

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
BETHLEHEM  
EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
(THE LUTHERAN  
CHURCH-MISSOURI  
SYNOD)

# Bethlehem Star

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PALESTINE, TEXAS 75801  
REV. DAVID L. ADLER, PASTOR

AUGUST 2016  
(903) 729-6362

**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT:** Steadfast in the Word, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shares Christ and serves people with friendship in His love in all God's world.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance, fellow sojourners!

## What's Wrong with America—Part I

Asked by a family member, "Are you concerned about the direction America seems to be going?" I replied, "Of course." And then I said, "... but I think you might be surprised at WHY I think our nation is going in the wrong direction." What is wrong with America? I'll attempt to answer that in a series of articles.

First, I believe that the answer is found in the Christian home. Specifically, how men have abrogated their responsibility to serve as the spiritual leaders of their families.

Paul writes: "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" (*Ephesians 6:4 NIV*) Here we have the solemn responsibility of Christian fatherhood declared and defined.

A strong case could be made that systematically over the last century, spiritual leadership by men has been sadly neglected and in some cases intentionally ignored, so that many churches are filled in large percentage by women, especially wives and single mothers. Seminars, Bible classes, Ministry groups, etc. seem to focus on women. Even Promise Keepers, which originally addressed the issue of the spiritual leadership of men, now includes women.

Doesn't this beg the question — **where are the men?** Let's acknowledge the fact of their glaring absence and then to go to the Scripture for correction.

Delegation is one thing, but abrogation is another. There are some things that cannot be delegated ... SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP is one of them. How many Christian fathers have attempted to delegate (to the point of abrogation) the responsibility which is clearly theirs - namely, the place of nurturing families in the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Psychologists write books and briefs informing us that suicide, aggressive and psychotic behavior, drug abuse, and sexual aberrations (including homosexuality), are directly related to dysfunctional relationships between the fathers and children.

- Do you realize that although America is the richest industrialized nation on the face of God's earth that we have a poverty rate which is twice that of any other industrialized nation?
- Do you know that we are the world leader in child poverty and youth homicide? There are more kids killed by other kids in America than in any other place?
- 60% of America's rapists, 72% of adolescent murderers, 70% of long term prison inmates grew up in a home without a father.
- Tonight 4 children in 10 go to bed in a household where their biological father is absent and 1 of every 2 children will spend at least some time before the age of 18 living with only one of their biological parents.

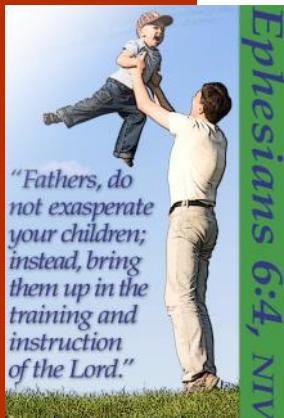
Please understand that St. Paul provides a picture of the Christian Father as a self-controlled and patient guide and instructor to his children. This is a striking contrast to 1<sup>ST</sup> century Roman culture. At that time a Roman father was an tyrant. He could treat his children as slaves ... chain them in his field and even sell them. He could punish them however he liked and was even able to inflict the death penalty on his children without any legal charges to follow.

I tell you this ... not because I think our present culture has overbearing fathers exercising their authority. No, quite the opposite ... today we find fathers with no authority at all. One word comes to my mind in describing many fathers today—"clueless." They wander aimlessly, thinking that earning a living is all that is necessary and hoping that a few great vacations will suffice and even solve all problems.

St. Paul shows that the Christian concept of fatherhood is not something gained out of a parenting manual or taught in a class, but it is derived from the one God and Father of us all, as he states in *Ephesians 3:14-15* – "For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." (*NIV*) A proper understanding of human fatherhood is only understood as we understand God as Father — and not the other way around! We turn to Holy Scripture and discover the principles of fatherhood and manhood ... then we ask the Holy Spirit to take these principles and work them out in our own families' experiences.

And St. Paul addresses the matter by saying, "Fathers, instead of exasperating your children, bring them up in the training and instruction of the

# Pastor's Message [continued]



**Those things which fathers consider most important they will impose upon their children. And our children are bright enough to understand that the things that we make optional for them are obviously not very significant.**

Lord." He says that the responsibility of a Father is to ***bring up*** his children. The Greek word is the word used for nourishing or feeding. So the Father has a responsibility not only to ***lead*** his family BUT to ***sustain*** them spiritually as well.

It is **very** clear: Fathers, this responsibility falls upon you. Certainly, you won't/can't do it on your own and the place of the mother by your side is not in question. Nevertheless, fathers cannot be allowed to sidestep their responsibility.

Fathers will impose upon their children those things which they consider most important. And our children are bright enough to understand that the things that we make optional for them are obviously not very significant.

One commentator wrote:

"If parents but gave as much time and thought to the rearing of children as they do to the rearing of animals and flowers, the situation would be very different." (D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, Commentary on Ephesians)

Paul explains this responsibility by giving us two different words ... two important words: the ***training*** and the ***instruction*** of the Lord. The "training" is something ***that we do***, the ***instruction***, is ***what we say*** ...

What does "the *instruction of the Lord*" mean? Does this mean that the only instruction children are to receive is that which is "Christian"? The idea that we will not teach anything other than Christian doctrine is silly. We will teach many things from sports to socialization. All of this multi-faceted teaching will be part of the child's total development.

BUT WHATEVER WE DO TEACH is to come from a Christian perspective ... and a Biblical worldview. Our families must understand that behind our verbal instruction and moral correction stands the Lord Jesus Himself ... that Christ himself is the chief instructor ... and that Christ himself is the chief administrator of discipline.

Our primary concern is that we bring the heart of our ***Savior*** to the hearts and minds of our family. Why is it that we see fathers make such great efforts to see to it that their children be involved in sports and/or academics and then make such poor efforts to read the Scriptures with their children? Have you taught your children how to

pray? Dad, have they ever seen or heard you pray from the heart? Why will dads seemingly move heaven and earth to make sure that they are involved in the development of that which is merely mental/physical and temporal, yet they won't budge even an inch to see that they are involved in the nurturing of that which is essentially spiritual and eternal? By the way, that doesn't end when the children leave the nest.

Another old adage comes to mind. Most children will adopt their mother's **beliefs** and their father's **behavior** - so if Mom attends worship services and Dad stays away, it's likely his children will be unchurched in their adult years. Yes, Dad, you have that much influence in your children's spiritual health and whether or not they will live their lives heaven-bound.

So, we now have a generation that has no real godly foundation. We ask, "what's wrong with America?" Isn't it obvious? We are now surrounded by a godless generation with godless goals and aspirations – AND, it hasn't even yet come to grips with the fact that it is godless. How can people ignore the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., in worship, study, devotional life, and lifestyle) and still call themselves Christian? And yet they do...

[... to be continued]

[If you do not agree with the positions stated here, I ask that you at least consider the arguments and put the best construction on my actions, my motivation, and my concern to be faithful 1) to Scripture and the Confessions, 2) to my ordination vows, and 3) to fulfill the great commission's goal of "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (St. Matthew 28:20).]

† † †

I look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning ... worshiping and studying with you ... lifting up and exalting our great God with you! Come with a smile on your face, a bounce in your step, your Bible in hand, and that friend you personally and intentionally invited. Also, bring a joyful, eager attitude to be touched by the Living Risen Christ, together with a hungry heart for spiritual vitality and victorious living that comes each time we encounter God's renewing presence in Word & Sacrament!

*Rex*

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(Peace [Shalom] be with you)

## SOCIAL CONCERNS

**THANK YOU!** to the Tugwell's for your hospitality and opening your home to us for a wonderful relaxing time of fellowship. Altogether about 35 folks came out and enjoyed burgers and some dominoes!

Brookdale (formerly Sterling House) Assisted Living would like to host a luncheon for those who might be interested in learning about the services they offer. Please contact Lana Bowden if you are interested. This will be held here at church or at their facility depending on interest. No endorsement from our church but for your information only.

**BACK THE BLUE!** (date to be announced) We are looking at hosting a come and go event to invite all law enforcement in the area-thanking them for their service and offering our prayers for safety as they go about their jobs. May also extend to all branches of services; EMS, firefighters etc. If you have any suggestions, please contact Lana Bowden.

## EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

We have a full plate beginning this fall! Come join us and help.

Our Adopt-A-Highway program signs are here and are waiting to be installed.

We are in the process of locating a new supplier for our church signs. The plan is to purchase and install 4 more around Palestine. Please see Don Fortner or Paul Stephenson to see how you can help.

We need your help: Donna Hughes needs someone to help deliver Bethlehem publicity to RV parks in the Palestine area. Short term commitment, may be  $\frac{1}{2}$  day. Please see her.

The Hospice bags have been a hit. We have sent 20 to the Hospice unit at the hospital. Feedback has been one of gratefulness.

**Saturday, August 27, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.** is the date for our program entitled "Caring for the Caregiver". All caregivers need spiritual and physical care on occasion. This program will address those needs. Please consider attending and invite friends who might benefit. Cyndi Gamble MA, LPC will be the presenter. Cyndi is Sandy Teets daughter. We are grateful to have her and look forward to her insights. This program will be open to the public in an effort to bolster Bethlehem's external focus.

**September 11, 2016** we will host Dr. Lou Jander. Dr. Jander will present an introductory snapshot of his "Sow the Word" ministry. It is based on the gospel of John. It will provide possible ways to share the Good News via John's gospel. It will be presented during our normal Bible study time slot.

Also on **September 11, 2016** Dr. Jander will make a presentation on possible disaster response that Bethlehem may be interested in pursuing. The presentation will take place after the Divine Service and a light lunch will be served. Please plan on attending both of these; they should be worthwhile and help us facilitate spreading the Good News!

And finally, we are planning a fish fry on **Saturday, October 15** to help fund upcoming Evangelism projects. Randy Teets is heading it up, please see him to see how you can help.

God has truly blessed our committee, with an enthusiastic group, please continue to pray for his guidance and that He would get the glory!

# Church Happenings ...

## YOUTH GARAGE SALE - SATURDAY JULY 30TH 7AM—2PM

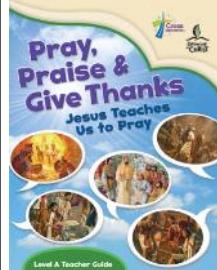
The youth and parents will help set up on Friday, July 29th starting at 8:00 a.m. The garage sale will be Saturday, July 30th, from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. If you have anything to donate, see Mary Bowden. Come and support our youth!

If you missed a Sunday, you can visit Bethlehem's web-site at [www.belctx.org](http://www.belctx.org) to hear past sermons.



## PRE-CONFIRMATION MEETING WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17TH 6:30 PM

Reverend Adler will meet with the parents of those who will be in confirmation class this year on Wednesday, August 17th at 6:30 PM. Confirmation class will begin on September 7th.



### SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL

There is still time to teach a class this summer. Let us know if you are interested.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL RALLY DAY AUGUST 28TH

We will be starting the new school year on August 28th. We are looking for individuals to teach on Sundays and Wednesdays. Please consider how you can assist in this important ministry.

### CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 27TH AT 10AM**

**SPEAKER: CYNDI GAMBLE, MA, LPC**

Bethlehem is hosting a free seminar to the community concerning "Caring for the Caregiver". All present and future caregivers will be blessed by this topic.

## KIDS KORNER

Matthew Jackson has been accepted into and is now a member of the Order of the Arrow, the honor society of the Boy Scouts of America. Congratulations Matthew!

**WE WANT TO RECOGNIZE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR TALENTED KIDS!** Please submit pictures and write-ups to Yanneth Harris or the church office.



## "THE LUTHERAN HOUR RADIO MINISTRY"

The Lutheran Hour can be heard on the radio Saturday at:

6:30 AM on 91.9 FM KAVX Lufkin, TX

Sunday at 10:30 AM on 97.5 FM KTTB Tyler, TX

Sunday at 12:30 PM on 91.5 FM KHCB Madisonville, TX

Online at [www.lutheranhour.org](http://www.lutheranhour.org)

DATE: August 7, 2016

TITLE: "The Word in a World of Words"

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

It's "Archives August" and Pastor Gregory Seltz revisits a classic sermon by Dr. Oswald Hoffmann

DATE: August 14, 2016

TITLE: "In Spite of Everything"

TEXT: Romans 8:28

SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

"Archives August" continues, as Pastor Gregory Seltz preaches another classic sermon by Dr. Oswald Hoffmann.

DATE: August 21, 2016

TITLE: "Hope Not in Politicians"

TEXT: Isaiah 31:1-3

SPEAKER: Rev. Gregory Seltz

"Archives August" concludes with a classic yet timely message originally presented by Dr. Oswald Hoffmann.

DATE: August 28, 2016

TITLE: "Boasting - Ridiculous or Real"

TEXT: Galatians 6:14

SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

Modern man boasts, "God is dead," but what have we gained from such thinking?



## *Jenth Lutheran Hymn Festival*

MORTON H. MEYERSON SYMPHONY CENTER —  
DALLAS, TEXAS OCTOBER 16, 2016

CELEBRATING THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION

### LEADING THE FESTIVAL:

REKNOWNED ORGANIST AND COMPOSER — DR. DAVID CHERWIEN  
FEATURING HYMNS WITH TEXTS AND TUNES — DR. MARTIN LUTHER  
MUSIC LEADERSHIP — ORGAN, BRASS ENSEMBLE AND MASS CHOIRS OF  
ADULTS AND CHILDREN LED BY SAM EATHERTON & CYNTHIA NOTT  
PURCHASE TICKETS AT [WWW.LUTHERANHYMFESTIVAL.ORG](http://WWW.LUTHERANHYMFESTIVAL.ORG)

INFO: 972-333-5614

Tickets are \$10 and \$15

## REMEMBERING IN PRAYER

**"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."** (Philippians 4:6)

### HEALTH NEEDS

#### MEMBERS:

Roberto Garcia - undergoing tests to determine a spot in his abdomen

George Nelson - recovering from a stroke

Pastor Roy Southard - treatment for cancer

#### FRIENDS:

Mike & Kathy Abrahamson - [Jackson's friends] - Kathy's health

Michael Brummerhot [Marcy Hogan's cousin] - accident

Shirley Carnahan [Steve & Mary Unk's friend] - health concerns

Vernon Denman - [James Taylor's friend] - loss of mother

Melvin Fogle [Jo Ann Tugwell's brother-in-law]

Cookie Howell [friend of Marcy Hogan] - cancer

Gena Lawense [Albert Harris's sister]

Steve & Katie Lund [former members] - ongoing health concerns

Clarence Mindrup - [Patti Lestig's father] - cancer treatment

Shannon and Thomas Nicholson [friend of Marcy Hogan] - needs job

Gaile Nivens [Alicia Hutton's aunt]

Debbie Noonan [friend of Marcy Hogan] - ongoing health concerns

Bonita Randall [Neva Shugart Broad's niece] - ongoing health concerns

Ethan Rodriguez - [Alice Chambers' grandson] - auto accident

Floyd Ruhnke [Marjorie Smith's cousin] - health concerns

Ruben Salazar [friend of Leo Markwardt]

Phyllis Shafferkoetter - [Mary Unk's sister] - blood clots in lungs and leg

Rebecca [Randy & Sandy Teets daughter]

Tim Walther [Melanie Jackson's brother] - stroke

Michelle Warren [Mike Smith's niece] - recovery from auto accident

Orville & Cookie Wilbanks [friends of the Hughes']

Gene & Patsy Worsham [Tim's parents] - ongoing health concerns

### HOMEBOUND

Opal Garber, Benjamin Garcia [Robert Garcia's brother], Nicki Hightower, Dorothy Jackson, Martha Kaudelka, Neva Kosted, Ardelle Samford, Dean Sands, Johnnie Weaver, Connie Wunderlich

### THOSE SERVING IN OUR NATION'S ARMED FORCES

Members Kyle Lawson and Kyle Shepherd, as well as Robert Garcia [Robert & Juanita's son], Jason Payne [Kay Wickliffe's son] and Jeremy Stafford [Marcy Hogan's nephew]

Please inform the Pastor and the Church Office regarding the status of submitted prayers so we may be timely and up-to-date in petitions to our gracious God.



# Church Council Meeting - July 12, 2016

Devin called the meeting to order. Pastor opened with devotion and prayer. Minutes were read, \*\*Motion by Lea, 2nd by Melanie to accept with correction.

## REPORTS

**VP**- absent

**Financial Secretary** - Lea reported June income \$12,108, expenses \$10,578, loan balance \$66,285 and CEF report.

**Treasurer** - Mary Lou gave income report, account balances, budget report for June & year-to-date. \*\*Motion by James, 2nd by Jim to accept financial reports. Motion carried.

**Elders** - James reported average June attendance 69, 2nd quarter 72. Added Jennifer Peterson & Laura Lewis, profession of faith; Emily & Sealy Peterson, baptism, Alice & MacKenzie Chambers, adult transfer in June.

**Christian Education** - Melanie reported Summer Sunday School going OK; Lock In went great, 7 young people-- bible study, pizza, movies, baked & delivered brownies to fire & police stations, ER & EMS and scavenger hunt. Rally Day will be August 28th.

**Evangelism** - Jerry reported fundraiser Fish Fry October 15th, will name recipient; 20 Hospice bags delivered to hospital; first sign up on Rusk Highway, 2nd will be put up soon & will order 4 more. Dr. Jander has program Christ Point Care to share with churches on how church can help in case of emergencies/disaster. He will be here September 11th after service. Prepared and mailed flyer & newsletters to seven RV parks in area inviting them to church, will deliver monthly. Cyndi will present seminar in August on Alzheimers/caregivers, will invite community and area churches. Will continue to use term "Evangelism" with focus on Outreach.

**Stewardship** - Devin reported for Steve, going through Grant process for new lights.

**Property** - Jim reported we now have weekly mowing during growing season.

**Social Concerns** - Lana reported about 35 went to Tugwell's for picnic, great time. Sterling House will have luncheon and information at their facility (not at church.) Installation August 7th at 4pm. Kitchen committee will meet, looked at Tugwell's cabinets to get idea what can be done. Pot Luck July 31st, will welcome new members.

**Youth** - Devin gave Jody's report, Splash Kingdom July 26th; Higher Things, Garage Sale July 30th.

**Pastor** reported Catechism class begins Sept. 7th with 5 students. Circuit Pastor's meeting here August 18th; Pastors Conference in Houston October 24-26.

## OLD BUSINESS

Nominating committee has posted slate of officers.

Aaron's Eagle Scout in the fall.

Tickets available for Lutheran Hymnfest \$10 & \$15.

## NEW BUSINESS

Lana suggested reception for law enforcement to show appreciation.

Pastor includes responders, law enforcement, fire fighters in prayers, asked about complimentary meal for those in uniform when we have fundraisers.

James mentioned change in Pastor's insurance as of first of year. \*\*Motion by James, 2nd by Jim that we pay prorated insurance. Motion carried.

\*\*Motion by Lea, 2nd by Lana to adjourn. Passed. Pastor closed with the benediction.

Present: Devin Jackson, Melanie Jackson, Donna Hughes, Lea Rosier, Lana Bowden, James Taylor, Jerry Hartenberger, Jim Broad, Mary Lou Daughtrey, Pastor Adler.



The Annual LWML Bazaar: November 5, 2016, 9am - 2pm. Good food and desserts. We need craft ideas to make items to sell. Put on your thinking caps and look at your craft books, or check online at Pinterest, etc. Don't forget that Hobby Lobby has great craft ideas – take time to go look!

Remember that we also offer baked goods for sale; go find those special recipes. We're looking forward to a successful Bazaar.

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**Reminder:** If you have brought food (for potlucks and other events), please pick up the empty dishes. Anything not picked up will be put into the Youth's Garage Sale on July 30.

### Future Activities:

Making plans to visit our members who are in nursing home(s).

Need Adventure Day ideas, for when it is cooler.

Garber Hall Kitchen committee is gathering information for the "re-do."

Adopt-a-Highway project – still waiting for installation of signs.

Collecting Items for Hospice Bags–part of our evangelism effort. Look for collection box in the Narthex.



**LWML Sunday 2016 — October 2 — “Come and See”** based on Psalm 66:5 and St. John 1:35-51. LWML women issue an invitation to “come and see” what God has done for all people; countless neighbors from all walks of life have been reached and touched by the love of God in Christ Jesus.

**Kroger “Community Rewards” Program-** THANKS TO ALL WHO JOIN US IN THIS EFFORT. Contact Donna Hughes for information on how to participate, using your Kroger card. Remember that LWML uses these funds for our various projects.

**CARD FRONTS** from all kinds of greeting cards – you know the ones that are cluttering your home, in cabinets, drawers, all the places you stash them! Look around and bring them to Garber Hall and deposit into the collection box. Only the card front is required, and it must measure **7" by 5" or smaller**. Make sure there are no personal, written messages on the front or the back. Bring them and we'll trim them.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Sun., August 14, 2016, next LWML meeting after church.

LWML Sunday 2016 – October 2.

LWML Zone Fall Rally – date and location to be announced.

*Our society is open to all women of Bethlehem. We usually meet after church on the second Sunday of the month. There are no dues, but we collect donations for MITES and for our general fund. The Annual Bazaar is our major fundraiser. Why do we meet together? The LWML in Texas creates opportunities for Lutheran women to become more aware of the need for outreach to people around them as they are in need of the words of hope that are valid only in Christ.*

Go to [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org) and sign up for “**The Time is Now,**” a 2-Minute Tuesday email for timely tips, insight and wisdom to share God’s word, Mission, service and fellowship.

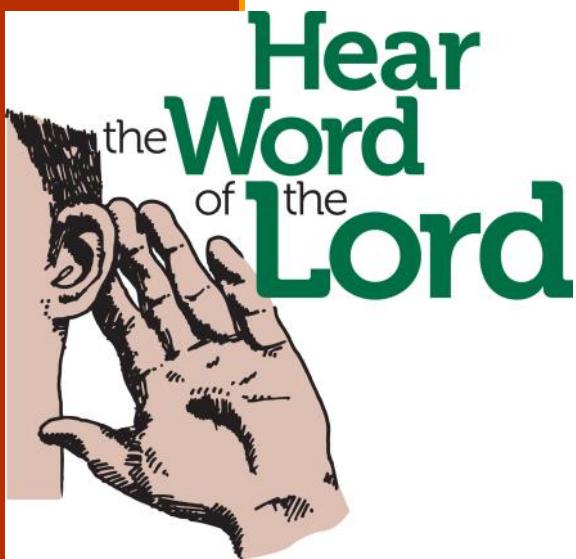
Web site: <http://lwmltxdist.org>



**Serve the Lord with gladness! Psalm 100:2**

**KIDS KORNER**

# TV's Effect on the Sermon



makes it hard to hold attention with a sermon and get an appropriate response. He says:

"First, a steady diet of television tends to make people physically lazy, offering them home entertainment at the turn of a knob. Why not relax in a comfortable armchair and worship before the screen? Why bother to turn out for church? Second, television also tends to make people intellectually critical. People flop before the box to be entertained, not to think. So the disease of 'spectatoritis' is widespread in society today. Third, the constant viewing of television leads to emotional insensitivity. We have viewed so much pain and tragedy that we have become hardened to human need. Fourth, too much viewing can cause psychological confusion. We are

The television diet of the average adult in America is 23 hours of viewing a week. Dr. John R. Stott, after a study of this phenomenon, suggests that this is what

bombarded with so many conflicting reports that we find ourselves bewildered as to the truth. Fifth, the vivid immorality and raw crime portrayed make viewers morally disordered. And sixth, I have also observed that television can be a substitute for the local church, undermining its authority and that of the pastor.

"In the light of the profound impact of TV upon the human psyche, we can no longer assume that people either want to listen to sermons or have the ability to do so."

—Bill Bennett, *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead: How You Can Preach Your Best Sermon Yet—This Sunday*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, pp. 41–42.



# Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses

**August 3** - Joanna, Mary, and Salome—Myrrhbearers - Known in some traditions as “the faithful women,” the visit of these three persons and other women to the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning is noted in the Gospel records of Matthew (28:1), Mark (16:1), and Luke (24:10). Joanna was the wife of Cuza, a steward in Herod’s household (Lk. 8:3). Mary, the mother of James (the son of Alphaeus), was another of the women who faithfully provided care for Jesus and His disciples from the time of His Galilean ministry through His burial after the crucifixion. Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt. 27:56), joined with the women both at the cross and in the bringing of the spices to the garden tomb. These “faithful women” have been honored in the church through the centuries as examples of humble and devoted service to the Lord.

**August 10** - Laurence, Deacon and Martyr - Early in the third century A.D., Laurence, most likely born in Spain, made his way to Rome. There he was appointed chief of the seven deacons and was given the responsibility to manage church property and finances. The emperor at the time, who thought that the church had valuable things worth confiscating, ordered Laurence to produce the “treasures of the church.” Laurence brought before the emperor the poor whose lives had been touched by Christian charity. He was then jailed and eventually executed in the year 258 by being roasted on a gridiron. His martyrdom left a deep impression on the young church. Almost immediately, the date of His death, August 10, became a permanent fixture on the early commemorative calendar of the Church.

**August 16** - Isaac, the long promised and awaited son of Abraham and Sarah, was born when his father was 100 and his mother 91. The announcement of his birth brought both joy and laughter to his aged parents (so the name “Isaac,” which means “laughter”). As a young man, Isaac accompanied his father to Mount Moriah, where Abraham, in obedience to God’s command, prepared to sacrifice him as a burnt offering. But God intervened, sparing Isaac’s life and providing a ram as a substitute offering (Gen. 22:1–14), and thus pointing to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world. Isaac was given in marriage to Rebekah (24:15), and they had twin sons, Esau and Jacob (25:19–26). In his old age Isaac, blind and feeble, wanted to give his blessing and chief inheritance to his favorite—and eldest—son, Esau. But through deception Rebekah had Jacob receive them instead, resulting in years of family enmity. Isaac died at the age of 180 and was buried by his sons, who by then had become reconciled, in the family burial cave of Machpelah (35:28–29).

**August 17** - Johann Gerhard, Theologian - Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) was a great Lutheran theologian in the tradition of Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Martin Chemnitz (1522–86) and the most influential of the 17th-century dogmaticians. His monumental *Loci Theologici* (23 large volumes) is still considered by many to be a definitive statement of Lutheran orthodoxy. Gerhard was born in Quedlinburg, Germany. At the age of 15 he was stricken with a life-threatening illness. This experience, along with guidance from his pastor, Johann Arndt, marked a turning point in his life. He devoted the rest of his life to theology. He became a professor at the University of Jena and served many years as the Superintendent of Heldberg. Gerhard was a man of deep evangelical piety and love for Jesus. He wrote numerous books on exegesis, theology, devotional literature, history, and polemics. His sermons continue to be widely published and read.

**August 19** - Bernard of Clairvaux, Hymnwriter and Theologian - A leader in Christian Europe in the first half of the 11th century A.D., Bernard is honored in his native France and around the world. Born into a noble family in Burgundy in 1090, Bernard left the affluence of his heritage and entered the monastery of Citeaux at the age of 22. After two years he was sent to start a new monastic house at Clairvaux. His work there was blessed in many ways. The monastery at Clairvaux grew in mission and service, eventually establishing some 68 daughter houses. Bernard is remembered for his charity and political abilities, but especially for his preaching and hymn composition. The hymn texts “O Jesus, King Most Wonderful” and “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” are part of the heritage of the faith left by Saint Bernard.

**August 20** – Samuel - last of the Old Testament judges and first of the prophets (after Moses), lived during the 11th century B.C. The child of Elkanah, an Ephraimite, and his wife Hannah, Samuel was from early on consecrated by his parents for sacred service and trained in the house of the Lord at Shiloh by Eli the priest. Samuel’s authority as a prophet was established by God (1 Sam. 3:20). He anointed Saul to be Israel’s first king (10:1). Later, as a result of Saul’s disobedience to God, Samuel repudiated Saul’s leadership and then anointed David to be king in place of Saul (16:13). Samuel’s loyalty to God, his spiritual insight, and his ability to inspire others made him one of Israel’s great leaders.

**August 27** - Monica, Faithful Mother - A native of North Africa, Monica (A.D. 333–387) was the devoted mother of Saint Augustine. Throughout her life she sought the spiritual welfare of her children, especially that of her brilliant son, Augustine. Widowed at a young age, she devoted herself to her family, praying many years for Augustine’s conversion. When Augustine left North Africa to go to Italy, she followed him to Rome and then to Milan. There she had the joy of witnessing her son’s conversion to the Christian faith. Weakened by her travels, Monica died at Ostia, Italy on the journey she had hoped would take her back to her native Africa. On some church year calendars, Monica is remembered on May 4.

**August 28** - Augustine of Hippo, Doctor of the Church - St. Augustine was one of the greatest of the Latin church fathers and a significant influence in the formation of Western Christianity, including Lutheranism. Born in A.D. 354 in North Africa, Augustine’s early life was distinguished by exceptional advancement as a teacher of rhetoric. In his book *Confessions* he describes his life before his conversion to Christianity, when he was drawn into the moral laxity of the day and fathered an illegitimate son. Through the devotion of his sainted mother Monica and the preaching of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (339–97), Augustine was converted to the Christian faith. During the great Pelagian controversies of the 5th century, Augustine emphasized the unilateral grace of God in the salvation of mankind. Bishop and theologian at Hippo in North Africa from A.D. 395 until his death in 430, Augustine was a man of great intelligence, a fierce defender of the orthodox faith, and a prolific writer. In addition to the book *Confessions*, Augustine’s book *City of God* had a great impact upon the church throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

# Theses on Worship (Part 1)

Rev. David L. Adler, Pastor

In Nomine Jesu

## THESSIS I

**I CONFESS** that worship (i.e., Divine Service, in German: Gottesdienst) is our triune God's service to us, and our faithful responses always direct us back to God from whom all blessings flow.

**I DENY** that worship is primarily a human activity, which is constituted by contrived efforts at emotion-centered adoration and praise.

What does this mean?

- Worship is always centered in our triune God's actions—thus the hymns, liturgies and messages must always convey God's work and not be seen as human activities. The hymns, liturgies and messages are to be evaluated on how well they bring an awareness of God's gracious activity into the consciousness and appreciation of the people.
- Worship is by and for those who have a living faith. It is therefore a faith-strengthening activity for the community as God comes to His people through the means of grace, resulting in evangelism activities by those who hear the Word of God and keep it.
- Trinitarian creeds and catechetical statements are regularly incorporated so that the ecumenical nature of worship is appreciated, yet the clarity of our Lutheran focus is evident.
- Worship practices or messages, which are designed to manipulate emotionally are inappropriately geared toward the worshipper and not to the One being worshipped.
- Likewise, worship will not be an entertainment event for the audience or a popularity contest for the message-givers. While worship is edifying, engaging, and attractive, the focus must always be on that which is above and beyond the temporal and mundane. Clapping is viewed as inappropriate.

## THESSIS 2

**I CONFESS** that worship flows from the Gospel. At the heart and center of all worship is Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for sin. In worship, the living and saving Lord comes to give us life.

**I DENY** that worship is based on the Law, namely, that our feelings or gifts supplement the work of Christ.

What does this mean?

- Our orders of service (liturgy) as well as our preaching must include God's Word of Law and Gospel. Most prominent will be the saving Gospel which offers the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ.

- When we gather for worship, our focus will be on God and not on ourselves. We will avoid going through the motions of the liturgy as if by such a work we merit God's favor.
- As we strive to engage the hearts and minds of the worshippers, we will try to avoid worship becoming mindless recitation, while valuing meaningful repetition of the Good News of God's gracious activity.

## THESSIS 3

**I CONFESS** that in the liturgy God's Word and Sacraments are proclaimed and administered. Through these means, God dispenses forgiveness, life, and salvation.

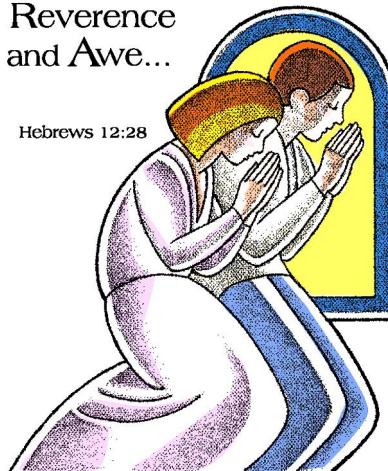
**I DENY** that the liturgy is a mere form to produce the desired responses in worshippers.

What does this mean?

- I recognize the great gifts of the liturgy, which have been handed down to us over the centuries. This liturgical tradition includes both the historic service of Word and Sacrament (the Divine Service) as well as the many prayer offices (such as Matins, Morning Prayer, Vespers, and Evening Prayer) that can provide a framework for our Sunday services and daily prayer. Our community will gain an understanding and appreciation of the variety of the Church's worship life and practice as we explore and experience these services.
- I use the historic liturgies because they have proven to be a reliable way to ensure the centrality of the forgiveness of sins, rather than merely for historic or aesthetic reasons.

Let us be thankful,  
and so Worship God  
acceptably with  
Reverence  
and Awe...

Hebrews 12:28



# STEWARDSHIP

"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift" (2 Cor. 9:15)! This is St. Paul's exclamation upon hearing the Corinthian church's response to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his request for support for the Church in Jerusalem. The Christians in Corinth heard and received God's mercy in Christ, and they responded to St. Paul's call to support Christians in Jerusalem with a collection. The Corinthian's joy filled Jerusalem's need.

This is the reality of stewardship. Because of God's generosity in the giving of His Son to die on the cross for us, we are to be generous with all that we receive from Him. What do we receive? Everything. All that we are and all that we have is the Lord's. He is the creator and the giver. We are His creatures and those who receive what He gives.

It sounds easy. And it is. But then again it isn't. Stewardship is easy because it's God's work. Through what God gives, we give to others. Through what God gives, we support the work of the church for the life of the world. He gives; we receive. And like our generous Father in Heaven, we, as His children, use what He gives to us to love and serve others.

But stewardship is also difficult. That is because it goes against our natural inclination to think that what I have is mine to do with what I want. This is

our sinful nature. It is our selfishness and our greed. How can we who have been given everything—life, food, clothing, house, home, forgiveness, divine sonship, an eternal inheritance—be so stingy with what we give to the church, the place where we hear about and receive all that God gives us and does for us? We are all guilty of this kind of thinking. And the only godly response is to repent and trust in the Gospel.



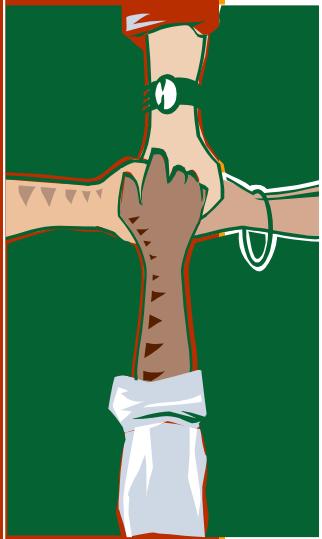
For if God has given you His own Son, will He not give you all things? Yes. He will. This is His sure and certain promise. God provides for His people. He provides everything we need for this body and life and for the life that is to come.

The church is a mercy place. It's a place where God's mercy in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, is given and received. For we who believe in Christ, it means forgiveness, life, and salvation in the face of sin, death, and the power of the devil. Here in the church we inhale God's mercy in Word and Sacrament, and exhale this same mercy in love and service to our neighbor. And that is an enduring, joyful thing to do. Our joy fills our neighbor's need because His joy filled ours (Heb. 12:2). Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give,  
 not reluctantly or under compulsion,  
 for GOD loves a cheerful giver."  
2 Corinthians 9:7

# 12 Reasons Why Church Membership Matters

Dedicated



to Christ



As for me and my household,  
we will serve the LORD.

JOSHUA 24:15, NIV

The following is excerpted from Jonathan Leeman's book *Why Church Membership?* from Crossway, 2012.

1) **It's biblical.** Jesus established the local church and all the apostles did their ministry through it. The Christian life in the New Testament is church life. Christians today should expect and desire the same.

2) **The church is its members.** To be "a church" in the New Testament is to be one of its members (read through Acts). And you want to be part of the church because that's who Jesus came to rescue and reconcile to himself.

3) **It's a pre-requisite for the Lord's Supper.** The Lord's Supper is a meal for the gathered church, that is, for members (see 1 Cor. 11:20, 33). And you want to take the Lord's Supper. It's the team "jersey" which makes the church team visible to the nations.

4) **It's how to officially represent Jesus.** Membership is the church's affirmation that you are a citizen of Christ's kingdom and therefore a card-carrying Jesus Representative before the nations. And you want to be an official Jesus Representative. Closely related to this...

5) **It's how to declare one's highest allegiance.** Your membership on the team, which becomes visible when you wear the "jersey," is a public testimony that your highest allegiance belongs to Jesus. Trials and persecution may come, but your only words are, "I am with Jesus."

6) **It's how to embody and experience biblical images.** It's within the accountability structures of the local church that Christians live out or embody what it means to be the

"body of Christ," the "temple of the Spirit," the "family of God," and so on for all the biblical metaphors (see 1 Cor. 12). And you want to experience the interconnectivity of his body, the spiritual fullness of his temple, and the safety and intimacy and shared identity of his family.

7) **It's how to serve other Christians.** Membership helps you to know which Christians on Planet Earth you are specifically responsible to love, serve, warn, and encourage. It enables you to fulfill your biblical responsibilities to Christ's body (for example, see Eph. 4:11-16; 25-32).

8) **It's how to follow Christian leaders.** Membership helps you to know which Christian leaders on Planet Earth you are called to obey and follow. Again, it allows you to fulfill your biblical responsibility to them (see Heb. 13:7; 17).

9) **It helps Christian leaders lead.** Membership lets Christian leaders know which Christians on Planet Earth they will "give an account" for (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

10) **It enables church discipline.** It gives you the biblically prescribed place to participate in the work of church discipline responsibly, wisely, and lovingly (1 Cor. 5).

11) **It gives structure to the Christian life.** It places an individual Christian's claim to "obey" and "follow" Jesus into a real-life setting where authority is actually exercised over us (see John 14:15; 1 John 2:19; 4:20-21).

12) **It builds a witness and invites the nations.** Membership puts the alternative rule of Christ on display for the watching universe (see Matt. 5:13; John 13:34-35; Eph. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:9-12). The very boundaries which are drawn around the membership of a church yields a society of people which invites the nations to something better.

**CHURCH**  
**What's missing?**  
**UR** (you are)