

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!

It has been said that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” I say, “Maybe, but it really depends on the dog and the relationship of the dog to its master.” Now in the realm of the Church, when dealing with matters of faith and practice, especially concerning what we may view as “tradition” – it is often hard to accept something which appears new.

However, our brief experience with what we think is traditionally correct, may in fact be different from that which was practiced for the better part of the history of the Church. As we continue to search and study the Word and the Confessions, we may indeed find that some of the “accepted” practice of the church today is not only different from, but also contrary to what was the historical norm. An example of this is our understanding of Holy Absolution. This is true in terms of what we do and receive as a congregation at the beginning the Divine Service ... and this is true in terms of what we might do and receive individually with our own pastor or father confessor.

Going back in time, what most of us grew up with *The Lutheran Hymnal* [1941]. There were two main services. Page 15 when we celebrated Holy Communion and Page 5 when we did not. Sometimes we would use *The Order of the Confessional Service* on pp 46-49. When we used Page 15 or the Confessional Service, we were taught that the Absolution was what the Pastor said to the worshipping congregation after they had made a sincere confession. Many of us learned that “heartily” was the word...not “hardly.” We were taught that when the pastor says these words: “In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (or some variation) that this effectively forgave all the sins of everyone who sincerely made a confession of sins beforehand. We were also were taught that this absolution was very different from the simple declaration of grace on page 6 that was spoken by the pastor on Sundays when Holy Communion was not celebrated.

When a new hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*, came out in 1982 we saw that it had these same two forms of corporate confession and options for an “absolution” or declaration of grace. And then when our present hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*, was published in 2006, it continued in the same fashion, offering both an indicative-operative Absolution (“I forgive you...”) and a Declaration of Grace. In *LSB*, Divine Service Four introduced a Prayer for Forgiveness.

As I wrote in last month’s newsletter article, our Lutheran Confessions state: **“private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse.”** (AC XII). Nonetheless, when *TLH* was published, it did not even contain a service of Individual Confession and Absolution. But the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has begun and continues to encourage the recovery of the lost practice of Individual Confession and Absolution.

Some of you may remember the practice of announcing for Communion, as also did my parents and grandparents. This was most likely the last remnant of private confession and individual absolution known to the Church of the Reformation. I began making use of private confession some years ago, when I learned, not only of it’s historical place in the Lutheran Church, but more importantly, because of its intrinsic spiritual value. Now I make private confession as often as my father confessor is available, and I pronounce the Absolution whenever anyone seeks it and makes individual confession. I also came to a point when pronouncing corporate absolution began causing me issues of conscience. As I was saying the words, I felt in my heart that it was wrong, and that I was a hypocrite for doing so.

We’re not sure when and how Individual Confession and Absolution fell out of use in our church (in spite of the Confession’s clear statement that this NOT happen). Regardless, a study of History and our Lutheran Confessions clearly reveals that the Lutheran Reformers of the 16TH century AND our Lutheran forebears in the 18TH century 1) valued Holy Absolution, and 2) did not understand Absolution to be what we have done corporately at the beginning of the Divine Service, but what was offered personally and

'...believe this absolution and firmly hold that when we believe the word of absolution we are as truly reconciled with God as if we had heard a voice from heaven...'

fore the Divine Service, and if we should have true "absolution", then we may do better not to practice before the Divine Service as we do, and we may do best to practice private confession and individual absolution as described in the Lutheran Confessions, based on Holy Scripture. Nathan and David in 2 Samuel 12:1-15 are a classic Old Testament example of such a practice, and Jesus and the paralytic in Matthew 9:1-8 are a classic New Testament example, but I cannot think of a single example from either Testament of more than one person being absolved at a time. John 20:23's use of the plural for the disciples and the plural for those being absolved or excommunicated hardly means all the disciples were acting at the same time with groups of people; they would have acted one on one (confer Matthew 18:20 and how Luther quotes it in the binding Smalcald Articles III:iv). In the history of the Lutheran Church, at least in one time and place, there were efforts to drop the large-group form and require the use of individual absolution.

The proper practice of private confession and individual absolution is closely linked both with the teaching of salvation and with proper reception of the Lord's Supper and so also with the proper practice rightly called "closed communion". The Lutheran Confessions repeatedly say (ACL XXIV:5-6; ACG XXV:1; Ap XV:40; Ap XXIV:1, 49) that no one is admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar unless they are first instructed, examined, and heard (as in private confession) and then absolved (as in individual absolution). Such absolution was not legalistically required before every time a person might commune; the Rev. Dr. Martin

But, Luther probably could not have imagined people never in their lifetimes making private confession for the sake of individual absolution and still being communed. We might be excused until we are taught better.

Generally, our conservative nature that resists what might appear to us to be new teaching is a good thing, for every false teaching is at some point "new". However, we should not resist true teaching that only is "new" to us, but we should let God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions norm our belief, teaching, and practice. If you are wrestling with matters related to confession and absolution, let us talk more about them. Maybe ask yourself what it would take for you to be convinced, whether you are open to such convincing, and what your real objections are. The answers to those questions may be telling! Let us all pray and believe that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13). (Rev. Dr. Jayson Galler, *What is true about confession and absolution?* The Pilgrimage, September 2015)

In my 39TH year in the pastoral office, I find my life a testimony to the truth that we *never* stop learning ... we never stop making corrections so that our practice is always faithful to Scripture and the Confessions. May we all be faithful "dogs" in service to our Lord and Master.

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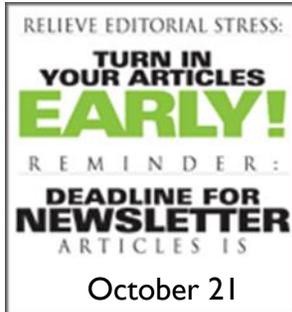
I look forward to seeing you each Sunday morning ... worshiping and studying with you ... lifting up and exalting our great God with you! Come with a smile on your face, a bounce in your step, your Bible in hand, and that friend you personally and intentionally invited. Also, bring a joyful, eager attitude to be touched by the 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!



light. Your support of this ministry helps to provide a safe home for minor girls that have been rescued from sex trafficking.

FROM JAQUELYN SKY FOUNDATION: On behalf of the 2018 Jaquelyn Sky Foundation committee and all the childhood cancer families that will benefit due to your generous donation-Thank You! Your faithful support means more than words can express. Thanks for your heart of Gold!

FROM DISCIPLES OF THE WAY: My new friend in the mission field, Baha, was blessed to be in your church. "I have never felt so welcomed in my life" he said. I thank the Lord of the Harvest for your generous gift of \$2500 to get more Arabic Bibles to grow the Kingdom of Christ. Pastor Karim



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Lutheran Witness subscriptions will expire on December 31, 2018. The subscription cost is \$13.65. For those who have a current subscription, it will automatically renew. If you would like to start receiving The Lutheran Witness or wish to cancel your subscription, please notify the church office by OCTOBER 14TH.

PAINT PALESTINE PINK FUN RUN SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6TH 7 AM

Bethlehem will once again have a rest stop in our parking lot for the Paint Palestine Pink Fun Run. We will set up at 7 a.m. and hand out bottled water. We need workers, cases of water and a cooler with ice. Contact Donna Hughes for details. Please come out and help this worthy cause!

BIBLE JAMBOREE AT GREENS PARK SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13TH 11 AM — 1 PM

If you would like to help with the Bible Jamboree, please see Jerry Hartenberger.



LWML BAZAAR AND BAKE SALE SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD 9AM - 2PM

Plan to come for lunch with choice of soups and all the trimmings AND shop for gifts during our Bazaar. Remember, we are planning to have delicious goodies for the dessert table and baked goods to sell, with the proceeds to benefit various projects for Bethlehem and the community!

 on Saturday, **November 3, 2018, 9am - 2pm**. You are invited to attend, shop, and buy the beautiful handmade items and collectibles, and search for gifts for the holidays. We'll also have delicious baked goods for purchase. Lunch will feature soups with all the trimmings, salad items, a drink and a delicious dessert.

We will again invite various vendors to display their unique items (we provide a table, chairs, and lunch), all indoors, for a fee of \$20.00.

We're looking forward to a successful Bazaar! Invite your friends and neighbors!

A craft day is planned for Saturday, October 20, 9am until noon, to finish various items for the Bazaar, under the watchful eyes of Peggy Adler. Note: Set up for the Bazaar: evening of Wednesday, November 1. On Thursday, 9am, we'll arrange all items for sale, placement of vendor area, etc. Friday is baking day!



LWML East Texas Zone Fall Rally, here at Bethlehem – October 6, 9am to 2pm (Reg. 9:30 am-10 am) Theme “**Our Rest in a Changing World,**” **Psalm 62:1-8**, featuring the new 2018 banner design. Pastor Davidson (St. John, Athens) and Pastor Adler (Bethlehem, Palestine) will offer devotions. There will be time for a craft (led by Peggy Adler), refreshments, lunch, a brief business meeting - all for \$6.00 per person. We are encouraged to bring ingathering items (diapers, wipes & baby items) for local Crisis Center. Ladies, RSVP to JoAnn Tugwell by September 21.

LWML Sunday will be celebrated on **October 7**. Carrying the theme “Our Rest in a Changing World,” Psalm 62:1-8, featured on the new banner made by Sandy Smith and helpers. Lay Readers: Lea Rosier, Sandy Smith. Ushers will be Yanneth Harris, JoAnn Tugwell, Donna Hughes, and Lana Bowden. All other members will serve as greeters. Flowers will be placed on the altar to the Glory of God for His many blessings. *Remember to wear PURPLE!*



Kroger Community Rewards - Use your Kroger card each time you make purchases at Kroger. Our LWML receives benefits that are used for our projects, both locally and in the community.

Garber Hall Kitchen – stop by and see the changes being made: Paul Tugwell and Jim Broad built an island to replace the table. Cabinets doors and countertops are being updated. Thanks to these talented members.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- ✦ Sat., October 6, **Annual Paint Palestine Pink**, walk / run (to provide mammograms to women and men of Anderson County & surrounding areas). Bethlehem is designated as the first rest stop. LWML will sponsor two young people from our church who will participate.
- ✦ Next LWML meeting; October 14, 2018.
- ✦ LWML 38TH Biennial Convention, Mobile, AL, June 20-23, 2019

Our society is open to all women of Bethlehem. We usually meet after church on the second Sunday of the month. The Annual Bazaar is our major fundraiser.





Life Newsbytes

Public health officials announced in September that sexually transmitted infections had skyrocketed to new record highs in the United States in 2017. The three STDs—syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia—hit a record high for the fourth year in a row. Preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) finds nearly 2.3 million cases of STDs were diagnosed in 2017. “This surpassed the previous record set in 2016 by more than 200,000 cases,” the CDC stated. Chlamydia remained the most common condition, with more than 1.7 million cases diagnosed last year. Nearly half (45%) of the diagnoses were among 15- to 24-year-old females. (*Medical Xpress, 8/28/18; CLR LifeWire, 9/6/18*)

A newly released report from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that Americans over 65 years will outnumber children in the near future, in what the agency described as “an important demographic turning point in U.S. history.” The Baby Boomer generation will be 65 years or older by the year 2030. That means one in five Americans will be at retirement age. (*U.S. Census Bureau Report Accessed 9/12/18; CLR LifeWire, 9/13/18*)

**Abortions in America
Since 1973: 60,069,971**

Source: www.lifenews.com

Speaking Up For Life

“Why do we strive to protect tiny embryos in Petri dishes or frozen in a fertility clinic? Because they are created, redeemed, and little ones whom God wants to call.” *Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb, former executive director of Lutherans For Life*

“When the God of the universe, who created and redeemed us, calls us by name, claims us as His very own, and assures us that nothing can snatch us from His hand where we are engraved, could there be any more loving and comforting words when we are living life even in the midst of death?” *Lynette Auch, president of Lutherans For Life*

“I have people say, ‘We need to go out and see people saved.’ I’ve got news for you: They don’t even know that they’re lost ... Where Luther nailed those theses on the door of the church, we need to be going to churches, Christian colleges, seminaries, and Bible colleges in this day and age and nailing Genesis 1-11 on the doors because that’s where we’ve lost biblical authority.” *Ken Ham, Answers in Genesis*

For those who have had an abortion—
a **Word of Hope.**
888.217.8679
www.word-of-hope.org

ry, 2nd by Albert to accept. Motion carried. Gil welcomed new council members Burl Gruetzner & Devin Jackson.

REPORTS:

VP - Burl-no report

Financial Secretary - Albert reported August income \$16,657, expenses \$13,945. Loan balance \$35,387 and CEF report.

Treasurer - Albert gave account and saving account balances; budget report for August and year-to-date. **Motion by Jerry, 2nd by Devin to accept financial reports. Motion carried.

Elders - James reported average attendance in August was 68, average communed 61; loss Mary Lou Daughtrey, death.

Christian Education - Melanie reported Midweek began September 5th; looking for more teachers for Sunday School. Children's Christmas Service "What Child is This." Computer crashed.

Evangelism - Jerry reported Adopt-A-Highway September 22nd, Bible Jamboree October 13th.

Stewardship - need chairman

Properties - Jim replaced bathroom faucet & toilet tank valve, also A/C control wire.

Social Concerns - absent. Plans for Chili Friday will begin soon.

Youth - Devin mentioned football parking, need helpers. Youth helping teach Sunday School. Ideas for activities and Bible Study/outings.

Pastor - Dwight & Valinda Saville requested transfer from Mt. Calvary, San Antonio; Shawn Daughtrey requested membership reinstated by affirmation of faith. Pastor Karim Baidaoui guest teacher & preacher September 16th; LWML Sunday October 7th. Texas District Pastor's Conference in October in Rockwall.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Kitchen renovations have begun.

Will talk with Bill Harris about his brother's property when he gets back.

Jim researching costs of doors with panic bars.

NEW BUSINESS:

Be thinking about 2019 Budget requests.

Jacqueline Sky Foundation donated 2 tickets for 5K run, looking for someone who will use them.

**Motion by Jerry, 2nd by James to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned and Pastor closed with the benediction.

Present: Gil Daughtrey, Jim Broad, Jerry Hartenberger, Burl Gruetzner, Devin Jackson, Donna Hughes, Melanie Jackson, James Taylor, Pastor Adler.

Putting our citizenship to work for the sake of the Gospel is nothing new. The Apostle Paul displays in his life both kingdoms, in Acts 16, as he proclaimed the Gospel to the jailer and his family (right hand) and appealed to his Roman citizenship (left hand).

Incredibly, here in the United States, God has granted American citizens even more freedom to serve their neighbors and to proclaim the Gospel. When Jesus says, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s,” such a statement existed where people were “subjects, not citizens.” With the constitutional limitation of government, with constitution protection of religion, free exercise, free speech and freedom to assemble, Christian American citizens don’t just have protected rights, they have exciting, new, public responsibilities to be exercised. American citizenship is a trust from God. It is a resource neither to be set aside, nor used for selfish gain, but to be used in service of the Gospel.

The first task then is to prepare ourselves for this moment. It is not enough to merely educate our own membership about governmental encroachment into the Church, we must deal with that for a greater cause. We must see clearly the harmful implications of any infringement upon the proclamation of God’s Word.

LCRL’s work in DC is one from the “inside-out.” Being here is a ministry of presence to support policy makers, to help policymakers understand how best to preserve the unalienable rights bestowed by the Creator. Being in the mix here in D.C. gives the LCMS an authentic voice that hears things as they are, supports what can be supported, and educates our people to an informed, active citizenship for the sake of the Gospel.

And that is what makes our voice in the culture unique. Ours is a ‘two-kingdom’ voice that understands that God is at work in the world in two distinct ways: to preserve the world enmeshed in sin, and to save the world from the eternal ramifications of its sin. We know that God is at work.

As Christians we need to know the power of the Law and the Gospel, always clearly distinguishing their purpose and their power. We need to know the limitations of any or all involvement in God’s left-hand work in civil government. Why? Because that’s His finite, temporal, this-side-of-heaven work for the sake of the Kingdom, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom that never ends.

He works in distinct ways for different ends, and these distinctions must not be blurred. But neither should they be divided one from the other, as though Christ has nothing to say to those for whom He died who happen to serve in government posts. The LCRL is ready to learn together with God’s people about how we might better be His two-kingdom servants (in this case, citizens) for the sake of the communities in which we live, the communities that our Lord loves.

The Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Seltz (gregory.seltz@LCRLfreedom.org) is the executive director for the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.



we should give, and this is sufficient to encourage us to give (Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:7; Gal 6:6).

But there's more to it than just obligation. We're not just trying to fulfill a work of the Law. We are bearing fruits of the Spirit given to us by our Father in heaven through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we're not just doing what our Father said, we're also doing what He did.

Children emulate their parents. When they grow up they often carry many of the same mannerisms and characteristics as their parents, but there is more to it than that. Children copy their parents even on a more mundane level. They watch how their parents cross their legs, how they fold their hands, how they stand and sit and walk, how they do and say most everything.

And children try to copy it, which can be quite humorous when parents wish they wouldn't. It can be uncomfortable and embarrassing if a child copies or repeats something less than polite that they learned from a parent. Sitcoms thrive on these situations. It only happens because children emulate their parents because they want to be like them.

We are the children of God, by grace, through faith. In Holy Baptism, God the Father declares of us what He declared of Jesus at His Baptism in the Jordan: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Father claims us as His own. He takes away all our sins, and in exchange He gives us His righteousness, His purity, His holiness, and His Spirit, by which we cry out, "Abba, Father."

We are born again, born from above, born of water and the Spirit, to a new life in Christ as His children. We are sons of God in Christ, through Baptism. And since we are sons, we are heirs – heirs who share in the glory of the Son of God. The inheritance is ours because of the Father's grace and mercy, His generosity in sending His Son in time to save us for

And this is why we give generously of our income to the work of the church. We want to be like our heavenly Father. We want to emulate His generosity by being generous ourselves. We give to the work of the Church because we have witnessed the generous giving of our Father in heaven.

More than that, we are recipients of it. It is because we have received God our Father's gifts that we desire to give ourselves. And His gifts are not just spiritual. They are temporal and earthly as well. As the Small Catechism teaches in the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer:

"Give us this day our daily bread." *What does this mean?* God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. *What is meant by daily bread?* Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

In other words, God gives us everything we need for the care of both body and soul. His generosity knows no bounds. Therefore, we sit down at the beginning of the year, the beginning of the month, or the beginning of the week to set aside a generous portion of God's daily bread for His work in the Church.

We don't do this simply because He has commanded us so to do; it is because we, as His children by grace, want to emulate His generosity in our own lives. He is our Father; we are His children. And children want to be like their parents.



God's Share First

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (St. Matthew 6:21)

Where you spend your money does make a difference. It makes a difference in your outlook. It makes a difference in your insight. Perhaps you need to do something specific to improve your spir-

of properly focusing all of life on the Lord who gives all things. Have you made a covenant with God to give Him a specific percentage of all that comes into your hands?



**"Store up for yourselves treasures
in heaven, where moth & rust do
not destroy, & where thieves do not
break in and steal!"**

HEALTH NEEDS—MEMBERS:

- Albert Harris - back problems
- George Nelson - recovering from a stroke
- Julie Schoppe - recovering from surgery due to a car accident

HEALTH NEEDS—FRIENDS:

- Anna [Sandy Smith’s co-worker’s granddaughter age 3] - chemo & surgery
- Carol [Tugwell’s sister in law] - recovery from heart surgery
- Calvin Gould [Paul Tugwell’s friend] - bone cancer
- Rayoma Leuschen [Ken Koehler’s sister in law/Julie Schoppe’s aunt] -lung disease
- Katie Lund [former member] - ongoing health concerns
- Ruth Marston [Ike Saville’s mother] - heart valve replacement
- Phoenix [grandson of West’s friend] - mowing accident
- Kenneth Taylor [James Taylor’s brother] - advanced pancreatic cancer
- Teresa White [Alicia Hutton’s grandmother] - ongoing health concerns
- Gene & Patsy Worsham [Tim’s parents] - ongoing health concerns

**Please
help
us
keep
this
list
updated.
Thanks**

HOMEBOUND:

- Dorothy Jackson, Martha Kaudelka, Johnnie Weaver

COMFORT: Joan Smith’s family-Dorothy Jackson’s niece

IN PRISON: William Schatte (LC-MS member @ Faith/Plano, incarcerated at Powledge Unit)

THOSE PREPARING FOR CHURCH WORK:

- Aaron Jackson – attending Concordia University, Seward, NE

THOSE SERVING IN OUR NATION’S ARMED FORCES:

- Members Kyle Lawson and Kyle Shepherd, as well as Robert Garcia [Juanita’s son], James Reed [Devin Jackson’s co-worker] 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.





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

DATE: October 7, 2018

TITLE: "God Created"

TEXT: Genesis 1:27

GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Perry Hart

Life is a precious gift. Guest speaker, Rev. Perry Hart warns against our culture's devaluation of life and calls us to see ourselves and others as precious people, created by God, redeemed by Christ.

DATE: October 14, 2018

TITLE: "We Will Not Fear"

TEXT: Psalm 46

GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Oswald Hoffmann

Dr. Oswald Hoffmann says, "Fear is a fact of life ... but faith in God harnesses fear and points it in the right direction."

DATE: October 21, 2018

TITLE: "We Preach Christ Crucified"

TEXT: I Corinthians 1:23-24

GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Oswald Hoffmann

In a classic message from 1955, Dr. Oswald Hoffmann talks about all the things that change--and the God Who doesn't.

DATE: October 28, 2018

TITLE: "Stranger Than Fiction"

TEXT: Romans 3:19-28

GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

God is the Author Who becomes part of the story--our story. The Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler presents his first message as Lutheran Hour Speaker



Lutheran parishes for America during a 45-year ministry in Pennsylvania. Born at Einbeck, Germany, in 1711, he came to the American colonies in 1742. A tireless traveler, Muhlenberg helped to found many Lutheran congregations and was the guiding force behind the first American Lutheran synod, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, founded in 1748. He valued the role of music in Lutheran worship (often serving as his own organist) and was also the guiding force in preparing the first American Lutheran liturgy (also in 1748). Muhlenberg is remembered as a church leader, a journalist, a liturgist, and—above all—a pastor to the congregation in his charge. He died in 1787, leaving behind a large extended family and a lasting heritage: American Lutheranism.

October 9 - Abraham, Patriarch Abraham (known early in his life as Abram) was called by God to become the father of a great nation (Genesis 12). At the age of 75 and in obedience to God's command, he, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot moved southwest from the town of Haran to the land of Canaan. There God established a covenant with Abraham (15:18), promising the land of Canaan to his descendants. At the age of 100 Abraham and Sarah were finally blessed with Isaac, the son long promised to them by God. Abraham demonstrated supreme obedience when God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. God spared the young man's life only at the last moment and provided a ram as a substitute offering (22:1–19). Abraham died at the age of 175 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah, which he had purchased earlier as a burial site for Sarah. He is especially honored as the first of the three great Old Testament Patriarchs—and for his “righteousness before God through faith” (Romans 4:1–12).

October 11 - Philip, Deacon Philip, also called the Evangelist (Acts 21:8), was one of the seven men appointed to assist in the work of the twelve Apostles and of the rapidly growing early church by overseeing the distribution of food to the poor (6:1–6). Following the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip proclaimed the Gospel in Samaria and led Simon the Sorcerer to become a believer in Christ (8:4–13). He was also instrumental in bringing about the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–39), through whom Philip became indirectly responsible for bringing the Good News of Jesus to the people on the continent of Africa. In the town of Caesarea he was host for several days to the Apostle Paul, who stopped there on his last journey to Jerusalem (21:8–15).

October 17 - Ignatius of Antioch, Pastor and Martyr Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in Syria at the beginning of the second century A.D. and an early Christian martyr. Near the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (98–117), Ignatius was arrested, taken in chains to Rome, and eventually thrown to the wild beasts in the arena. On the way to Rome, he wrote letters to the Christians at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, and also to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. In the letters, which are beautifully pastoral in tone, Ignatius warned against certain heresies (false teachings). He also repeatedly stressed the full humanity and deity of Christ, the reality of Christ's bodily presence in the Lord's Supper, the supreme authority of the bishop, and the unity of the Church found in her bishops. Ignatius was the first to use the word catholic to describe the universality of the Church. His Christ-centeredness, his courage in the face of martyrdom, and his zeal for the truth over against false doctrine are a lasting legacy to the Church.

October 25 - Dorcas, Lydia, and Phoebe, Faithful Women These women were exemplary Christians who demonstrated their faith by their material support of the Church. Dorcas (also known as Tabitha) was well-known and much loved for her acts of charity in the city of Joppa, especially for her making clothes for the poor. When Dorcas died suddenly, the members of her congregation sent to the neighboring city of Lydda for the Apostle Peter, who came and raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36–41). Lydia was a woman of Thyatira, who worked at Philippi selling a famous purple dye that was so much in demand in the ancient world. She was also a “worshiper of God” at the local synagogue. When the Apostle Paul encountered her in prayer among other proselyte women, his preaching of the Word brought Lydia to faith in Christ. She and her friends thus became the nucleus of the Christian community in Philippi (16:13–15, 40). Phoebe was another faithful woman associated with the Apostle Paul. She was a deaconess from Cenchrae (the port of Corinth) whom Paul sent to the church in Rome with his Epistle to the Romans. In it he writes of her support for the work of the early Church (Rom 16:1).

October 26 - Philipp Nicolai, Johann Heermann, and Paul Gerhardt, Hymnwriters Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608) was a pastor in Germany during the Great Plague, which took the lives of 1,300 of his parishioners during a sixth-month period. In addition to his heroic pastoral ministry during that time of stress and sorrow, he wrote the texts for “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying” and “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright,” known, respectively, as the king and queen of the Lutheran chorales. Johann Heermann (1585–1647), also a German pastor, suffered from poor health as well as from the ravages of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). His hymn texts are noted for their tenderness and depth of feeling. Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676) was another Lutheran pastor who endured the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. By 1668 he lost his pastoral position in Berlin (for refusing to compromise his Lutheran convictions), and endured the death of four of his five children and his wife. He nevertheless managed to write 133 hymns, all of which reflect his firm faith. Along with Martin Luther

Lutherans place their faith in the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who has made us, redeemed us, and empowers us for Christian living.

We believe Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, who came to earth as a man, suffered and died in our place to win for us forgiveness of sin, and who rose again to life, assuring us that we, too, can live with Him eternally.

We teach that we come to stand in right relationship with God not through our own goodness or righteousness, but through our faith in Jesus as Savior. Faith alone receives the full promises of God.

We believe that the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were instituted by Christ and offers forgiveness of sin to all who receive them in faith.

Concerning Baptism, we teach that infants should also be baptized, since they, too, are sinful and need God's grace. God can work faith in them, even though they are too young to intellectually grasp the Gospel.

We believe that the body and blood of Jesus are truly present in the Lord's Supper through miraculous means, and that only Christians who are in full agreement with our all our beliefs should commune with us.

We believe that God speaks to the world through His Word in the Bible.

We believe that God loves every person and intends for all a life of dignity and meaning.

We believe that Marriage is a life-long union of one man and one woman. We reject any other “union” called “marriage” as immoral and contrary to God's will.

We assert the vital importance of the Christian congregation as the community of believers in which the Gospel is correctly preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered.



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

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