

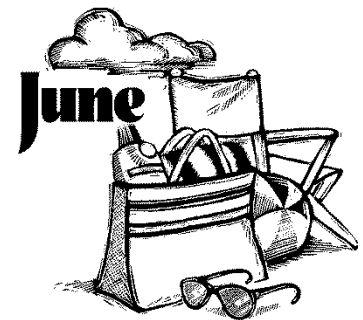


The Messenger
St. John Lutheran Church

155 Fairview Street
West Branch, Michigan 48661
Church Phone: 989-345-0120

Rev. Howard Travis, Pastor
Pastor's Home Phone: 989-312-4637

Web site: www.stjohnwb.org



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PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS

Monday and Thursday: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

No appointment is necessary – just stop by! Please call the office and make an appointment if these times are not convenient (345-0120).

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Dear members and friends of St. John,

Pastor Dugood bumps into a parishioner at the local supermarket. He smiles, "I'm glad to see you! How's your **personal relationship with Christ** going?" Myrtle May replies, "Well, I've been staying home more, and I've taken up meditation and yoga. I've even been reading my Bible!" "Oh, is that why you haven't been in church in a while?" the Pastor asked. "Yes! But I feel so much closer to God now!"

Oh, Myrtle May! You have *indeed* been listening to the church over the past two decades. And what is the popular Evangelical message – preached from the pulpit, and written in popular Christian books? **"Develop your personal relationship with Jesus,"** of course. And, there's another more insidious voice out there that has been encouraging her as well: **the voice of this world telling Myrtle May that she can find her own spiritual pathway through life.** Both the church and the world echoing similar themes: You are able to spiritually flourish on your own.

Pastor Dugood shouldn't be too shocked at Myrtle May's response. After all, how many messages did he give, charging his flock with this command? And how many talk show hosts have told people to find their own meaning to life, by searching inside oneself for the answer? But is that what the Bible teaches?

Turning to **Romans chapter 12:** *"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness"* (vv. 4-8). From this text we can conclude that God has a plan that includes us coming together in His Church, sharing our different and yet vitally important gifts and talents for the good of His kingdom.

Or, how about these words in **1 Corinthians 12:** *"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body"* (vv. 13-20). **Note how St. Paul specifically attacks the notion that we can be individual members of Christ. We cannot.** Look at verse 19 again. *"If all were a single member, where would the body be?"* The Body is the Church. And yet, **if members act independently of one another – the Church's function in this world is harmed. The Body is broken.**

The truth is, **spirituality in America is flourishing.** People believe in a "higher power." And **church attendance is decreasing every year.** The Bible is clear: **You cannot flourish as a Christian away from the Body of Christ.** Your congregation is the very heart and soul of your

spiritual wellbeing. And Christ is the Head. Worship provides you with the opportunity to publically confess both your sins and your faith in Christ. Jesus died for you, and He gives you the strength to carry on through the Gospel (preached and read) and the Sacraments. Church is also where we come together. Together, we complete the Body. Separately, we die.

How does this play out in your Christian walk? I've listed some fundamental questions that you might ask yourself today.

- 1. "How well do I know my congregation? Do I try to reach out to them through fellowship"** (i.e., congregation Bible Studies, Ladies Aid, congregation boards, Sunday fellowship time, Sunday brunches and church picnics)? **"Do I know them superficially, or do I know them like family?"**
- 2. "How often do I volunteer to help in the congregation?" Can you teach?** (we always have need of Sunday School & VBS teachers and guides). **Can you serve?** (we always have opportunities to serve). **Are you empathetic? Are you a good listener?** (we always have hospitalized or homebound members who would love a visit). There are too many other talents to mention here, but you get the idea.
- 3. "How often do I pray for my congregation as a body, and for individual members?"** To do this, you should know who they are, and what their needs are! Have you signed up to receive **emergency text messages** from the church, when someone is in crisis?

While growing individually in God's Word is always good – it must not be at the expense of growing corporately as part of the Body of Christ. Maybe we should be asking each other, **"How is your corporate relationship with Christ going?"**

When congregations put the needs of members and visitors and the community first, God's church flourishes. After all, that's His divine plan for St. John Lutheran Church, West Branch, Michigan. May God bless you as you seek to grow *corporately* in His Church.

Pastor Travis

SOCIAL MINISTRIES

FOOD TRUCK – We are collecting donations of personal hygiene items and cleaning products to distribute at the Food Truck give-aways. Individuals in need cannot purchase items such as shampoo, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, or household cleaners with their Bridge cards even though they are needed.

We are working with a grant from Thrivent and our local Walmart for the food funding. A collection basket will be in the fellowship hall for donations. We very much appreciate the support we get from all of you! Very blessed to be a part of this church family! Questions can be made to Lisa or Bev.

We had a Red Cross blood drive on May 17th, – at the Knights of Columbus Hall. Thank you to all who participated.

The baby bottle donations drive in support of the Caring Pregnancy Center will run from May 6th till June 10th. The Mother's Day Brunch was on May 6th, thank you to all who helped in preparing and cleaning-up on this special day. Father's day brunch will be on June 10th, immediately following the service. Thank you for your support and please keep these events in your prayers.

PRAYER MINISTRIES

Prayer Warriors – Please keep your students in your prayers and drop them a note to let them know you're praying for them.

Praying for you... Have you received a postcard in the mail recently that said, "The Congregation has prayed for you"? As part of the ongoing prayer ministry here at St. John, we pray for the spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our members. We also lift up the ministries and outreach of this congregation on a daily basis. If you are interested in praying for these concerns, June Prayer Sheets are available in the Narthex on the cart next to the Portals of Prayer.

LADIES AID

BIBLE AND DEVOTIONAL COLLECTION - The Ladies Aid will continue the collection of Bibles and Devotional Material through the month of June. See the May newsletter for details. There is a collection box in the Fellowship Hall for your convenience. Please place any Bibles or devotional materials in or around this box.

FAMILY FARE "Direct Your Dollars" - As of May 10th we have collected 28,316 dollars in receipts. Remember, you must use your "Yes Rewards" card or give them your phone number for the purchase to count as a "Direct Your Dollars" receipt. For more information check the "Direct Your Dollars" container on the counter by the kitchen.

MEETING - The June 14th meeting of the Ladies Aid will begin at "Dairy Queen" for lunch at 11:30 A.M. with the meeting following at the church at 1:00 P.M. Please remember that all women of the congregation are invited to come to Ladies Aid meetings and assist us in this important work in the church.

GARAGE SALE – Thank you to all who assisted with the Ladies Aid Garage sale this past weekend. Our success is directly related to the many hands working together.

Cloth Prefold Diapers – The ladies will soon be making prefolded diapers from discarded T-shirts. The T-shirts that work best for this project are men's extra large, but other sizes can also be used. White is best, but most other colors can also be used. These diapers will be donated to Orphan Grain Train due to the great need. Save your gently used T-shirts for us.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Psalm 119:105

Let His Word light your way!
Check out the opportunities below
and join us we dig into God's Word!

Sunday Mornings

8:30 a.m. - A Longer Look at the Lessons – Prepare for worship by taking a closer look at the Bible readings for that Sunday's service.

Monday Mornings

10:00 a.m. - We are taking an in-depth look at **1 Samuel**. We will see our Lord's continuing, faithful care for His people, despite their weaknesses and unfaithfulness. Our Lord hears their prayers and calls them to repentance again and again. Ultimately uniting them as a nation under His servant, King David, and ultimately pointing them and us to Jesus our Savior and King.

Tuesday Evenings

7:00 p.m. - Women's Bible Study at Jane Tennant's home will be taking a summer break for June, July and August. They will resume meeting in September.

7:00 p.m. - Men's Bible Study on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday will also be taking a break for the summer and will resume meeting in September.

Wednesday Mornings

10:30 a.m. – Men's Breakfast and Devotional - 3rd Wednesday at the church.

Sunday School Happenings

See what kind of love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God;
and so we are.

1 John 3:1

What wonderful words to start the month with! Who are we? A beloved child of God! Through baptism, water and the Word, we have been brought into God's family and made His child! We start the month with "*God wants me to pray to Him.*" And, the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven." As the Catechism reminds us, "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father." We are shown in our true story from God's Word in the Holy Bible that at Jesus' Baptism God the Father said Jesus was His beloved Son. God our Father in heaven who made us His children through water and the Word, invites us to come to Him without fear and to ask for anything.

We continue the month with, "*God helps me keep His name holy.*" And, the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." As the Catechism reminds us, "God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us." So how is God's name kept holy? We keep God's name holy when God's Word is taught among us in its truth and purity, and

when we live according to the Word of God. This week in our true story from God's Word, we will see how Zacchaeus joyfully responded to His Savior's invitation, showing the Word of God at work in him. And, leading Zacchaeus to repent of his sin, and his promise to give half of his wealth to the poor and pay back four fold what he had taken from the people. By the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, we keep God's name holy and glorify him as we live according to His Word, letting His light shine through us.

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

In our lesson the next week we will hear how *"God works through me to make His kingdom grow."* And, the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." The Catechism reminds us, "The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself with our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us." So how does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead godly lives here and in eternity, bring many others into His kingdom of grace; and use us to extend His kingdom of grace. In our true story from Acts 16, we will hear how Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail, but their faith was not dampened. They continued to pray to God and sing hymns throughout the night. Being a bold witness to the other prisoners, and especially to the jailer and his family who were all brought to faith and baptized. Through Paul and Silas' witness, the kingdom of God grew. Through His Spirit working through the Word, God helps us live according to His Word and uses us to extend His kingdom of grace too.

The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

Mark 1:15

We end the month with *"God keeps me strong in faith."* And, the Third Petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." As the Catechism reminds us, "The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us." So what does this mean? "God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die." Through the true story of Job, we learn that in spite of all the troubles that the devil threw at Job, God is faithful and did not allow the devil to destroy Job's faith. We also know that amid all the troubles we experience in our lives, God strengthens us through His Word and keeps us in the one true faith until life everlasting. And, with that we can say along with Job...

I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last He will stand upon the earth.

Job 19:2



**Summer is coming!
And, so is VBS!**

July 15th-19th

Interested in helping this year?

Come join us for our

"Get Ready" Meetings,

June 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th at 6:45 p.m.

At "Splash Canyon" VBS we will be sharing the message, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him." 2 Corinthians 1:20... We all know that life is full of thrills and spills, and we may not know what is around the bend, but God does. At Splash Canyon VBS, we will discover that on life's wild ride Jesus is by our side. God saves us through Jesus and gives us life and hope every day, now and forever. From Day 1 to Day 5, through the true stories found in God's Word, we will discover God's promises for our life. So come join us as we plan and prepare at our "Get Ready" Meetings starting this month. And, think about the friends, neighbors, and relatives that you could invite to join us in July. And, don't forget to ...

Please pray for VBS!

- That the Holy Spirit would lead, guide, and direct us in all we do.
- That we can connect with children and families that don't know You and those that do.
- That we share the message of hope and salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all who come.
- That we have many willing volunteers eager and ready to share Your good news.
- That we prepare well and do all for God's glory.
- That the Lord would bless our preparations and bring children and families to listen and learn.

EVANGELISM / OUTREACH

During our **Free Food Give-Aways** we have an **evangelism table** where New Testaments, tracts, and information on St. John are handed out free to all who are interested. These resources have been very well received by the community! Please pray that the Christian resource materials and Bibles will be effective in reaching the lost and hurting. We will be receiving a Thrivent Grant to be used for Lent Devotions for our Sunday School children and also for the day cares in the community. Thank you.

Prayer cards are being sent out and Facebook has been updated with pictures from Bible school. Patty Rohman is sending cards to our visitors to let them know we were glad they chose to worship with us and inviting them back. Hope everyone will remember to pray for the people in Texas during the hurricane and flooding they are going through.

We still have lots of car decals if you want one just ask Patty or John or check with Dennis in the office. Don't be bashful to ask. They make great conversation starters to invite someone to visit us on Saturday night or Sunday morning services. Do you know anyone that could use a prayer or a word of encouragement, let me know so I can send them a card. Carolyn Smith

Then Comes Marriage...

by Peter Scaer

Marriage is a blessing, a gift from the God who created us. In holy matrimony, bride and groom vow to remain faithful "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health."

Marriage promises companionship and pleasure, to be sure. But the meaning of marriage goes

deeper than that. Our Lord has fearfully and wonderfully made us. Each of us has a cardiovascular system, a digestive system, a circulatory system, all whole and fully integrated. Only one system is not fully complete in each of us — the reproductive system. When it comes to sex, we are complementary creatures. Two become one, and together husband and wife can do what they could never accomplish alone.

Natural marriage thus naturally leads to children. Now, we recognize that not every couple is physically able to bear children. Those who marry late in life may be past their childbearing years. For some, infertility can be a pressing and heartbreaking issue. Nevertheless, marriage is essentially oriented toward children, and because it is, we associate with it values of permanence and life-long fidelity. And with marriage and children, God willing, come the blessings of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins — a wonderful web of support and love.

In marriage, a husband and wife become an image of Christ and the Church. They are also an extension of God's work of creation. Indeed, there is no such thing as human *reproduction*. We are not factory parts, nor are we made on an assembly line. Each and every one of us comes from the creative hand of a God who loves us and uses *procreation* to continue His good creation. The family that arises from a procreative marriage takes us even further into the very mystery of the Triune God, the God of love.

But a strange thing has happened in our culture today. We have forgotten what marriage is and what it means for us. We see this clearly in the many common distortions of God's perfect plan — gay marriage, serial marriage, pornography, polyamory, single-parent families and the like. But even more, we see it in the redefinition of marriage as simply our best and most important relationship, an intense and emotional bond that includes and encompasses sexual pleasure. Even Christians have lost sight of marriage's intrinsic link to children — and as that link fades to nothingness, we can't help but notice that the less children play a part in it, the less marriage really matters.

Perhaps, in a nation where a million children are aborted each year, this should not be surprising. But the roots of this problem go back further than *Roe v. Wade*. Before abortion became the law of the land, Margaret Sanger and those like her pushed a radical birth control agenda, and they did so under the banner of sexual liberation. In her book *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger promised that "through sex, mankind may attain the great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the path to paradise." For Sanger, large families were the ultimate taboo. She wrote, "The most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families."

As we look around, we see that our world has been taken captive by Sanger's vision. Increasingly, young couples are putting off having children, with some even choosing not to have children at all. Small families are the norm. Birth control and abortion have taken on an almost sacred aura for those who rely on them. We can see clearly, too, the effects of these shifts in our churches, in graying populations and smaller Sunday schools.

As a church, we obviously need to do some deep thinking on the issue, but we might start simply by reaffirming simple, self-evident truths: that children are a gift from God, and that marriage was

designed so that a child might have a mother and father, bonded together for life. Our failure to remember this may be why so many of us seem to have so little hope, so little thought for the future.

Perhaps we Lutherans would do well to recover the ancient Hebrew wedding toast, "*L'Chaim*," "To life!" — that is, "To new life!" Marriage is about so much more than securing either our financial future or our present happiness. Indeed, children are a gift worth more than all the money and experiences that the world claims will give our lives meaning. As Mother Theresa famously quipped, "Too many children? That's like saying there are too many flowers." Children remind us of God's grace, and they call us to look to the future. A small child can light up a room; a group of children can bring joy to a congregation. No wonder our Lord loved to hold them in His arms.

All of this must certainly be said with sensitivity, and with special care for the barren, for the widow and the orphan. Such is life in a fallen world. But we are to be pitied if we do not open ourselves up to the love of marriage as God intended, and if we do not rejoice with all our heart to know that a child is born.

Is there anything sweeter than the Baptism of an infant? For in those waters, we see hope, we embrace the future, and we taste of eternity. We recognize that even as we care for our children, our Heavenly Father cares for us all. We know what makes life worth living, and we celebrate the goodness of the God who created us male and female and gives to us, through the marriage relationship, the good gift of children. In a dark world, this is a message of hope, a life-affirming faith, which stands in awe and wonder at the birth of the Christ child and gives thanks that in Him, through His death and resurrection, our lives — and those of our children — will have no end.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer is associate professor of exegetical theology and director of the M.A. program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. He also serves as president of Allen County Right to Life and is a founding member of Shepherds United, an ecumenical Christian group formed to *defend* life, natural marriage and religious liberty.

Reprinted from The Lutheran Witness magazine, May 2018, CPH: St. Louis.

Three Worldviews Parents Need to Confront

by Kenneth Kremer

The power of culture is undeniable. It shapes our ideas about morality, law, history, literature, politics, religion. It informs our attitudes regarding community, family and raising children. In an age dubbed the Post-Christian Era, in which the culture around us is growing increasingly hostile to our convictions, the worldviews our kids embrace should concern us. If we do not teach our children to love Jesus, the world will teach them not to.

Here, then, are three common contemporary challenges to a Christian worldview, along with takeaways for parents seeking to confront them.

One World, One God?

God operates in both spiritual and material realities — both in His eternal kingdom and in the created universe of time, space and change where our human story now unfolds. God's people embrace both realities. Unbelievers know only one.

Teaching this truth to our children is a challenge because our dominant culture dismisses God and exiles spiritual realities to the realm of fiction. The godless myth of only one reality, however, puts children at great spiritual risk. Promises of heaven, miracles, eternal life, prayer, a physical resurrection, angels, Jesus' real presence or God's free grace cannot — will not — resonate without a biblical worldview that sees God as the King of all reality, in heaven and on earth.

Takeaway for Parents:

Make a point of daily communicating the wonders and blessings of belonging to God's Kingdom to your child.

The Moral Shell Game

Perhaps the greatest legacy of Western civilization was a common moral platform based on God's Ten Commandments. Our secular culture, however, now grants equal status to three alternative moral platforms: constitutional law, scientific studies and popular opinion.

True, all three are useful. We rightly teach our children to see them as blessings from God. But none of them acknowledges that our relationship with God is the only foundation for a God-pleasing ethic. The Constitution is a manmade document. Scientific studies are subject to revision with new information. Popular opinion is fickle. These cannot be viewed as the moral equivalents of God's Law. They are imposters.

Takeaway for Parents:

Take advantage of every opportunity to bind God's commandments to the hearts and minds of your children.

A Narcissistic Age

Narcissism is not a new phenomenon. (Adam and Eve thought they could become God's equals.) Yet today's digitally enhanced form of narcissism threatens the faith of many young believers. And who should wonder why? The popular culture bombards them with messages that urge them to trust their own instincts, dream big, plot their own courses. It tells them they are superior to others — bronze gods and goddesses, permanently cast in their own Snapchat images.

Godly character requires an intense focus on humility — which includes shifting your gaze to something beyond yourself. Jesus washed the feet of His followers to teach them humble servitude, saying, *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14, ESV).

Takeaway for Parents:

Teach your children that greatness in God's Kingdom happens when we trust that Jesus loves us and forgives us and look to Him for our self-worth. They don't need to turn the world upside-down because He has done it for them on the cross.

Kenneth Kremer is the author of Embracing Godly Character; The Christian Community's Response to a Godless Culture, new this spring from CPH.

Reprinted from *The Lutheran Witness* magazine, May 2018, CPH: St. Louis.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

2018 FLOWER CHART — A new flower chart for 2018 is posted. There are many opportunities to sponsor flowers for the altar. Please take a few moments to sign up for a special date. Remember, flowers are \$15.00 and the Ladies Aid would like them paid for when you sign up.

DECALS — Been noticing St. John window decals in the cars in the parking lot or around town? Want one for your vehicle/vehicles? There is no charge . . . just ask Patty Rohman or stop by the church office to get one.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT — St. John Lutheran has entered into an agreement with AuSable Valley Community Mental Health that allows them to use our facility for certain activities during the week. Part of this agreement is that our congregational members will keep confidential the names of people that are using our facility. Please observe this agreement by never mentioning the names of people that you may have seen. Also, remind others of this agreement if you hear of a visitor's name being mentioned. Thank you for your cooperation. Executive Council.

Reminder: There is a box in the Narthex for giving to the **Ogemaw County Clergy Association**. This money is collected hygiene items, for the purchase of food, personal home heating fuels, and funeral expenses for people in Ogemaw Country that are unable to afford these necessities. Make checks payable to Ogemaw County Clergy Assoc. Thank you!

EMERGENCY PRAYER REQUESTS — St. John has developed a system that allows us to rapidly contact all members when a life threatening situation develops, requiring immediate prayers. We are requesting cell phone numbers (for text messaging) or e-mail addresses for all members. For those who don't use e-mails or text messaging, phone calls will be made. Please request a salmon-colored form the office and return it when completed. Thank you.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

6/07 – James Barber
6/08 – Lesa Klein
6/09 – Sally Killinger
6/12 – Marie Miller
6/16 – Melva Wheelock
6/21 – Tracey Bielby
6/21 – Elizabeth Scott
6/27 – Rev. Theodore Voll
6/29 – Avarie Klein
6/30 – Michael Fritz



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

6/10 – Brian and Amey Moeggenborg
6/12 – John and Patty Rohman
6/13 – Bret and Linda Bertossi
6/19 – Rev. Theodore and Linda Voll
6/28 – Ronald and Shawn Darling
6/28 – Henry and Lois Hernandez