

THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER



AUGUST 2024

Volume 38, Issue 10



From Your Pastor

The work of God is not measured by our limitations; it is measured by His magnificent grace. St. Paul writes to the Romans and says, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:20-21). By the overflowing grace of God through the sin-payment made by Jesus on the cross we are forgiven! “Abounding all the more,” to borrow Paul’s words, is God’s grace active also in our lives, so that we are moved to live for Him and offer our lives in His service. Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

We should not and we must not hold back in living for our Savior and giving of ourselves as He presents needs and opportunities to us. This is how His kingdom comes—when we as His people offer ourselves in willing service to the One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood (Rev. 1:5). He is able to bless us and He “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to [His] power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:19).

At our July Voters’ Meeting we discussed providing a gift to support those who have suffered incredible loss in our Iowa District West in recent months because of tornados and flooding. We considered bundling resources from several different accounts, and one of them was our Home Mission Fund. There was some concern that if we took out of that fund the amount proposed, the balance might not be adequate to supply need that may arise among us. We moved forward in faith trusting the One who is able to provide. Eight days after we made that decision to give from the Home Mission Fund we received a Memorial Gift directed to our Home Mission Fund, which doubled the

amount we gave! O what God can do! God tells us in His Word, “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (James 4:2-3).

And now, members of Immanuel, I call upon you to ask—to pray—for our congregation because we have a considerable need for Sunday School teachers. Three of our teachers from last year are not coming back to teach this coming year. We thank them for giving of their time and their gifts for this most noble work. But now we have a great need, and we need you to pray “most earnestly” (1 Thess. 3:10) that the Holy Spirit would move the gifted individuals among us to serve in this way. We already have them among us. To say we do not would be to deny the grace and power of God and to make God a liar, for again, as His Word, which cannot lie, says, “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8). So pray! Pray that God the Holy Spirit would move, call, equip, and inspire those whom He already has chosen to gladly and quickly say “Yes” when He calls, and by His grace fulfill what we are unable to do.

To teach children the wonderful, loving, works of God for us sinners and to be our Savior’s very channels for His love is a precious work! Together, as God’s people in this place, and for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14), with each doing his or her part, let’s joyfully answer our Lord’s command, “As you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, emphasis added). We have His promise, “Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Your fellow servant for Christ,

Pastor Mahuken



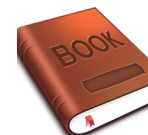
- August 1.....Brenda Brinkley
TJ Bubke
Jennifer Hennings
Kerry Meseck
Kandi Teut
- August 2.....Dorothy Pingel
Mara Streck
Morgan Wood
- August 3.....Trisha Abbe
Bennett Lickteig
- August 4.....MacKenzie Jorgensen
Whitney Weiss
- August 6.....Alex Harm
- August 8.....Deidra Brown
Larynn Friedrichsen
Marlene Hight
- August 9.....Jay Fink
Carmen Schmidt
Jeramie Streck
- August 10.....Justin Johannsen
Mariya Streck
- August 11.....JoAnn Clausen
Jerry Ernst
Joshua Mitchell
Calvin Segebart
- August 12.....Tamara Chubb
- August 13.....Mackenzie Teut
Carol Walde
- August 14.....Joyce Detlefsen
- August 16.....Jeffery Hummel
Roger Prussing
- August 17.....Lori Kragel
- August 18.....Derick Bruhn
Andy Hennings
Delores Sonksen (90th)
- August 19.....Charlotte Ogren
- August 21.....Allan Gierstorf
- August 22.....Coleen Fredericks
Aubryana Hoffmeier
- August 23.....Cameron Brown
Hailey Brown
Cory Martinson
Steve Slater
Cindy Stoppel
Logan Stoppel
Weston Stoppel
- August 24.....Austin Otto
Joann Riessen
- August 25.....Mckinzie Hargens
- August 26.....Francisco Cruz
Christine Wunschel
- August 28.....Donna Harm
Jeff Kragel
Judy Schultz
- August 29.....Amanda Ashbrook
Maria Darrow
- August 30.....Dustin Ogren
J'Lynn Schmidt
Jace Schmidt
Denice Schultz
- August 31.....Trevor Kline
Troy Kline
Matthew Wunschel

- Harry & Kay Riessen.....August 1, 1987
- Lydell & Lauri Schoenfeld.....August 2, 2008
- Dakin & Mary Lynn SchultzAugust 5, 2000
- Matt & Dana KollnAugust 11, 2018
- Lowell & Judy Lee..... August 11, 1973
- Neal & Doris NahnsenAugust 12, 1989
- Mike & Melanie Hargens.....August 14, 2004
- Kevin & Jill Andresen.....August 15, 1987
- Troy & Kris KluenderAugust 15, 1987
- Derek & Beth RotheAugust 15, 2020
- Rick & Jodi LorenzenAugust 18, 1990
- Erik & Crystal BowmanAugust 16, 2008
- Derick & Amanda BruhnAugust 23, 2003
- Craig & K'Lynn HarmAugust 24, 1991
- Rodney & Shelley SegebartAugust 25, 1990
- Josh & Ashley HankeAugust 31, 2019

Please notify the office of any omissions or corrections.



From the Church Record Book



Marriages: "...and the two became one."

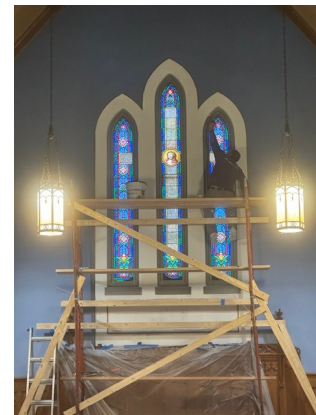
Mattheu Darrow and Maria Valdez were married at Immanuel on May 26, 2024.

Jordan Richardson and Madison Wimmer were married at Immanuel on June 8, 2024.

Peter Bekkerus and Josie Schultz were married at Immanuel on June 8, 2024.

Fresh Paint at the altar

If you are noticing that it is brighter around the altar...it is! A fresh coat of paint was applied the end of June. Here is a few behind the scenes photos!





August 21

- * Parent/Confirmand Orientation Meeting @ 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

August 23

- * First Day of Public School

August 28

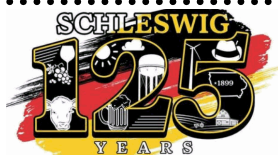
- * Preschool Open House @ 6 pm

August 29

- * First Day of Preschool

September 8

- * Sunday School Rally Day



Schleswig will be celebrating their quasiquintennial September 13-15, 2024.

You can follow their Facebook page “Schleswig 125th Celebration” for more information on events, vendors, entertainment and more!

Don’t forget to save room for Immanuel Lutheran Church’s chicken dinner following the big parade on Saturday!

More details to come in the September issue.

Iowa District West Youth Gatherings

Registration information will be coming out soon!

Junior Youth Gathering

October 19-20, 2024

The Sheraton-West Des Moines
 Topic: Confession & Absolution
 Theme: The Great Exchange
 Bible Verse: Psalm 51



Senior Youth Gathering

October 5-6, 2024

Camp Okoboji
 Theme: One In Christ
 Bible Verse: Galatians 3:28



THE ORDINATION & INSTALLATION OF
PASTOR-ELECT ZACHARY STAEHR



Saturday, August 3 @ 5:00 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla, IA
 Meal to follow
 All invited!





**Name Your Own Price
 GARAGE
 SALE**

Celebrating Kiron’s 125th Anniversary!

Saturday, August 24

8:30 am – 4:00 pm

**St. John’s Lutheran Church
 17 S Orchard, Kiron**

-----Proceeds go to missions-----

- serving coffee
- cinnamon rolls
- loose meat on bun
- chips
- beverages

~ THE LWML INVITES
ALL LADIES ~



LWML did not have a meeting in July due to the Fourth. Our next meeting will be on the first of August.

We continue to make monthly visits to Immanuel members in care facilities.

The LWML District Convention was held at Camp Okoboji in June. Pastor, Chris, Peggy, Loretta and Deb attended. The 2024-2026 Mission Grants were selected. Also, the District officers for 2024-2028 were chosen.

The next project for Immanuel’s LWML will be the upcoming Calf Show dinner during Schleswig’s 125th Anniversary celebration. This is a big undertaking and we will be busy making plans during August. We’ll probably be asking some congregation members to assist with this. More information will be coming in the weeks ahead.

Donna Harm, Secretary



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



Signs and Wonders
by Philip Gulley

This collection of short stories depicts life in the small town of Harmony, Indiana. The stories are centered around the town’s Quaker Church, Pastor Sam Gardner and the congregations many varied characters.

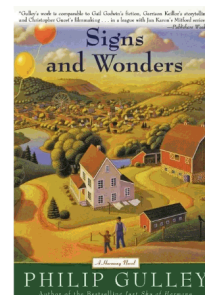
A small group of ladies in the church formed a stove committee to search for a new, modern stove for their kitchen. They visit three stove stores before they find one who offered a discount to churches, which didn’t seem to matter because there will always be someone who says, “if I had known, I have a cousin who could have gotten it cheaper.” The stove is delivered but the delivery men couldn’t get the old cast iron stove out because a wall had been built since the original stove was put in.

Not one to give up, Fern Hampton tells her committee ladies to go home, get their electric knives and bring them to the kitchen. The women clean and oil their knives. On Fern’s command, the women started sawing through the door. The three delivery men look on in amazement but know better than to say anything. When they were finally exhausted, the opening was big enough to slide the old stove out.

When Pastor Gardner returns to look at the new stove and sees all the bent and destroyed knives he walks away, not wanting to know what happened. Of course the women never confessed to their husbands when they wondered where the electric knife disappeared to.

Author Gulley has written several books in the Harmony series. If you want a light, fund read, you will enjoy this book.

—Submitted by Elaine Teut



**Immanuel Lutheran Church
Voter's Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2024**

- I. Opening Devotion and Prayer**
Led by Pastor Mahnken (Acts 4)
- II. Reading/Approval of Minutes and Agenda**
Minutes from the April 21 meeting were read and the voters approved to accept the minutes.
- III. Reports of Officers and Boards**
 - A. Elders (Curtis Korner)**
A cookout was held on July 2 to celebrate the summer Youth Rec Program. It was moved to the church fellowship hall due to weather.
 - B. Trustees (Loren Jepsen)**
Mens bathroom in the basement is finished as well as the painting of the altar. The belltower is going to be fixed by Juan and the Parsonage has a leak somewhere when it rains so they are looking into that.
 - C. Treasurer/Stewardship/Finance (Richard Fredericks)**
Currently, Immanuel is short \$3,741.14 in the budget for 2024.
 - D. Education/Youth (Dustin Ogren)**
There were 2 high school graduates from Immanuel this year. Calli Korner was selected as the recipient of the Weifenbach-Russell Scholarship this year. VBS was held July 7-11. The hallway in the education unit was painted as part of a service project by C & B Operations from Ida Grove.
 - E. Preschool**
No report.
 - F. Mission/Fellowship (Janice Jepsen)**
Monies raised at the garage sale in June haven't been decided upon where they will be allocated. Monies raised from Rachel Mentink's plant sale will be directed to Unity Ridge.
 - G. Memorial Committee (Lodean Voss)**
There was nothing to report at this time.
 - H. Pastor's Report (Pastor Mahnken)**
Pastor shared membership data with the voters. Pastor also encouraged members to attend Saturday evening worship if Sunday morning was not an option. Also, if you are vacationing, check out the LCMS website and use the "Church Finder" tool to locate a place to worship if you are away from Immanuel. The plea was made again to pray for the spiritual well-being of the members of Immanuel. More of Pastor's report can be found elsewhere in the Messenger.


IV. Old Business

V. New Business

Discussed and voters passed to donate the ABC \$415.53, Choice Dollars \$3,659, Home Mission \$1,000 and 2 Church door offerings held on July 20/21 and July 27/28 to IDW Disaster relief for flooding and also the tornado in Greenfield, IA.

VI. Adjourn With Prayer

Pastor Mahnken led the closing prayer.

 Submitted by Val Teut
in absence of Craig Bogatzke



Father's Day 2024

To celebrate Father's Day the Sunday school children and their dads played a game of Bible Trivia kickball and cooled down afterwards with DQ dilly bars!






**Pastor Mahnken's Report
Voters' Meeting—July 14, 2024**

We began 2024 with 623 baptized members and 514 communicant members on the books. So far this year seven members who have died—Elaine Friedrichsen, Gaylord Boeck, Kathy Korner, Tom Bubke, Jim Aldag, Roger Chisholm, and Guenter Detlefsen. We have had two baptisms; one member added by affirmation of faith, and two transfers in. Four members (2 communicant & 2 children) have asked to be released to join a non-Lutheran church. As of today we have 617 baptized members and 514 communicant members on our roll.

We just finished Vacation Bible School this past week. We are thankful for our teachers, staff, and helpers. We are thankful we had very good weather. We are thankful for the children our Lord brought to us for this week. We had an average of 39 children each night. That number is the lowest ever for our congregation. I only have an approximation by visual recognition, but I would say up to 40% of the children were not our members. Some of our members are gone on vacation; some are gone for other activities. We were somewhat short on staff—again because of outside activities from softball to Senior pictures to work. We had two staff members who are not members of our congregation. For these reasons it is even more important that we do thank and recognize those who selflessly give of their time for this important service in our congregation's ministry.

Clean-up and rebuilding continues in the Spencer area. Individuals and groups can help out. If you would like to help out—even for a day, and all kinds of assistance is needed—you can contact Julie Mann, our Iowa District West Disaster Response Coordinator & IOWAY Director.

We are thankful Nancy Bielenberg has filled in as organist in these weeks since Marlene has been unable to play. We have also had guest players on three other Sundays. We have used recorded music on Sunday a few times—even as we always use recorded music on Saturdays. If you consider the volume to be too high or too low when we used recorded music, please let me know. We try to make the worship atmosphere as good as we can. Some of our recorded music is recorded faster than that to which we are accustomed. When I come across these I slow them down as much as I feel comfortable. We have computer software that can do that.

As I mentioned to the Elders at our last meeting, we are thankful for Pastor Kaiser and his assistance

in ministry here at Immanuel. He makes most of our shut-in visits and has filled in many times in the past months for our Thursday evening study when I was away on obligations associated with Unity Ridge Lutheran School, for whom I am the Pastoral Counselor for their Board of Directors. Pastor Kaiser has not been with us for several Sundays this summer. Most of those he has been covering the service at Zion, Denison. For a second week in a row he will also officiate at a funeral at Zion. Zion does have a call out to a pastor; the first call they extended was declined and returned. Pastor Wrede's last Sunday at Zion was April 28.

Speaking of Unity Ridge Lutheran School—at their annual meeting this past Wednesday, I was again elected to be the Pastoral Counselor for the coming year. I had no opposition on the ballot! This is just another example of our shortage of pastors. When I came into this Circuit in 1996, there were 7 full-time pastors serving. Today, we have 3. We do have several retired pastors who help out, and Pastor Lopez serves Amigos in Christo in Denison, but he is a District Missionary, called by Iowa District West. Pray for the Lord to send forth laborers into His harvest!

We are thankful that our Lutheran Womens' Missionary League group has purchased a couple of new tables and some new chairs for our Sunday School. They are very nice—the tables and chairs, that is, but the ladies are very nice also! They also provided the funding to purchase new chairs for our Adult Library—to go with our new table, which was donated by member memorials.

Please join me in striving to make our congregation a welcoming congregation. Make a special effort to engage in conversation someone you may not know. Sit beside someone you may not know. No visitor should sit alone!

Finally, I again remind you of my prayer challenge for us all: Please join me three times a day in prayer for the spiritual growth of the members of Immanuel. Please pray three times a day—following the example of Daniel in Daniel 6! Pray that the eyes of our hearts may be opened to the wonder of God's grace. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work among us. Pray on behalf of the families and children of Immanuel that they will be blessed with a love for Jesus and a growing zeal to live for Him in this darkening age. Yes, continue to pray, but we also need to continue to invite and teach and grow in ministry to help one another grow up in our salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

I thank you for your prayers.



It's amazing how God provides! I confess, I am typing under duress. Amanda asked for my newsletter with plenty of advance warning and I, yep, forgot! Thus, I am sitting here asking the Lord what He wants me to share knowing that printing is being held up because of me! Ach!

The saying has been coming to my mind, "I may not know what tomorrow holds but I know Who holds tomorrow." I don't know if it is a song or where I've even heard it before? But it resonates true today! You see, as I am typing, I have not actually begun thinking about school beyond the pressing knowledge that I need to get in and put the classroom back together after it was painted and knowing I need to finish this newsletter. However, I am thrilled that God HAS been thinking about it! He knows exactly what children will be attending. He knows their homelife. He knows their strengths and skills. He knows how many hairs are on their head. He knows if there has been trauma, love, grace, healing, etc. And, He knows I cannot minister to any of them without His equipping and training. He is just so good! The best part, I don't HAVE to know what tomorrow holds. It will be a surprise! I am fully confident in Who holds tomorrow. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. I know when school arrives He is still good. He is still faithful. He is still loving, kind, joyful, peaceful, patient, gentle, and demonstrates self-control. He will arrive with each child and teacher and meet us right where we are teaching us, growing us, and filling us with His Spirit. I am honored and humbled to be a part of His plans.

As I said, the classroom has been painted. Doris has graciously volunteered to deep clean which is a TREMENDOUS blessing. We have hired two new associates. We are thrilled that one is a returnee following having a baby a couple of years ago and the other is a young man recently graduated. Both of our associates love Jesus and will pour His love into the children through the doors and opportunities God opens. We will begin home visits the end of August, have Open House, and kick off on August 29. Please pray that all the necessary preparations are accomplished with ease. I especially ask that the children will be covered in your prayers as they enter the building. May we as a staff seek His wisdom as we begin to follow Him in obedience to help meet those needs. And please pray that we have opportunities to minister to the families as well as the children.

I'll keep it short since I'm under a deadline. I pray the rest of your summer is amazing! I'll see you at the church in August!

Loving Him with you,
Mrs Gustafson





VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

VBS at Immanuel was held July 7-11 with the theme "Celebrate the Savior." THANK YOU to everyone who helped in any way whether in gifts of your time, talents, money, donations of snacks or crafts, and especially your prayers, we appreciate and thank you!



AFRICAN RADIO MINISTRIES—NEWS

Dear Mission friends,

Ethiopia Updates: A remarkable journey began in 2014 with a single family of seven people listening to the ARM worship service in their heart language, Oromiffa. This sparked the formation of the listening group, as neighbors were drawn to the love of Jesus. Ethiopian ARM leaders visited the remote area, nurturing the group, which was strong in spirit but struggling financially. The Lord provided land and soon a small church was constructed through the combined efforts of the members and ARM donors. Unfortunately, this area became one of Ethiopia's heavy conflict zones, blocking any opportunity to access the region or visit the remote Ulaa Ummoo church plant since 2019. Reports just surfaced—in the face of adversity, the original church of 30 members flourished and has grown to over 200 members. Even more astonishing, these believers have taken their message of hope in Christ across mountains and valleys, encouraging people to tune into ARM radio programs and establish listening groups. The result? Six additional churches have been planted with a collective membership of 275 and growing. The powerful message of Christ cannot be contained!

Islamic Inmates Turning to Christ: Christian persecution in 2024 has been heavy in Dodolla, Ethiopia, where 98% of the city's population follows the Islamic faith. In recent months, two entire families were killed. But God is being glorified in the Dodolla prison where ARM church leaders regularly visit the prisons to conduct worship, Bible Studies, and discipleship classes. In June, seven former Muslim believers were baptized. 32 prisoners graduated from Confirmation class and now proclaim Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Prison Commander, so delighted with the behavior of Christian prisoners, left an open invitation for the church leaders to come back anytime.

Liberian Updates: In June, the Foya district held training for young adults to be empowered to share the Gospel in their schools and communities. The District is focused on training various people groups such as youth, women, and men so that all peer groups may be reached with the Gospel of Christ. Rev. Ezekiel Saah shared that the church leadership is especially excited about the 158 young adults who came together since they have the zeal and energy to run with the vision! These evangelists can be sent to establish prayer or listening groups among a younger audience who will call in requesting a visitation.

Maryland County, Liberia: God worked through the radio worship programs in Maryland County to form two listening groups and bring eight new believers into Christ's flock. One man shared that he had stopped going to church for four years, but his heart was touched by the message of God's love on the radio in his mother tongue. When he visited, he was delighted when Rev. David Bardue offered to teach him more about God's Word. Mr. Benedict Koffa joyfully joined the church in June.

In closing, we thank you for keeping Kathy's battle against cancer in your prayers. Her second PET scan shows the locations of the Stage 4 cancer have disappeared and/or shrunk significantly. We are winning!

In His service,

John & Kathy Duitsman
and Missionary Linda Kurtz



**To the Honorable
Missionaries at
Immanuel Lutheran
Church**

Dear Co-workers for the Lord Jesus:

Your kind gift of love that you have sent in Loving Memory of my dear Maxine, is a very, very wonderful tribute to her and our family! I can't put words together to thank you enough, as it's the best gift you could have sent! Yes, your gift will tell more and more people who have never heard the name of our dear Savior Jesus, so that there will be more people in our real home in heaven, when we get to see Maxine again. She is waiting for us, and she would be so happy that you have sent this gift to support one of the MOST NEEDY MISSIONARY FAMILIES! You realized something that many people don't, and that is the fact that if we can't go to these lands of darkness, then you are helping to send someone in your place! Jesus gave us a real COMMAND in Mark 16:15..."GO INTO ALL THE WORLD."

Every penny of your memorial gift will go into the support account of this missionary, so that they can continue their most important work! We do NOT take one penny out of your memorial gift to cover any expenses here at the Lord's Mission Central...it goes to the support account of this missionary!

It's going to be so, so hard for this old Missionary to continue the work here at Mission Central without dear Maxine. She was such a hard worker and for 30 years she helped here so our work for our dear Jesus could grow and grow. She mowed so much lawn here, and let me know that I couldn't do it well enough, as it had to be mowed "just her way!"

The great encouragement for me is found in the the words of Jesus in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies!" Our Jesus had feelings also and I have to cry at times, but the shortest verse in the Bible tells that Jesus had feelings also, in John 11:35: "JESUS WEPT" for His friend Lazarus!

We were together as husband and wife for 9 days short of 44 years, and I know without question God sent her to be with me. No other woman could have put up with what she had to put up with! She understood that this work is the most important work in the whole world of TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS AND PLANTING THOSE SEEDS! If ever I can be of help to you, just pick up the phone and give me call. You are part of my real family, and we will be together with Maxine forever and our friendship will last for all eternity!

Your Co-worker for our dear Jesus,
Old Missionary Gary

ASK THE PASTOR**By Pastor Jonathan Conner****Zion Lutheran Church, Manning, Iowa**

The following question is a real question from a real kid. To hear me answer more of these questions (and to hear me go into more depth in my answers), search for “Kids Have Questions” at www.issuesetc.org.

Someone told me that you don't have to go to church to be religious, is this true?

Scripture says you are baptized into the body of Christ, which is the Church. So, baptism connects you to the church. The church gathers around the font, the pulpit, and the altar to receive God's grace through God's means to give Him the praise that is due His name. So, we're not actually “going to church,” we are gathering with the church. Scripture knows nothing of a lone ranger Christian, or of a Christian who willingly doesn't gather with the gathering people, of a Christian who willingly doesn't hear Christ's Word or receive His Sacraments. Scripture would look at that person like we would look at a bottle of tomato-less ketchup or peanut-less peanut butter. If you are a Christian, you will gather with the gathering people. Scripture speaks of the church gathering around “the apostles' teaching and the fellowship . . . the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). It exhorts the church to devote ourselves to “the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13) and exhorts the church not to neglect meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). This doesn't mean we are saved by having our bottoms in the pew. We are saved by Jesus on the cross. It is true, though, that Christians gather as the church to receive the gifts God gives.

God bless!

Pastor Jonathan Conner

“Jesus has freed us from our sins by His blood ...” (Revelation 1:5).



MIKE ROWE URGES AMERICAN APPRECIATION FOR ARMED FORCES BY MOVIEGUIDE® CONTRIBUTOR

(Note: The following article was written with a focus on Memorial Day. It is appropriate on any day. Source: Movieguide®, May 27, 2024)

Mike Rowe shared his thoughts about Memorial Day and why he believes it highlights a large problem in Americans' understanding of the country they live in and the freedoms they enjoy. “The tendency to conflate Veteran's Day with Memorial Day is unfortunate, but I don't think it poses a threat to our country,” Rowe wrote. “The real threat, in my opinion, is the gap between those Americans who appreciate our military, and those who do not.”

“One of the biggest threats facing the country, is the degree to which the average American has become disconnected from The Armed Forces. Most Americans today don't have a personal relationship with anyone in uniform,” he continued. “Statistically, that's understandable; less than one percent of the population actually wears one. But that's no excuse for the breathtaking ignorance of what our men and women in uniform do on our behalf.”

“Wars today require zero sacrifice from the civilian population, and therefore zero understanding,” he added. “Zero understanding leads to zero awareness. Zero awareness leads to zero gratitude. And zero gratitude is a clear and present danger to our many freedoms.”

Rowe believes that this is the case for many institutions in Americans' lives which allow them to enjoy the luxuries they take for granted. In fact, many Americans degrade those who work tirelessly to provide America with the high standard of living that is prolific across the country.

“One percent of our population now feeds 300 million people three times a day. Are we impressed? No, we are not. The modern farmer is under siege, and grossly misunderstood by all those who rely upon his expertise,” Rowe explained. “Likewise, the skilled worker, the teacher and the first responder.”

“We have become a people of overwhelming nonchalance, spoiled rotten by the sacrifice of those who do the heavy lifting, and profoundly disconnected from a great many things that make freedom and civilized life possible,” he continued. “If I were to allow myself to get offended by anything this weekend, that's the thing I'd rail against – the monumental indifference among those who take our freedoms for granted.”

Close, closed, close[d] Communion: Three words, one meaning

By Matthew C. Harrison (President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod)

Reprinted from *The Reporter*, June 27, 2024

<https://reporter.lcms.org/2024/close-closed-closed-communion-three-words-one-meaning/>

There are three simple but main points to closed Communion:

1. Concern that the recipients know “what they seek” and “why they come” (Luther’s Large Catechism, “Of the Sacrament of the Altar”), and therefore receive Christ’s body and blood for their benefit (forgiveness), not harm (1 Cor. 11).
2. The New Testament requires unity in doctrine and doctrinal practice (1 Cor. 1:10, etc.).
3. There are exceptional cases that require pastoral discretion.

Not too long ago, a pastor told me a humorous story about his “theological interview” as he was about to finish seminary training in the mid-1980s. This was done before the faculty certified a student for a call to a parish. One professor asked him, “What is closed Communion?” The pastor told me that after that, “the three profs argued among themselves for the rest of the time.”

The Rev. Dr. F.A.O. Pieper (professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis [CSL], 1878–1931; CSL president, 1887–1931; president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1899–1911) wrote the main theological, doctrinal textbook used since the 1920s and even today in our seminaries. He wrote in German about closed Communion but added English to be very clear in the American context.

“*Die apostolische Kirche praktiziert nicht ‘open’ sondern ‘closed’ Communion,*” Pieper wrote, which means, “The apostolic church practiced not ‘open’ but ‘closed’ Communion.” By the time the text was published in English in the mid-1950s, the editor had changed the word “closed” to “close,” evidently thinking that the word “close” was a gentler way to express the practice.

The term “closed” had come from the ancient church practice of the deacon crying out, “The doors, the doors,” which were closed to the unbaptized and those undergoing instruction before being admitted to Communion. “Close”

came particularly from Baptist sources, albeit depicting another truth: that there is a closeness in belief among those who commune.

The New Testament and Lutheran view is derived from the word *koinonia*, or “communion,” which means having something in common. In this case, we Christians share Christ and His gifts — gifts that make us one in Him. Where Christ and His teaching are rejected, there is no communion. We Lutherans firmly believe, though, that there are millions upon millions of Christians who believe — sometimes against the public teaching of their own church bodies — that Jesus died for their sins, and that they trust in Him by faith alone for eternal life.

As the Synod faced challenges that grew out of the American context, the move to English, and the rise of historical criticism, our theological terminology underwent various influences, nuances and changes. A certain mythology of meaning was ascribed to terms like “closed Communion” and “close Communion,” and a term was invented to try to speak into the confusion: “close(d) Communion.” In some minds “closed” meant communing only members of one’s own congregation, while “close” meant communing only the baptized (including other denominations), or perhaps those who agree on the “real presence.” Neither the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions or any resolutions of the LCMS support these ideas.

In fact, the Synod in convention has spoken very clearly to this issue on many occasions, including in 2023, when it adopted Res. 5-09 (“To Review Guidance on Admission to the Lord’s Supper”) by 88.9%. Included in the resolution is a resolved stating that the words “close,” “closed” and “close(d)” all mean the same thing, despite the accretions of attributed meaning. The Synod’s public confession on this matter has remained the same from its first president, the Rev. Dr. C.F.W. Walther, to Dr. Pieper, to today.

For the forgiveness of sins

Allow me to elaborate three brief points upon which our public doctrine and practice are based.

First, I think we all agree with Paul's clear words: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

None of us wants a person to take the Sacrament to his detriment. That's why so many Communion statements make as clear as possible that we believe that the very body and blood of Christ—the same body and blood that hung on the cross—is actually present in the Sacrament. "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink" (Luther's Small Catechism, "The Sacrament of the Altar"). We believe and teach exactly what Jesus says: "This is my body. ... This is my blood." All this "for the forgiveness of sins."

May Christians who belong to another denomination (which may even publicly reject these very cardinal truths about the Sacrament), but who recognize their need for forgiveness, believe that Christ died for their sins and believe His words "Take, eat, this is my body" receive the Sacrament at our altars to their benefit? Yes.

Second, there is more behind the practice. The New Testament rejects participation in false teaching over and over again. It also demands unity of believers in the truth and separation from false teaching and erring fellowships. This is hard for us. We are American individualists. No church or pastor is going to tell me what's what in my personal relationship with Jesus!

While each communicant has the personal accountability of repenting and believing what the Lord gives (His body and blood) for forgiveness, pastors have a responsibility too. St. Paul calls pastors "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). Luther put Hebrews 13:17 in the catechism: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." And the Preface to our *Book of Concord* very clearly states that we believe there are Christians outside the Lutheran church who may not have

come to agreement with us on all doctrinal points. The Augsburg Confession states that sacraments are "marks of profession among men."

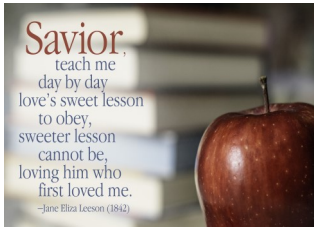
Third, there are cases of pastoral discretion. All of our Synod resolutions on the subject grant this. Life throws all kinds of strange, unique and interesting situations at us. Pastors make judgment calls for the spiritual benefit of persons involved.

A few years back a friend of my wife shared that her lapsed Roman Catholic husband was given only weeks to live. I visited him. He was in bad shape. I spoke very pointedly to him about his spiritual condition. He received and believed the Gospel when I told him what Luther told his friend, "Christ dwells only in sinners." I added, "You'd better be one."

He confessed his sins, and I absolved him. I asked him if he believed what he had been taught as a Catholic, that the bread and wine are the body and blood. He said yes. I asked if he believed Jesus when He said, "Take, eat. ... Take, drink. ... Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." He said yes. I communed him. Guess what? He then proceeded to get better! I began taking him through the catechism, the senior pastor finished up, and he was confirmed before dying a year or so later. Thanks be to God.

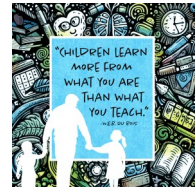
The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (XI 66) says that our pastors are "good men" who will know what to do in such situations. Our pastors are good men. Bulletin statements that teach the truth about what the Sacrament is and why we take it are very good.

But inviting all who believe such statements, without regard to their church membership or lack thereof, is not pastoral discretion. At a minimum, such statements should add, "Please speak to the pastor" (or perhaps a trained elder) before communing, or maybe, "If you would like to speak with the pastor, please call the church office during the week." Inviting people to come to the rail, cross arms and receive a blessing is a fine, welcoming alternative. It's what we do at my parish. Ironically, not communing everyone is a great way to initiate spiritual conversations with individuals, conversations that often lead to a catechism class. In this day and age, many are looking for churches that stand for something. That includes at the Communion rail.



AUGUST 2024

Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Schleswig, Iowa



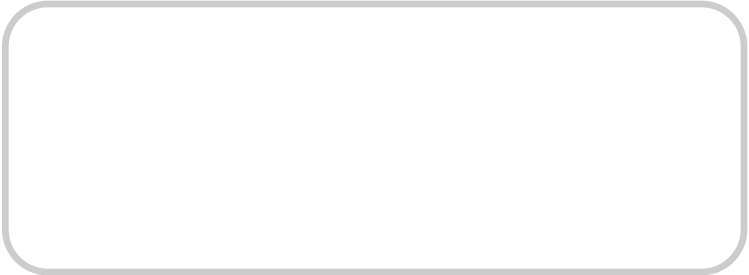
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<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Preschool: Mon., Tues., Thurs. 8 a.m.— 3 p.m. Wed. 11:45 a.m.—3 p.m.</p> <p>Confirmation: Wednesday's 5th & 6th grade: 3:30-5:15 p.m. 7th grade: 6:15-8:00 p.m.</p> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>September</p> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td> </tr> <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></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table> </div>		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						1 1:30 p.m. LWML	2	3 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."*