

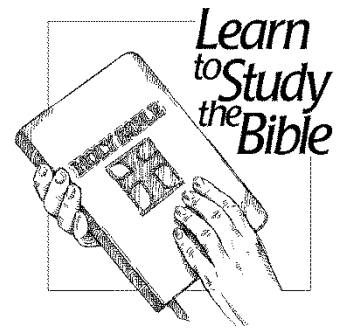


The Messenger
St. John Lutheran Church

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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September

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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,

Is showing anger always a sin? Most Christians, I believe, would answer, "Yes, of course!" But what does God's word teach? The answer is that a public show of anger may or may not be sinful. It depends. God gets angry. Plenty angry. How do we know this? It's throughout Scriptures. There's God's anger over Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit; over His people at the base of Mount Sinai, worshipping a golden calf. There's God's anger when He walks into the Temple, only to find vendors selling animals and moneychangers stealing from His people, in the very place that people should have been worshipping Him (this, by the way, leads to Jesus making a whip out of cords, and driving the vendors and their animals out, and overturning the tables of the moneychangers). He's angry!

Since we've heard about God's anger, and yet we know that He never sins, **there must be a form of anger that is not sin.** Everyone who feels guilty about getting angry can relax. Or can we? **Anger can be dangerous.** The apostle Paul admonishes the Ephesians, *"In your anger do not sin; do not let the sun go down while you are still angry"* (Ephesians 4:26). And Jesus warns, *"Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment"* (Matt 5:22). This leads us to understand that there are different kinds of anger.

Holy anger is God's kind of anger. Not only is it always justified, but when it's quenched, it also brings a condition that is better than merely being calm. It brings to us grace, mercy and forgiveness – a release from the punishment that we deserve. The cross of Jesus has quenched the Father's anger, and has brought us peace!

When we look at what makes God angry, we can begin to understand what kind of anger is just. Even more than that, what's expected of us! **First, God's anger is never hasty.** *"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love"* (Psalm 103:8). This phrase is repeated again and again in the Old Testament. What is behind this forbearance? He wants the unrepentant sinner to receive His word of Law, and then, having the opportunity to be brought low over their sin, to return back to God through repentance and faith.

We hear this in the Sermon on the Mount. How are we to respond when an **unbeliever** strikes us on the cheek? Jesus says, *"To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either."* (Luke 6:29). **Let the unbeliever (unrepentant) harm you without recourse.** Instead of anger, show them **kindness.** Why? God wants them to see Christ in you. They'll wonder, "Why didn't that Christian retaliate against me? Why is he still kind to me?" God wants them to see their sin, and our loving kindness, so that they may be restored to Him (see Rom. 12:19-21).

While the response is different when a brother or sister in Christ sins against us, the response is still very much metered. Matthew 18 tells us that you are to take-up this matter with your brother in private. If he repents, your bother is reconciled to, not only you, but to Christ as well. If he refuses to repent, you are to go back later, taking one or two other brothers with you. If there still is no repentance, the entire congregation is to be brought together to confront him over his sin. Notice that there is no mention of personal retribution. Finally, if the congregation can't lead him to repent, **he is to be cast out of the congregation,** and treated like an unbeliever (Matt. 18:15-18). This is not done in anger, but with deep concern over his eternal life.

Through all of this, we see that God's anger is never carried out in haste. We are to show the same longsuffering that our Savior has shown to us.

Is there ever a case when righteous or holy anger can be displayed without sinning?

The answer is: Yes, of course. Remember Jesus' reaction to the vendors and moneychangers in the Temple, who were hurting the spiritual lives of thousands by not allowing them a place to worship? Notice Jesus' response to the Scribes and Pharisees who are attempting to discredit and destroy Jesus, so that thousands may be lost. (Matt. 15:7, 23:13-29).

The difference is in the depth of the hurt to the Body of Christ – His Church. Attacks on the Church have been on-going for thousands of years. **We are to be angry when we see people who try to publicly harm the lives of other Christians – especially Christian leaders.** This is supposed to make us stand-up in defense of the person who was injured! But even in this righteous or holy anger, we are not to attack the person responsible, but speak out against their sinful behavior. Even as we are repulsed by their blatant willingness to follow Satan, we must love them because our Father in Heaven loves them unconditionally. **It's O.K. and even necessary to show holy anger when it is directed against this public display of sin.** A verbal attack by a church member against a pastor (see 1 Tim. 5:17-19) or other member, when done publicly with the intent of destroying their reputation, are very common today. The congregation that allows this to occur without recourse is directly sinning against God! God is hurt by this, and angry! In the face of such hurt and destruction, how can we remain unemotional and detached? **The Church over the centuries has suffered great harm as the righteous have refused to show holy anger against public injustice. In the face of public harm done to a brother or sister in Christ, how can stand by idly?** In fact Paul tells Timothy, "*As for those who persist in sin [i.e., those who refuse to repent of their sin], rebuke them in the presence of all [members], so that the rest [of the congregation] may stand in fear*" (1 Tim. 5:20). [Bracketed words by Pastor Travis].

Finally, we have an obligation as citizens of this world. **Outside our immediate congregation, we are to show holy anger toward government laws and directives that publicly oppose the Word of God, and therefore endorse sin as good or justifiable.** Abortion laws, gay and lesbian marriage laws, euthanasia and other laws that reject God's holy word are all public actions that bring harm to God's Church and must be publicly opposed by us. Notice that the government officials aren't the target of our anger here, but the unjust laws and directives that violate God's word.

Holy anger is not only allowed by God, it's expected of us! We must not hide behind meekness and claim that real Christians never show anger. Public injustice against the Church and unjust laws that violate God's word, must be met with holy anger! But be careful. It's the public sin that we strike out at, and not the individual sinner. The Christian who publicly sins must be confronted out of love, using the course established by our Lord (Matthew 18). May God leads us to holy anger, when are called stand up for His Church in acts of righteousness.

Pastor Travis

SOCIAL MINISTRIES

FOOD TRUCK – Our next truck will be on October 20th at 10:00a.m. Volunteers are needed. We are collecting donations of personal hygiene items and cleaning products to distribute at the Food Truck give-a-ways. 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.

Please save the date and come join us for a picnic on 9/9/18 at Irons Park after Sunday Service...please bring a dish to pass... meat will be provided...Thanks.

Social Ministries team is collecting garage sale donations for their garage sale until September 2nd ...please drop off at the Garage or in Sunday school class room- last room on the left...Garage sale is to be held on September 7, Friday 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., and on September 8, Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

PRAYER MINISTRIES

Prayer Warriors are always needed!

Prayer Angels are needed! We not only need volunteers to intercede on a daily basis for the needs of the church, but we are also looking for ***volunteers to pray for our toddlers through college age young people. The time requirement is minimal, but the need is great!*** If you have been a Prayer Angel before, or the Lord has placed a desire in your heart to pray for the young people of our congregation contact me, Adele Travis at 430-6011.

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, September Prayer Sheets are available in the Narthex on the cart next to the Portals of Prayer.

LADIES AID

SCHOOL KITS – We will be filling the backpacks with school supplies during the Fellowship Hour on Sunday, September 23rd. This will allow the Sunday School children to help us fill the backpacks before they go to class. We would appreciate assistance from anyone that could stay after church that day. If we get plenty of help, it should take no more than ½ hour. Thank you to all who donated school supplies to this project!!! The response has been wonderful!

BLANKET PROJECT – The ladies are working on making fleece blankets similar to fleece blankets with tied edges. We have a newer method of securing the edges and could really use some help! We invite any ladies or men that would like to help, to please join us on Mondays at approximately 12:00 Noon. The project requires no standing or bending over. It is totally a sit-down project!

LWML SUNDAY – LWML Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, October 7th. The pews of our church will be draped with quilts and blankets made by the ladies which will be blessed during the service. The ladies will present a short skit during the Fellowship Hour which will encourage you to save your mites for LWML Mission Projects.

DIAPER PROJECT – Thanks to all of you that have donated T-shirts for us to make diapers for Orphan Grain Train. We have completed over 10 dozen diapers and are running out of T-shirts! We especially need used men's extra-large t-shirts so that we can give them a new life. Stained collars and minor small stains are OK.

FAMILY FARE "Direct Your Dollars" - As of August 22, we have collected 32,814 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. We have had some receipts recently that didn't count due to not using the "Yes Rewards" card!

MEETING – Don't forget we have changed our meeting day to the 2nd Tuesday of the month instead of Thursday. Those of you who have been unable to attend the Thursday meetings are especially invited to attend. For any other ladies, if Tuesday is a better day for you, we would love to have you. The September meeting will begin at The Topsy Bear at 11:30 A.M. for lunch with the meeting to follow at the church.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September is Christian Education month!

Rally Day is September 9th.

Remember... growing in God's Word is **not** just for the children in Sunday School. It's for big kids, little kids, kids at heart, and even older adults too! Check out the opportunities you have to grow in Christ here at St. John...

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. They will resume meeting on September 11th.

7:00 p.m. - Men's Bible Study on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday. They will resume meeting on September 11th.

Wednesday Mornings

9:00 a.m. – Men's Breakfast and Devotional - 3rd Wednesday at the church.

Choose a study...

And, come grow in God's Word with us!

Sunday School Happenings

By Christ all things were created,
in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.
Colossians 1:16

We're starting at the beginning this fall, with the book of Genesis! It lays the foundation for our faith and for the world in which we live. "Let there be ... and there was", God spoke, it happened! And, from John 1:1-14 we know that our loving Savior Jesus was there too. He is the Word made flesh. We know the Bible is the true story of Jesus our Savior.

So, we will start at the beginning with the true story of creation...

- **How God made the beautiful world for us to live in in six days by the power of His Word from Genesis 1:1-2:3.** And, how He rested on the seventh day. Not because He was tired, but because He was establishing patterns and priorities for us.
- **Next we will continue with His creation of man, both Adam and Eve, from Genesis 1:26-2:25.** How He breathed life into them and how He breathes life into us through His Word.
- **Then we will look at the fall into sin from Genesis 3,** and God's plan and provision for forgiveness through Jesus His Son and our Savior.
- **We will continue with the true story of Cain and Able from Genesis 4:1-16.** Even though Cain sinned God still loved him and preserved him. Even though we sin, God, in Christ still loves and preserves us too.
- **We will finish the month with Noah and the flood from Genesis 6-9.** In the flood, God used water to drown sinful mankind. In Baptism, God uses water to drown my sins, granting me eternal life through His Son Jesus. And, for that we give thanks and praise!

There will be faith words galore for our older and younger children as we explore God's Word. And, most importantly, each week will include the message of salvation that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We pray that the seeds of faith that have been planted in our Sunday School children are fed and nourished, and continue to grow as we share God's Word with them on Sunday mornings. To God be the glory!

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom.

To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

2 Timothy 4:18

COULD YOU HELP SUPPORT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

We are providing Student Leaflets instead of Arch Bible Story books to our Sunday School students this year. **We are looking for donations** to cover the cost of the student packets. The cost will be \$8 per quarter or \$32 for the entire year. Please put your check or money in an envelope, label

it **"Sunday School Student Packets"**, and place it in the offering on Sunday or put it in Jolene's mailbox.

EVANGELISM / OUTREACH

During our **Free Food Give-a-ways** 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

The Problem with Offering Multiple Worship Styles

by Gene Edward Veith Jr.
July 11, 2018

Does your church offer multiple worship services, each with a different style? One traditional, one contemporary? Plus a children's service? An option of contemporary services, with one featuring "praise music" and another being more "emergent"? Lots of large congregations offer this kind of variety. But evangelical church musician Jonathan Aigner raises a warning.

He has written a post at his Patheos blog entitled How Offering Different Worship Styled Contributes to Church Decline. His criticism is not that all of those different kinds of services segregates the congregation into different age- and interest-groups, whereas the church needs to be a place where Christians of all generations, social classes, and personalities come together. That's the problem I have heard raised, and it deserves consideration. But he raises an even deeper issue.

When the church caters to everyone's preference, it creates the impression that **the church and thus Christianity cater to everyone's preference**. That is, that Christianity is all about **you** and what **you want**. This undermines Christianity and weakens Christians, Mr. Aigner says. And it leads to the decline of the church because individuals can pursue their own preferences far better without it.

From Jonathan Aigner:

When we tell our people that we're here to connect them with God through their own

preferences, ***we are telling our people that worship is about their story.***

When we suggest that corporate worship is about fitting everyone just right, ***we are telling our people that worship is about their story.***

When our strategies church growth hinge on making the worship life of the Church fun, entertaining," and easy, ***we are telling our people that worship about their story.***

When we design worship services to flow seamlessly like a theatrical production, ***we are telling our people that worship is about their story.***

He cites the example of Donald Miller, the author of *Blue Like Jazz*, which has become influential for the emergent church. Mr. Aigner quotes him favorably when he said, "The most difficult lie I have ever contended with is this: life is a story about me." But then he notes that Mr. Miller, while still a popular Christian teacher, has stopped going to church:

A few years ago he wrote a blog post entitled, "I Don't Worship God By Singing. I Connect With Him Elsewhere," in which he asserted that he doesn't feel intimacy with God through singing, he rarely attends church, and most of the most godly and influential Christians he knows don't regularly attend, either.

So the person who inspired many of these alternative worship services no longer attends any of them! As have "most of the godly and influential Christians he knows." And this makes perfect sense, if Christianity is just about "me and Jesus," why does anyone need the church at all?

But we do.

See also what Mr. Aigner calls for to churches to set things right. He recommends "finding Jesus where He said He would be." He says churches need to recover the liturgy. And to put a new emphasis on the Sacrament: "Holy Communion is the great antidote to the emotional manipulation the modern church loves to employ. It sets the body of Christ like a burning coal on our lips and in our stomachs, and we begin to see things just a little bit differently."

This non-Lutheran evangelical sure sounds like a Lutheran. And it's ironic because he is recommending measures that Lutherans have historically followed, even as some Lutherans are embracing the evangelical approach to worship that he is criticizing.

To be sure, different traditions will have different theologies of worship and different worship practices. Those have to be respected. (But note why Mr. Aigner urges jettisoning the terminology of "traditional" for worship services.) Would Mr. Aigner's concerns be met if a congregation just set on one style and used it with everyone? You pastors who employ different worship styles, can you answer Mr. Aigner's worries?

Comments by Pastor Travis:

My wife and I attended a large, growing Lutheran church that had a smorgasbord of worship styles. They even had a Country Western worship service (complete with Country Western band). My observations about this congregation fits completely with what is said, above. **This church was all about "me."** People were attracted to it, because they could have Christianity on ***their terms.*** But the church is supposed to be "other worldly." It's supposed to be a place that presents God's Word as opposition to what the world says is good and true. God intended it to be a sanctuary

where the Old Adam in us is struck down, replaced with the **New Person in Christ**. That new man or woman in Christ is **not** focused on “me” but on “being Christ to our neighbor.” Selfishness replaced with sacrificial love.

When church bureaucracies stress multiple worship styles over liturgical worship, they are doing so largely because they think that ever growing congregations **centered on individual preference** are Godly and are the future of the Church. My experience was that these large congregations are **not spiritually healthy**, nor are they going to be our future. When you wish that your congregation’s worship service was more like a mega church, it’s not God that working to plant this idea in your head. It’s the adversary that is always seeking to destroy. Only the ancient church that centers on killing the Old Adam in you is the church that God desires for you.

Dr. Veith is a college professor, public speaker, and Lutheran who has written numerous books on the Christian faith and sociological change in America.

Reprinted from *Christian News*, July 23, 2018, a periodical published by Lutheran News, Inc., New Haven, Missouri.

Trial by Wilderness

by Mark A. Loest

The **Testing** and **Hardship** of Early Lutheran Immigrants

Early Lutheran immigrants traveling to America in the 1830s, 40s and 50s faced brutally difficult circumstances compared to those we so often complain about today. The trip from Germany was long and arduous, requiring at least a 90-day ocean crossing.

On board, sickness and disease often took the lives of the very young, old and weak. Most who arrived were impoverished from the cost of the trip, having sold practically all their earthly possessions to gain passage. They came with the clothes on their backs and perhaps a steamer trunk or two, filled with whatever things they thought they might absolutely need, including a Bible.

Why had they risked their lives to come to the United States? Many settled here so they could be free of the influences of state-imposed false doctrine, which dominated the churches in Germany, and the persecutions they had known for being faithful to their confessional Lutheran faith. Others came to plant congregations and share God’s love as witnesses and missionaries — not just to other settlers — but also to the Native Americans. Still others were unemployed or underemployed and faced a bleak future at home, so they hoped for a better life for their families.

In the winter of 1839, a group of Saxon settlers arrived in New Orleans, seeking freedom to practice their Lutheran faith without interference and persecution from a hostile government. Five ships left Germany, but only four arrived. An entire ship and all the souls on board perished during an ocean storm. One can hardly imagine what grief, and even guilt, the survivors must have felt.

Traveling on to St. Louis, a large group of these settlers then headed about 100 miles south to Perry County, Mo. Not long afterwards, their first pastor and bishop, Martin Stephan, was accused of an

immoral life and removed from both leadership and the community. This was a crushing blow, and temptations began to set in. Nothing was going right. Looking around at their circumstances — primitive hovels, spoiled belongings, rampant disease, scant provisions and a community in spiritual crisis — they wondered if God was punishing them for leaving their homes and families and churches in Germany. Were they even a church at all? A young pastor by the name of C.F.W. Walther would help them with the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions to see that God had not abandoned them and that they still had His grace and could continue as a church.

Perhaps the greatest of the many difficulties faced by early Lutheran settlers at this time — worse than even the physical hardships they endured — was their separation from loved ones and the isolation and loneliness of the land where they were settling. Rev. Friedrich Wyneken wrote about his journeys through Michigan, Ohio and Indiana when these states were still wilderness. He published an account called “An Urgent Appeal,” and described how the settlers at that time struggled physically and especially spiritually. There were no pastors and so the Means of Grace were not being administered. Babies were unbaptized, the sick and dying were not consoled and the dead did not receive a Christian burial.

Wynecken’s “Appeal” got the attention of Rev. Wilhelm Loehe, a pastor whose heart was moved with compassion for the lost and suffering. Back in Neuendettelsau, Germany, Loehe was busily establishing ministries of mercy for those in need, based on the love and mercy in Christ. Loehe formed a mission society so that the Gospel might come to those settlers in the North American wilderness and elsewhere. What is now Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., began with students who were first trained in the Loehe parsonage and then sent to America to gather and serve congregations.

Another approach used by Loehe was to gather a congregation together at home in Germany, and then send them to support their fellow settlers and to witness to the Native American tribes. In 1847, Pastor Philipp Graebner came with his small Frankentrost congregation to the dense forests of Michigan’s Saginaw County. There they purchased land from the government, cleared the trees and worshipped in a log cabin. Bears and wolves roamed about. The Native Americans would visit. Of the first 100 burials recorded, three-fourths were children. There was little money at first and flour for baking was greatly desired. Yet they worshipped regularly and received the Sacrament weekly. For all the difficulties and hardships, those early settlers learned to depend on their Savior’s promises.

Today it is hard to imagine how difficult it must have been for those early Lutheran settlers to leave home and loved ones and travel great distances under perilous conditions only to arrive at a place where their strength and faith would be tested by poverty, isolation and physical hardship. Little wonder we often find in their remembrances the words from 1 Sam. 7:12, “Till now the LORD has helped us.”

The Rev. Mark Loest is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Frankentrost, Michigan.

Reprinted from *The Lutheran Witness* magazine, August 2018, St. Louis: LC-MS.

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.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/01 – Betty Weiss
9/07 – Rev. Howard Travis
9/13 – Nancy Simon
9/14 – Carol Werth
9/18 – Pat Wohlfeil
9/19 – Carolyn Smith
9/22 – Lisa Curnow
9/30 – Edward Schmitt



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

9/13 – John and Lisa Curnow
9/17 – Craig and Nancy Simon
9/19 – Mike and Carol Curtis
9/23 – Kirk and Tracy Bielby