fertile soil. We want every single child (and adult) to sense the eternal love of our Savior.

God is faithful. It is going to be a fantastic year!

Blessings,
Mrs. Gustafson



Our Thursday night Bible Study resumes September 21 at 6:30 pm.

We will be using the book "Overcoming Life's Sorrows" learning from Jeremiah by R. Reed Lessing.

What do you do when life goes off the rails and you're left with questions such as "Can I keep going through this and not be destroyed?" or "How can I keep a kind heart when it's been wounded and broken?" or even "Is there a way out of suffering and back to the way life was before?"

Author Reed Lessing says yes—there is hope. The prophet Jeremiah begins with life as it is, not how he hoped it would be or should be. He provides examples of experiences that exceed the ability to cope and carry on—public humiliation, mockery, conspiracies, death threats, depression, times of doubt, imprisonments, forced exile—and becomes a God-given example of how to overcome. When you wonder where sorrow fits into your faith and belief that God is merciful, just, and kind, Jeremiah points you to Jesus.

As Reed Lessing takes you through the prophet's alarming poetry, jarring narratives, and multiple near-misses with death, you can find hope again. Find hope as Jeremiah repeatedly points back to the empty tomb. See a new day dawning—one where you overcome your sorrows through Christ, just like Jeremiah.

Mercy Work for Relief of Maui Wildfire Victims

Many people have been reaching out to ask how they can help with disaster relief for Maui and the town of Lahaina. At this point, financial donations are what will be most helpful in the early days working through this very difficult time. These will help support the people of the community as well as the responders there to help minister in so many ways. We will be sending your donations to these two sources: Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School and the California-Nevada-Hawaii district of the LCMS. Here are a few ways to help:

- ⇒ Take a congregational door offering and send it to Iowa District West, marked Maui Disaster Relief.
- ⇒ Pray! For the individuals and families who were directly affected in so many ways. For all the community related pieces; businesses, schools, healthcare, government, and safety. For the responding agencies and volunteers who are there to help. For hearts to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit giving hope in such a tumultuous time.
- ⇒ Donate directly on the source websites
 - <https://www.elc-maui.org>
(Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School)
 - <https://www.cnh-lcms.org>
(California, Nevada, Hawaii district of the LCMS)

If later, gathering clothing, home items, hygiene products, etc. will be beneficial, we will get that information out.

Julie Mann—Director of IOWAY

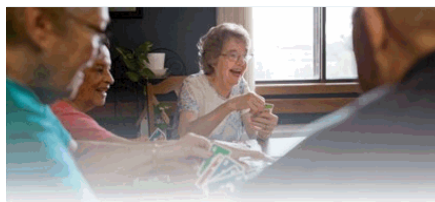


"GOD HELP ME"

It all changed with a THREE WORD PRAYER ... During the 1985 World Games for the Deaf Brad Minns was down 2 sets - 5 games - 40 love in the Gold Medal Round for the Men's Tennis Championship. Desperate to find a way to fulfill his dream, Brad Minns said that very prayer "God Help Me" and began what would be known throughout the collegiate, Pro and Olympic tennis world as the greatest come from behind victory ever on a tennis court.


NEVER GIVE UP is the true story of how twenty-year-old Brad Minns does the impossible in the Men's Singles Tennis Finals in the 1985 Deaf World Games. In a five-hour match for the ages, Minns somehow comes back from match point in the third set to winning the Gold medal in the fifth set. The match serves as a framework for the story of this inspirational man who became deaf at age three and rose to the height of his sport thanks to God helping him to NEVER GIVE UP.

NEVER GIVE UP will be released in theaters on September 1. You can search online to watch the trailer. Check local listings for theater showtimes.



Join us at
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Looking for worry-free living at an affordable cost? Consider our low income apartments at Heritage Heights. On top of the stress free lifestyle, enjoy the cost savings! Heritage Heights apartments are income based, helping you to stay within your means while living in a relaxing and social setting.

Find out more at (712) 263-6631 
 118 South 20th Street, Denison

What is a Lutheran?

By Matthew C. Harrison

In June, Thrivent — a fraternal benefit society born of a merger of two Lutheran organizations — exhorted its Instagram followers, with a rainbow heart, to “Celebrate Pride Month.” Many folks who own Thrivent products have asked us for alternatives for life insurance and investments. I especially feel for the many faithful LCMS people who serve or have served as Thrivent agents whose consciences are burdened. I think of J.A.O. Preus I (father of former LCMS President Rev. Dr. J.A.O. “Jack” Preus II), who founded Lutheran Brotherhood. I think of the Lutherans (like my family) who served so well in these institutions for so long, and all the charitable dollars to worthy causes.

In other news, a congregation in Minnesota bearing the name “Lutheran” — though not one with which we are in fellowship — has gone viral for its use of the so-called “Sparkle Creed” at a Pride Sunday service in June. Again, our voicemails and inboxes lit up with those concerned that the Synod needed to issue a statement about this “creed,” which includes phrases such as “I believe in the non-binary God whose pronouns are plural. I believe in Jesus Christ, their son, who wore a fabulous tunic and had two dads.”

These are shocking developments, but not unexpected. Thrivent long ago shed “for Lutherans” from its name, and more recently dropped “for Christians.” In 2014, it stopped allowing Thrivent Choice donations to be directed to pro-life organizations (taking what they called a neutral position on the matter of abortion). And the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has advocated for LGBTQ+ issues for decades. I pray for the many Christians in the ELCA. Thank God the dictum of the ancient church — “The ears of the hearers are more holy than the hearts of the priests” — remains true. God grant to all of us wretched sinners repentance and faith in Christ. By the way, I only mention the ELCA here because the national media, in its reporting on the “Sparkle Creed,” indiscriminately lumped all Lutherans together.

While once faithful church bodies in Australia and Japan have slipped away from historic, confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice, other churches — particularly in Africa, but also elsewhere — are throwing off their entanglements with the heterodox Lutheran World Federation and seeking LCMS pastors and professors to catechize them in more faithful doctrine and practice. This vital international role of our seminaries is often overlooked. We have more requests from around the world than we can meet.

This all raises the question: What is a Lutheran? Thrivent used to be “for Lutherans.” And as we can see, a church with “Lutheran” in its name can have its members confess, “I believe in the non-binary God whose pronouns are plural.”

Being a Lutheran does not mean being like Luther or believing everything he taught. Though God magnificently used the blessed reformer to restore the Gospel to its proper place in the church, we don’t confess everything Luther taught.

Being Lutheran is also not heritage or history. Churches descended from the Reformation are not necessarily Lutheran. And being Lutheran does not mean

reinterpreting glorious and thoroughly biblical Lutheran words like “grace” to mean “tolerance,” or “vocation” to mean “service.”

Being Lutheran does mean subscribing to the specific teachings of the Lutheran Confessions because they accord with the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture. You all know this confession, which is most simply put in Luther’s Small Catechism. The catechism sets forth the great basics of the faith: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, Confession and the Lord’s Supper.

At the core of the catechism are these words: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”

This — the doctrine of justification, on which the church stands or falls — is what it means to be Lutheran. Everything else flows from it. Original sin and the preaching of the Law (apart from Christ, all of us are “lost and condemned persons”) are about justification. Because we know that God justifies sinners, we aren’t afraid of man’s sinful condition, nor do our sins terrify and oppress us. God reckons us righteous, by grace, for Christ’s sake.

Baptism — even infant Baptism — is about justification because the font is one of the places God does His justifying work, apart from any participation of our own. The Office of the Keys is about justification because the pastor’s absolving words are God’s justifying work. The Lord’s Supper is about justification because God gathers His saints around His altar to feed them with the price paid for their justification: the very body and blood of Jesus. Even the authority of the Bible is tied to justification. Jesus says the Bible testifies about Him (John 5), and those who believe in Jesus listen to Him. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

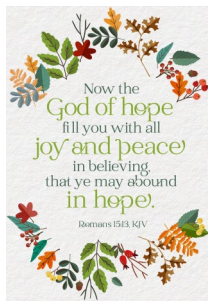
If a church body rejects God’s Law, it cannot call sinners to repentance. It loses the fullness of justification and ceases to be truly Lutheran. That’s why we must always proclaim Law and Gospel. If a congregation rejects the church’s historic creeds in favor of something made up to fit the sexual mores of the culture, it rejects justification, since Christ suffered on the cross to pay for man’s sins, not to permit and celebrate them.

If that’s what a Lutheran is, must one be a Lutheran to be saved? No. As the doctrine of justification rightly teaches, God saves people solely out of His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, through simple faith in Jesus as their Savior. Wherever His Word is preached — even if imperfectly — there is hope for sinners to be saved by the working of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

One pastor I know is fond of telling his parishioners that there are no Lutheran insomniacs, at least when it comes to eternal life. No Lutheran should stay awake at night worrying about his salvation. If justification is God’s work alone (which it is), and if He works through tangible means (which He does), then a Christian can remind himself that he is baptized by God and go happily to sleep.

The point of being Lutheran is comfort, not pride. God intends His people to have full and complete confidence that they are His because of His perfect work. This is justification. This is why I am a Lutheran. This joyful confidence is the baptismal birthright of every Christian. And it’s why we won’t confess the Sparkle Creed with the “church of what’s happening now.”

The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison is president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



SEPTEMBER 2023

Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Schleswig, Iowa



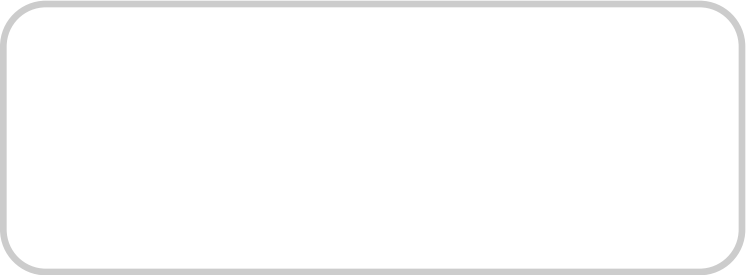
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat																																										
Preschool: Mon., Tues., Thurs.: 8 a.m.—3 p.m. Wed.: 11:45 a.m.—3 p.m. Confirmation: Wednesday's 5th & 6th grade: 3:30 p.m.—5:15 p.m. 7th & 8th grade: 6:15 p.m.—8:00 p.m.		October 2023 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					1	2
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3 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC	4 Labor Day Church Office Closed No Preschool 	5 Preschool	6 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation	7 Preschool 1:30 p.m. LWML	8	9 5 p.m. Worship w/HC																																										
10 Grandparents Day Rally Sunday 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS & BC 11:30 am Board of Ed meeting 4 p.m. Adult Instruction 	11 Patriot Day Preschool 6 p.m. Grace at Ground Zero Presentation by Paster Wrede at Zion, Denison	12 Preschool	13 No Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation	14 Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting	15 ←Calf Show Weekend→ Carnival Basket Raffle 5 pm Pedal Pull 	16 Craft Fair 10:30 am Parade Immanuel's Dinner till 1 pm 2:30 pm Cribbage 5 p.m. Worship w/HC																																										
17 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC 8am-Noon Pancake Breakfast at Comm. Bldg.	18 No Preschool	19 Preschool <i>Messenger</i> Deadline for October issue 	20 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool 1 p.m. Volunteers to OGT Confirmation	21 Preschool 9 a.m. LWML Zone Rally @ Trinity Manilla 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	22	23 Fall Begins 8:30 a.m. LWML District Fall Retreat at Mission Central 5 p.m. Worship w/HC 																																										
24 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS & BC 11:30 a.m. Confirmation Prayer Team lunch	25 Preschool <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> District Pastors Conference </div>	26 Preschool	27 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool 8:45 a.m. Newsletter Assemblage Confirmation	28 Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	29	30 5 p.m. Worship w/HC																																										

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**OUR MISSION
STATEMENT:**
*"Together in Christ,
we grow through the
Word and
Sacraments, serving
our Lord and
sharing His saving
grace with all
people."*