

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Nothing Stays the Same

Another Pew Research report on religion in America confirms what we have been experiencing for some time: Americans are less interested in religion, and Christianity in particular.¹ From their study on “Trends in Religious Identity and Attendance,” according to their polls conducted in 2018 and 2019, “...65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.” In other words, people aren’t leaving Christianity for Buddhism or Islam or any other religion; they are leaving religion altogether.

For those of us following this trend in our culture, this report is similar to previous ones that showed a decline in Christianity, only now the pace is quickening. This report also confirms that the results are felt in every denomination across the board – Catholic and Protestant. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination in America) reports about 1 million fewer members over the last decade and Roman Catholics

have declined several million members at the same time, dropping from 24% of the U.S. population in 2009 to 20% today.

Consider how this trend has affected our own beloved Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Our high population mark was in 1970 when the synod had approximately 2.8 million members. That year, we baptized 66,704 children. Thirty years later, we baptized 38,957 in the year 2000. The latest report in the November 2019 edition of the Lutheran Witness states that of those churches that turned in their annual statistics, we baptized only 19,599 children last year. This does not bode well for the future of the LCMS.

Other statistics paint the same foreboding picture for our synod. For example, the number of seminarians set to graduate from both seminaries this year with a Master of Divinity degree is 85. (I think that is about half the number of students who graduated in the year 2000, when I received my MDiv.) Anecdotal evidence like simply looking around your local churches on Sunday morning and estimating the average age of the worshippers tells the same story. The younger generations have been leaving the church for the last 50 years and as the older generations

age and pass away, the total number of Christians is rapidly declining.

What does this mean? Barring some divine intervention, it appears that things are going to be very different for the Church in America in the near future. Younger people are less interested in attending religious services, thus, if everything remains the same, many congregations like ours will likely cease to exist and or they will be forced to make difficult choices like merging with other nearby congregations or two or three churches will share one pastor.

Of course, there is one big problem with the previous example: it assumes that everything will continue as is, and as we already know: nothing stays the same.



¹ <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

What is the Lord going to do in the foreseeable future? Will He change hearts and turn them to Himself? Will we witness a remarkable revival happen along the lines of earlier “awakenings”? Or, will the trends continue and the Christians become only a faithful remnant of what they once were, as happened to Israel throughout the Old Testament? Only God knows and either way, our only option is to remain faithful.

What does it look like to be faithful in a rapidly changing society? To meet the new challenges of an increasingly secular culture, we Christians will also need to change. No, I don’t mean we need to adopt some new identity so the world will like us, or take on some system that allegedly works like magic and converts all the heathen around us! Such programs amount to nothing more than a “get rich quick” scheme for the church and such schemes are worse than useless. What we will endeavor to do with the Lord’s help is to care for our members and seek the lost in our community. We will teach the faith to our children and pass it on to the following generations. We will do this much as we have for the last 30 years at Lord of Life and as Christians have done throughout the world for the last 20 centuries. But we may have to shift our tactics and be very careful with our limited resources. We may want to consider staffing changes or consider specific ministry to a certain ethnic group that has moved into our area. One thing is for certain, we will have to adjust our expectations from what they have been in the past.

Things are not the same in America. The notion of setting up a church in a growing area and waiting for Christians to show up is not a winning long-term strategy especially given the cultural and demographic trends. Then again, this was never the plan Christ gave His Church. He didn’t say, “Build it and they will come to you,” or “Conform to the world around you so people will like you more.” By no means! Our Lord told His disciples to “go and make disciples” by baptizing and teaching, (Matthew 28:19-20) and in the parable of the wedding guests He has the master tell his servants “Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.” (Luke 14:23) Baptizing, teaching, compelling people to be a part of God’s Kingdom, that, with His grace, is what we will endeavor to do as we seek to be faithful in this rapidly changing world.

And the results? As always, we will leave that to God. Whether we plant or water and no matter how hard we work, only God can make it grow. (1st Corinthians 3:5-9)
~ PrS

Special Services this Month

Wednesday, December 4

1:30 PM

(Light Lunch Noon)

7:00 PM

(Soup Supper 5:45 PM)

Wednesday, December 11

1:30 PM

(Light Lunch Noon)

7:00 PM

(Soup Supper 5:45 PM)

Wednesday, December 18

1:30 PM

(Light Lunch Noon)

7:00 PM

(Soup Supper 5:45 PM)

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve, 5:00 PM

Christmas Eve, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 25

Christmas Day, 10:00 AM

Note: No special service on
New Year’s Eve.





prepare for worship in December

Sunday, Dec. 1: First Sunday of Advent

Texts: Is. 2:1-5; Rom. 13:11-14; Matt. 24:36-44

Hymn of the Day: "Savior of the Nations, Come,"
332

Wednesday, Dec. 4: Advent Midweek 1:30pm,
7pm

Sunday, Dec. 8: Second Sunday of Advent

Texts: Is. 11:1-10; Rom. 15:4-13; Matt. 3:1-12

Hymn of the Day: "On Jordan's Bank the
Baptist's Cry," 344

Wednesday, Dec. 11: Advent Midweek
1:30pm, 7pm

Sunday, Dec. 15: Third Sunday of Advent

Texts: Is. 35; James 5:7-11 Matt. 11:2-15

Hymn of the Day: "Hark! A Thrilling Voice is
Sounding," 345

Wednesday, Dec. 18: Advent Midweek
1:30pm, 7pm

Sunday, Dec. 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Texts: Is. 7:10-17; Rom. 1:1-7; Matt. 1:18-25

Hymn for the Word: "O Come, O Come,
Emmanuel," 357

Tuesday, Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Divine
Services, 5 and 7pm

Wednesday, Dec. 25: Christmas Day, 10am

Sunday, Dec. 29: First Sunday after Christmas

Texts: Is. 63:7-14; Gal. 4:4-7; Matt. 2:13-23

Hymn for the Word: "Let All Together Praise
Our God," 389

Every Sunday Communion



At the December 1st voters' meeting, I brought the subject of every Sunday communion before the congregation for a discussion. The issue was brought to the elders for us to consider and there are some, perhaps many, who would like to see us offer the sacrament every week. There are also some, perhaps many, who have raised concerns over this matter and are hesitant to pursue it. A good discussion was had at the voters' meeting with many issues surrounding the topic being raised. The elders and I will make the final decision on the matter in the days ahead, but we have no timeline for this nor are we determined to do one thing or another. We want to hear from people and we also need to know that people are willing to volunteer to take up the extra work involved (this especially concerns the altar guild.) If you have thoughts on this issue you want to share with me or your elder, please contact us and let us know what you are thinking.

After the meeting, an email was sent to me by Dennis Delzer. He shared in the meeting that he had been in a congregation previously that had considered the same issue. He also shared with me and some of our leaders a white paper on the subject entitled, "Every Sunday Communion: Why?" Remarkably, the author of the paper, Rev. Klemet Preus, addresses every single issue raised at our meeting. I recommend you read this paper if you want to know more about this issue and its history in the Lutheran church as well as some practical responses to the questions that are often raised surrounding the issue.

Here is a link to the article online:

<http://storage.cloversites.com/gloryofchrist/documents/COMMUNION%20EVERY%20SUNDAY.htm>

As many of you are aware, our Thanksgiving offerings were gathered to support Lutherans for Life. In light of that, it seems fitting to post this letter for all to read:



Our national Thanksgiving holiday testifies to God's many blessings. One Lord, the Father and Savior, made, gave, and still sustains not only us but also all our neighbors and everything that we need to support this body and life. His goodness and mercy prevail even in the face of our many frailties, failures, and dangers, and He lovingly provides for both our salvation and our survival.

We rejoice that He has created us and every human life in His own image (Psalm 139:13).

We celebrate how He has redeemed us and every member of our race by His coming and suffering and rising again in mortal body like unto our own (John 1:14).

And we give thanks that He calls every person from fertilization to eternity into His everlasting family (1 Timothy 2:4).

We delight to declare and demonstrate how this grace—and not anyone else's age, appearance, or ability—puts the worth and purpose in all human bodies and lives.

So especially this day we revere especially the least of these as gift, privilege, and precious treasure of our Almighty Maker. Please accept our humble and hearty gratitude to you, the Lutherans For Life community, for making it possible, and Happy Thanksgiving!

In truth and love,

Pastor Michael Salemink
Executive Director, Lutherans For Life

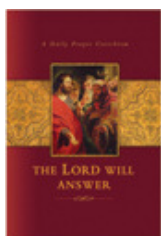
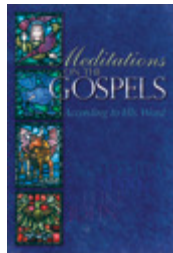


“Come, Lord Jesus”

This is the title of our Advent series this year authored by Rev. W. Mart Thompson of Concordia seminary. Thompson thoughtfully weaves the theme of Christ who has come, still comes to us today and will come again to the parable of the sower and he addresses the three challenges posed in the parable that try and hinder Christ’s coming to us, namely, the devil, the flesh, and the world. I won’t go into more details, other than to say that throughout, there will be a strong encouragement for you to engage in daily devotions.

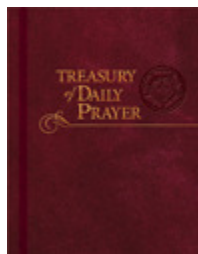
To that end, I recommend the following devotional resources from Concordia Publishing House:

Meditations on the Gospels. This is a wonderful devotional written nearly 100 year ago but updated and modernized using the ESV translation of the Gospels. This devotional divides all four gospels into brief sections and offers devotional thoughts and prayers on each section. It is a really great devotional and highly recommended for the beginner or the experienced.



The Lord will Answer. Based around the 6 chief parts of the Catechism, these brief daily devotions also contain many ancient prayers from church fathers.

Treasury of Daily Prayer. This is the granddaddy of devotionals. At nearly 1500 pages, it is the size of a Bible. This comprehensive resource is not for the beginner. It too contains many ancient prayers and readings from various church fathers and also has a guide for reading the Bible every year.



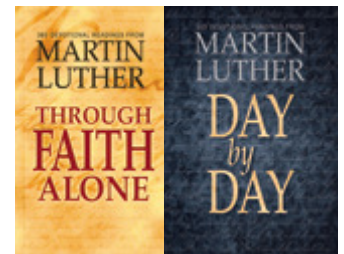
To Live with Christ. This book by Bo Giertz is my favorite devotional ever. Giertz was a Swedish Lutheran bishop in the 20th Century. His devotions are brief (about a page and a half) but deep and thought-provoking.

His prayers and writing reflect a wonderful piety that is able to relate profound theological truths to everyone and in only a few words. I cannot recommend this any higher.

God Grant it. This is a collection of writings by the founder of the Lutheran Church –Missouri Synod, C.F.W. Walther. This writing is dated and perhaps a little technical for some, but others will appreciate Walter’s great insights into Scripture and the connection with our church’s past.



Along the same lines... These two devotionals are a collection of writings by Martin Luther. Through faith Alone and Day by Day.



Additionally, here are several devotional links if you prefer to access your devotions electronically:

Lutheran Hour has great, short devotions that many will find valuable:

<https://www.lhm.org/dailydevotions/default.asp?date=20191130>

This links to devotions written by Dale Meyer, former Lutheran Hour Speaker and current seminary president:

<https://themeyerminute.typepad.com/meyerminute/>

Higher Things is the Lutheran youth organization that we take our kids to every year. These devotions can be printed out into a booklet and some will be available in the narthex in the weeks ahead. Here is the link to their daily devotions, called Reflections:

<https://higherthings.org/reflections/>

You can find additional links on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s website: lcms.org

In Memoriam

Recently we had three saints in our congregation pass away; Nita Burger, (10/30) Marian Krehmeyer, (11/4) and Gay Stueckler (11/18).

Nita's loss came as a sad surprise and we had to say goodbye much sooner than we wanted. She had struggled with health issues for years, but when she suffered a pulmonary embolism on October 30th, her death was sudden and unexpected. Nita was a good soul, truly a kind and compassionate person who was dearly loved. Her funeral was well attended and many were sad to lose her, but we know that in addition to being a kind and loving person, she was a woman of great faith and her Lord is a great Savior who gives hope to all who believe.

Marian Krehmeyer died peacefully at the age of 91 after a long and happy life. Though her final years were marked by memory loss and dementia, her happy demeanor never changed and she was as joyous and cheerful in her final days as ever. Marian grew up in the Church (literally, since her father was a pastor!) and she never left. She remained faithful all her life, and at her funeral, the Gospel was proclaimed for all to rejoice in again. Her ashes will soon be put to rest at the National Cemetery next to her husband Ralph, who served in the Navy during WWII.

Gay Stueckler suffered a fall in early November that resulted in bleeding on the brain, and she never recovered. Gay was a wonderful and strong woman with a lot of discipline and determination. I got to know her quite well these last 7 years as I ministered both to her and her husband Paul in the hospital and in care centers many times. Gay suffered both a heart attack and a stroke earlier this year and she did not seem long for this world then. But miraculously (or providentially) she did recover and as often as I visited her, she made it clear that her one reason for recovering was to see a playground built in honor of her husband Paul. As you know, this came about in October and on the day we celebrated the Reformation, we dedicated the new playground. Gay was in attendance with several family members. I watched her as she watched her great grandson play on the playground and I saw in her face, contentment and peace. A few days later she fell, and a not long after, she was gone. She will be missed, but because of God's grace and the faith He gave her, we will see her again one day in the Kingdom.



Lord of Life Small Groups

EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net
- † Usually meets third Sat., at 2:30 PM

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meets one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or speters@planolutheran.com
- † Usually meets one Sun. a month at 5:30 PM

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Usually meets the 2nd Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

MIXED BLESSINGS

- † For info contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771
- † Usually meets the 2nd Sat. of the month at 6:30 PM

TWENTY SOMETHINGS

- † For couples and singles in their twenties
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com
- † The group is currently in transition, but has usually met on Sundays after late service



- 1 Tim & Alyson Wood (12)**
- 4 Mollie Manning**
- 4 Monique Phelan**
- 5 Helen Dolan**
- 5 Mabel Heffner**
- 6 Frank & June Edelmann (38)**
- 6 Bob & Kathy Helms (32)**
- 9 Amanda Belcher**
- 11 Paula Lowery**
- 13 Monica Heffner**
- 13 Gail Wolf**
- 14 Stu Ehrett**
- 14 Jack Schrank**
- 15 Eleanor Duff**
- 15 Sebastian Shaltanis**
- 17 Marty & Angie Buckmeier (31)**
- 17 Joe & Laura Isbell (9)**
- 18 Stephanie Tabor**
- 19 Gabriel Frazier**
- 20 Alexander Duff**
- 20 Dave Peters**
- 21 Lizzy Short**
- 21 Stephen & Ireland Dillard (1)**
- 22 Dennis & Linda Delzer (52)**
- 23 Nancy Cawood**
- 23 Shirley Sparks**
- 23 Kevin & Cheryl Tyler (26)**
- 26 Andrew Buckmeier**
- 26 Ben Scarth**
- 27 Phil Klein**
- 27 Randy & Sylvia Rippey (1)**
- 27 Andrew & Rebecca Short (16)**
- 30 Dennis Delzer**
- 30 Ken & Rhonda Tabor (36)**

Serving in Worship in December

	December 1		December 8		December 15		December 22		December 29	
	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM
Elder	Kunschke		Moudy		Ziegelbein		Moudy		Ziegelbein	
Common Cup	Read	Ziegelbein	Read	Kunschke	D Peters	Kunschke	S Peters	Hite	Moudy	Hite
Altar	Lynda Abbott, Nancy Cawood, Nelda Schrank									
Acolyte	Kaitlyn	Luke	Josh	Sebastian	Josh	Sebastian	Kaitlyn	Luke		
Greeter	Martin	Dorak	Schrank	Ripsey	Hampton	Abbott/Moore	Vess	George	Schrank	Bennett/Tyler
Sound	Moudy	Shaltanis	Wolf	Reinert	Wilkerson	Wolf	Hacker	Hite	Wolf	Reinert
Usher	Scarth Bunger Shaltanis	Loewecke Ozlowski Ziegelbein	Frinsko Read Paradise	Cruz Moudy Carter	Prescott Ozlowski Messinger	Oltmann Berger Parish	Hacker Hacker Schrank	Buckmeier Short Strecker	Prescott Messinger Bunger	Parish Oltmann Berger

Midweek Advent Services

December 4
1:30 PM Elder: D Peters
7 PM Eder: Read
Sound Tech: Hacker

December 11
1:30 PM Elder: Read
7 PM Elder: D Peters
Sound Tech: Shaltanis

December 18
1;30 PM Elder: Read
7 PM Elder: D Peters
Sound Tech: Moudy

Christmas Eve

5 PM Elder: Read
Ushers: Hacker,
Hacker, Schrank
Sound Tech: Hite

7 PM Elder: Moudy
Usher: Buckmeier, Short
Cruz
Sound Tech: Wolf

Christmas Day

10 AM Elder: Peters/Read
Ushers: Strecker, Shaltanis,
Frinsko
Sound Tech: Wolf

FINANCIAL REPORT January- October, 2019

		ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE
RECEIPTS:	Regular Offerings	\$467,750	\$477,807	(\$10,057)
	Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$467,750	\$477,807	(\$10,057)
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$453,821	\$456,149	(\$2,328)
	RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES	\$13,930	\$21,658	(\$7,728)

OTHER INFORMATION

- 1. General Operating Fund Balance \$100,919
- 2. Dedicated Funds Balance \$141,734
- 3. Building Note Balance \$230,958