Stop Forgiving *Yourself*

"You need to forgive yourself." You've received such advice. Maybe you've even offered it. Someone, maybe you, made a mess out of some piece of life and was/were struggling with guilt. So a well-meaning individual offered, "You need to forgive yourself. Let go. Move on." Is that good advice? Is it Biblical advice? Does the Bible teach us to forgive ourselves?

It's true that the Bible talks about forgiveness – a lot. We are exhorted to forgive one another (see Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13, for example) and promised God's forgiveness (see Psalm 32:5 and 1 John 1:8-9, for example).

It's important to notice what forgiveness assumes, though: it assumes that a wronged person is releasing the person who wronged him from a deserved penalty. So, when God forgives us He does so by removing the penalty for our transgression (Jesus endured that penalty on the cross in our stead). When we forgive someone who wrongs us, we release him from the penalty we might otherwise bring on him, confessing that Christ has borne that penalty for him.

Ken Sande, in his helpful book on reconciliation entitled *The Peace Maker*, describes forgiveness as a set of promises or actions offered to another person. Carefully consider these promises:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others (i.e. gossip) about this incident.[1]
- I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.[2]

These are what you mean when you say to another, "I forgive you." Notice how none of them has to do with how you feel about a person. Rather, each promise is a decision to act a certain way toward another and a pledge to treat him in a certain way.

This is how Scripture understands forgiveness. It is a promise from one person to another (because of Christ's cross), or in the case of Christ's death on the cross, an act done for the benefit of another (us). Either way, there's more than one person involved. So, by definition "forgiving yourself" makes no sense as far as the Bible is concerned. Forgiveness involves at least two people.

But the problem is deeper than definitions. Notice on whom Scripture fixes the focus in forgiveness: Christ! God forgives us through the cross of Christ. We forgive others because of the cross of Christ. "Forgiving yourself" omits Christ. In fact, it refocuses the individual squarely on himself, on something he must do or accomplish to feel forgiven or to feel free from his sin. This is the real problem with the "forgive yourself" mantra. And this is why we need to be discerning Christians. Satan will coopt Biblical language and use it

[1] This does not preclude talking to a counselor or pastor to work through hurt or grief or the action of forgiveness.

[2] This does not eliminate the need for healthy boundaries; it merely keeps us from using an incident as a wedge to uncharitably keep a relationship from healing.

against us. He will use familiar and comfortable Biblical language, and twist it so as to distract us from Jesus. We can't let this happen.

But maybe what people mean by "forgive yourself" is simply "Stop clinging to guilt," or "Stop punishing yourself." The intent here may be good. After all, wallowing in guilt is foolish and punishing yourself is destructive, because such behaviors not only obscure Christ by sinking a person's attention into himself, but deny faith in Christ by denying the accomplished work of Christ on the cross.

St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 7 come to mind: "godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10). A person clinging to guilt that Christ has forgiven is clinging to worldly grief, a grief that separates us from Jesus. Godly grief or guilt over sin, however, leads us to repentance, that is faith in Christ and His gift of forgiveness.

So if we're trying to help someone be free from guilt, exhorting him to "forgive himself" won't do it. The focus is on the wrong person. Someone battling guilt shouldn't be told "forgive yourself." He needs to hear Christ's definitive word: "I forgive you," the very word He speaks through His called servant, the pastor. He needs to be turned outside Himself to the source of forgiveness: Christ.

Telling a friend to "forgive yourself" is like telling a dying person to "heal yourself."

Someone once put it this way: telling a friend to "forgive yourself" is like telling a dying person to "heal yourself." Like medicine for a dying person, forgiveness is something that comes from outside, from beyond the heart and will of the individual. Forgiveness, like medicine, comes from the hand of the healer.

Consider Paul's words in Romans 5: "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1). And his words in Romans 8: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). We have peace with God because of Christ! All condemnation has been removed because of Christ! These are the words a guilty conscience needs hear.

Consider the perceptive words of verse two of the Baptismal hymn "God's Own Child I Gladly Say It":

Sin, disturb my soul no longer:
I am baptized into Christ!
I have comfort even stronger:
Jesus' cleansing sacrifice.
Should a guilty conscience seize me
Since my Baptism did release me
In a dear forgiving flood,
Sprinkling me with Jesus' blood?

Nowhere does the hymn exhort us to forgive ourselves. Instead, it reminds us that we are baptized into Christ! In the forgiving flood of Baptism, God has released us from a guilty conscience. We don't need to punish ourselves – Jesus was punished for us! – and our sins have been washed away. Before God we are clean! There is NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus. Period.

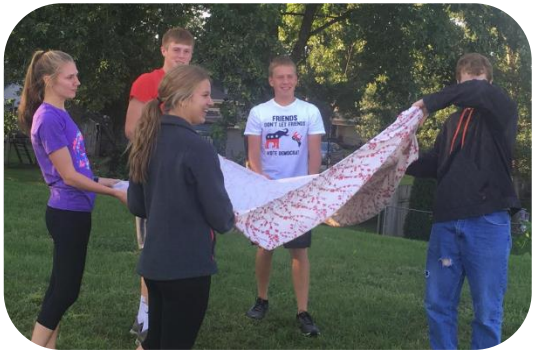
And that's what makes God's forgiveness so astonishing. The full and total penalty for our sins has been borne by Christ. We are forgiven. That's the message we need to be sharing. "Forgive yourself" is the wrong message. It's nonsensical and it distracts us from Christ. So stop "forgiving yourself." Look to Jesus. Stop telling others to forgive themselves. Point them to Jesus. He doesn't make us forgive ourselves. He forgives us – fully, freely, and repeatedly forgives us. Live in that forgiveness. – Pastor Conner

Get your calendar and clear whatever you had on Saturday, November 10 because family and friends of Zion and Trinity are going on a field trip together to Mission Central! If you've never been before, this is the time to go. It's a missionary triple-header!

And, the Creation Theater will be included in the festivities. AND a fantastic lunch will be served. Presentations begin at 10:17 sharp. If you're planning to attend, add your name to the registration sheet in either congregation's fellowship hall or email Pastor Conner (connerjonathanidw@gmail.com) or Pastor Johnson (johnsonan1445@gmail.com) to RSVP.

TRIZION YOUTH GROUP

Trizion youth group is in full swing. We played fling the water balloon over the net with a sheet. The other team had to catch it before it hit the ground. More importantly, we've been looking at significant figures in the Bible -- Judas, Peter, the prodigal son and his brother. We've seen that in the midst of their failures, Jesus Christ wins and forgives.



Ministry Apps

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes (October 2018): Zion and Trinity Lutheran

How would you complete this statement? "I'm living . . . ." Responses are individual and varied. "I'm living busily, happily, alone, confused . . . ." While every season would generate some of the same responses, the transition to fall brings additional excitement to some and additional struggles for others. The Apostle Paul's response in the book of Philippians (1:21) is, "I'm living in Christ." Paul's relationship with Christ affected His outlook on life. In spite of being in prison, Paul shares, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (4:4). With joy and confidence in Christ, Paul also lives in the hope of eternity. While Paul lives each day in Christ, he also confesses, "to die is gain." May God bless our living in Him!

Living in The Word

The book of Philippians will be the focus of the Monday morning Bible study beginning October 1. The class will begin at 9:30 a.m. and conclude about 10:30 a.m. The theme of the study is "Living in Christ." Friends and neighbors are invited.

Living our Vocations in Christ

In the recent Concordia Seminary magazine, Seminary President Dale Meyer noted, "Jesus chose you to bear fruit in your job and weekday life. There is your calling, your vocation, indeed your worship when you do it in total reverence and love for God who saves you in Jesus." The "Here am I" response of Isaiah is lived out in Christian vocation. "Here am I, sent into the work week on Jesus' mission, continuing the worship of God."

Christian vocation continues to be the focus of the monthly Fellowship Club meeting. The group will meet on Monday, October 22 at 7:30 p.m. The vocation emphasis for the month will be highlighted in a bulletin announcement.

Living in Mission

Sunday morning children's offerings and Sunday school offerings will be directed to Missionary James Sharp, his wife Angela (from Denison), and their four children. The Sharp family shares the love of Christ with the people of Uruguay. Offerings for the previous year were designated to Camp Okoboji. The children gave over $1000 to our Camp. Great job children!

The Fellowship Club (with the generous partnership of the congregation) is supporting Orphan Grain Train (OGT). Your recent clothing donations might be a blessings anywhere in the world where there is poverty or catastrophe. Today 27 OGT centers collect and ship goods. The Iowa District West warehouse is located in Ida Grove. Recent OGT shipments included: bicycles, school books, backpacks, and clothing from the Maryland warehouse to Liberia; blankets, linens, Spanish Bibles, clothing, hospital beds, walkers, etc. from the Norfolk warehouse to Nicaragua; and funds for meal purchases to Kerala, India relief camps assisting those displaced by monsoon flooding.

Living Connected

If you have a college-aged youth and have not been contacted about a college address, email address, and cell phone number for your young adult, please share that with the church office so we can be more intentional about church connections with these members. We celebrate connections to Christ in every life stage and setting.

In Christ, Pastor Bob

What We Believe In

By now you've seen the advertisement. Former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who initiated the kneeling protests during the national anthem, is featured by Nike with this tagline: *Believe in something. Even if it costs you everything.*

While the figure and his stance may be controversial (not to mention thickly ironic – he is being paid millions of dollars to make his sacrifice!), the statement masterfully captures the spirit of our age, which is what makes this such a brilliant ad for Nike. People may be put off (or drawn to) the figure and what he stands for (or kneels for!), but few seem to be offended or concerned by the statement.

Confessing Christians shouldn't be taken in. The figure behind the statement isn't what should concern us most in this ad. The truth claim being made is what should grab our attention. What is its message? Can we embrace it?

We'll begin our evaluation by simply changing the background image. Consider the next two images:

Notice that the statement hasn't changed, just the figures behind it.[3] How are you feeling about the statement now? Can you endorse it? Is it

[3] The first figure is Larry Nassar, former team doctor for the U.S. Gymnastics team, and convicted child molester. The second is Osama bin Laden, mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks that took the lives of nearly 3,000 people.

something man can live by? If you recall last month's newsletter, a similar statement made by Supreme Court Justices O'Connor, Souter, and Kennedy was highlighted: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." Nike just put it more succinctly: "Believe in something (i.e., *whatever you want*). Even if it means sacrificing everything."

But the alternate images behind the statement have revealed the statement's error: What we believe may be wrong! The statement artfully (and intentionally) moved the focus away from the content of the belief to the act of believing itself, suggesting that the important thing was the passion and sincerity of the individual doing the believing rather than what he or she was believing. Nike did so because they know that people are not inclined to entertain the idea that their beliefs could be wrong. People are not accustomed to questioning their beliefs and Nike's advertisement does nothing to encourage them to.

Confessing Christians should not be duped. Beliefs can be wrong. What Mr. Nassar believed was wrong. What Mr. bin Laden believed was wrong. And the results were catastrophic. One can argue the merits of Mr. Kaepernick's beliefs, but the point that needs to be emphasized here is that beliefs aren't true simply because we believe them.

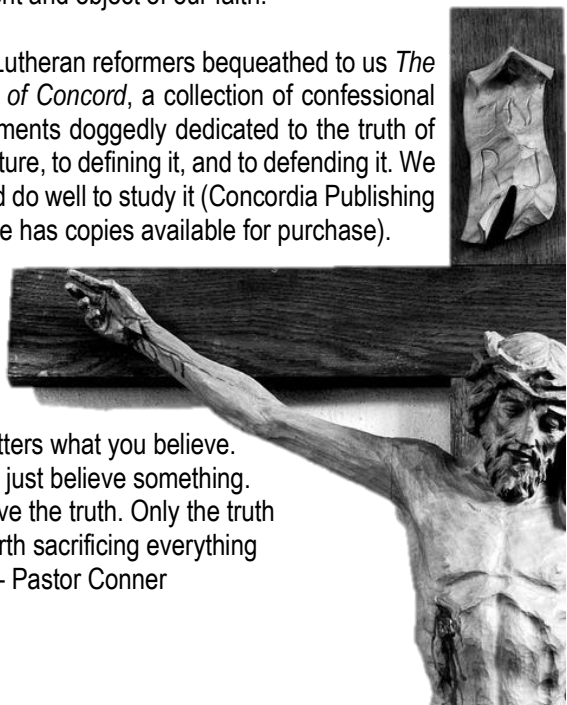
When we talk about believing as confessing Christians, our focus and emphasis isn't on our believing; it's on the substance and content of our belief. So when we say that we are saved by faith in Christ, we're not saying that our act of believing saves us; we're saying that the object of our faith saves us – Christ. To put it another way, we're not saved by faith in faith; we're saved by faith in Christ.

It is the object of our faith that saves us. And this focus on the object (and content) of faith leads to important questions such as: *Who is Christ? How does He save us? What does it mean to be saved? Why do we need to be saved?*

If we didn't care about the content of our faith, these questions wouldn't matter. Sadly, these are precisely the questions being downplayed in so much of American evangelicalism today as they focus more and more on the individual's act of believing over against the content and object of the faith. And, in a world enamored with advertisement's like Nike's (and Supreme Court opinions as highlighted last month), we will increasingly stand out as different.

But it is a difference we must embrace. Now is not a time for soft sentiments or squishy mottos; now is a time for bold confessing of truth. Now is a time to learn what the Church confesses. We are blessed to belong to a Church with a rich confessional history tenaciously focused on the content and object of our faith.

The Lutheran reformers bequeathed to us *The Book of Concord*, a collection of confessional documents doggedly dedicated to the truth of Scripture, to defining it, and to defending it. We would do well to study it (Concordia Publishing House has copies available for purchase).



It matters what you believe. Don't just believe something. Believe the truth. Only the truth is worth sacrificing everything for. – Pastor Conner

Why the Church: Being Church in a Time When it's Difficult

The greatest argument against Christianity is the Church[4], or more specifically the Church's people.

The silver bullet isn't an argument over the existence of God – that's child's play. God doesn't necessarily get dismissed because of suffering. Really, the one thing that's hard to swallow is the beauty, authenticity, and splendor of the Church. Yes, the Bible claims that Jesus laid His life down for the Church, but it seems like He got a raw deal! I mean have you met people in the Church? Jesus says to love God and neighbor over and against everything else in life – do you see that happening in the Church or among people who claim to be Christians? And if Christians fail to follow their Lord, that brings into question the sanity and claims of the Lord Himself!

The reality is you don't have to dig too hard to find atrocities committed in the name of the Church and Christianity. Manifest Destiny. The German state Church's support of Adolf Hitler. Clergy abuse against children along with potential cover-ups. These just pop to my mind immediately; you can probably add to the list.

Now What?

So what do you do once you figure out the truth that the Church lacks splendor? As far as I can tell there are at least three responses.

1) Give up on the Church or Leave

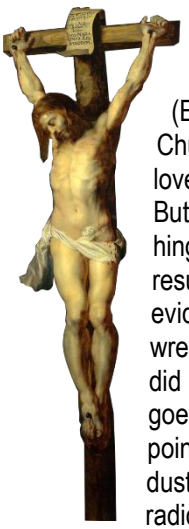
When a toaster doesn't work, you replace it with a new toaster. Church fails, replace it with some new source of meaning or hope. There's certainly no shortage of options, that's for sure!

But here's why that's problematic – giving up on the Church that is. "that he [Jesus] was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve [Disciples]. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:4-6). Paul tells the Church in Corinth that Jesus died, but then He came back to life. But most important of all, 500 eyewitnesses saw Jesus alive. Those eyewitnesses knew Jesus died; the Romans were efficient executioners – there was no doubt in the disciples' mind that Jesus had died.

Here's what you have to ask yourself: Did Jesus actually, for real, literally come back to life after He died? If the answer is yes then Jesus should become the center of your life and the only person who gives you purpose and meaning. Why is that? Because all other things in life will leave you penniless or dead. Hobbies will dry up your income. People, especially family, will fail you. Stuff will not prevent you from dying; medical technology will get you pretty far, but your body will eventually give. Imagining what would have happened if Jesus hadn't come back to life, Paul says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life **only**, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). If Jesus is just like our hobbies, family, or stuff that gives us happiness now then He's a temporary hit of joy and meaning, but in the long run – after we die – He's meaningless. But if Jesus actually came back to

[4] When I say Church I mean an assembly of people that lives in the truth and person of Jesus.

life after He died, and if He is the only one who can bring us back to life after we die then that changes everything! He becomes worthy or our time, allegiance, and our everything!



More than that the stuff Jesus loves becomes the stuff you love too. Jesus loved the Church…to death (Ephesians 5:25). When you leave the Church, then you fail to love what Jesus loves – you're failing to understand Jesus. But again, loving that which Jesus loves all hinges on whether or not Jesus actually resurrected. I'm not going to include evidence here for Jesus' resurrection, but wrestle with that this month. Because if He did rise and radically altered the way life goes – you know, comes back to life at a point in time where lifeless bodies turn into dust in the ground – then your life should radically alter too. For our purposes, that radical alteration means loving the things Jesus loved/loves…like the Church.

2) Like Jesus, Cut out the Rest

The second response goes like this: "I love Jesus and I love what Jesus does, but I can't stand what His supposed followers are doing." The second response can also go: "I'll worship God when I'm in nature by myself." Or, "I'll worship Jesus in my own way." It's kind of like scraping off the mold on a potato. You'll keep the edible part, but cut off the gross stuff. In this case, keep Jesus, but cut out the hypocritical followers.

Now it's difficult to not come off as aggressive in a newsletter article because of the lack of face-to-face communication, but I love you and here's what I'd like you to consider if you find yourself in the above boat: **you were not created to be a lonely island**. Put another way, you are hardwired to be a part of a community.

In the beginning of the Bible at the time the world was created, God keeps on calling stuff good. Light = good. Stars and moon = good. The list of good stuff goes on, however, one part of Creation does not receive God's stamp of approval prior to Genesis 3. Genesis 2:18 → "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone;'" Adam needs company.

Jump ahead to Exodus 19. God had just rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Then He brings the people to a big mountain called Sinai. Just before the people receive the Ten Commandments, God says, "'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore **<u>you</u>** on eagles' wings and brought you to myself'" (Exodus 19:4). Special emphasis on *you*. It's hard to tell, but that word is plural. So the Texan translation might go, "I bore y'all…." Here's the point. While God saves individual people, He doesn't save individuals so that they can remain individuals. Rather, God saves individuals, but then transforms them into a radical community. At Mt. Sinai the Israelites transformed into a community who were to love the true God, and as a result they will be a radical community that does not steal from others. The community abandons hatred because that is murder. The community requires people to live faithfully toward their spouses rather than just allowing spouses to *use* each other for sex or whatever. Again, the list goes on. In the story of God, He moves people out of themselves toward others. The Church becomes the new Israel; a new radical community that loves God and people.

Isolating yourself from the Church goes against how you were designed and created, but more than that keeping Jesus but denying the Church fails to grasp the underlying story of the Bible. Denying the Church is unhealthy. Denying the Church means you don't understand Jesus the way you thought you did.

Before I end this point…

Before I close you might be wondering what if the Church isn't living like the radical community it's called to be by Jesus? Great question! You can go one step further and wonder how the Christian community is any different from another religious community that calls individuals to live selflessly. Buddhism, Hinduism, so on.

What makes Christianity different is Christ. When Christians have failed it's because they haven't abided by His Word. It's because they weren't being Christian *enough*. Such is not the case in other faiths. Islam exhorts adherents to jihad, even endorses deception/lying (called *taqiyya*) to further the cause of Islam. Hinduism produces a system that refuses compassion to lower castes who are required to suffer for the sins of their previous life. Buddhism roots evil in the individual's desires, proposing as the solution not the overthrow of evil, but the elimination of the individual's desires, even his very identity.

At the core of Christianity is a man who says things like "put your sword away" rather than saving yourself. When people have committed cruel and unusual punishment against this man, the man uses his final breaths to say, "Forgive them, Father. They don't know what they're doing." Forgiveness rather than vengeance.

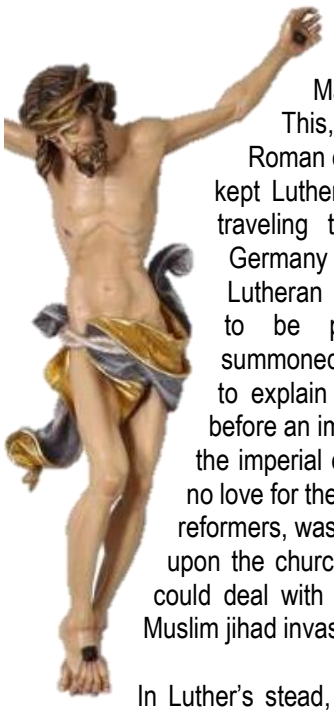
The call then is to become *more* Christian. As the Church – the people and the leaders – fail in heart wrecking ways, the answer is to return over and over again to the heart of the Church – Jesus Christ.

To be continued... -Pastor Johnson

On October 31 the church celebrates the Reformation – the rediscovery of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While most of the country knows the 31st as Halloween, for ages it was an evening of preparation for All Saints' Day on November 1. As such it was called "All-Hallows-Eve." This eventually morphed into Hallow-een and was overrun by the secular holiday many celebrate today with costumes and candy. Luther chose All Hallows Eve to post his 95 Theses because he knew large crowds of worshipers would crowd the church the next morning to celebrate All Saints' Day. By posting them when he did he maximized their visibility.

We, in the Lutheran tradition, still celebrate All Saints' Day. This day "is the most comprehensive of the days of commemoration, encompassing the entire scope of the great cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded (Hebrews 12:1). It holds before the eyes of faith that great multitude which no man can number: all the saints of God in Christ – from every nation, race, culture, and language – who have come 'out of the great tribulation… who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:9, 14). As such, it sets before us the full height and depth and breadth and length of our dear Lord's gracious salvation (Ephesians 3:17-19)" (from *The Treasury of Daily Prayer*).

Unlike some traditions, however, we do not invoke saints. We honor them in three ways: 1) We give thanks to God for the mercy He has extended to them. Their presence in heaven demonstrates God's desire to save. 2) We see God's repeated acts of mercy and grace in their lives and our faith is strengthened. 3) We emulate their faith by learning from their examples. Our celebration of God's saving of the saints is reflected in the white paraments that adorn our altar, pulpit, and lectern. The saints in heaven and the saints on earth have been clothed with Christ and His righteousness. And in our songs we joyfully sing, "For all the saints who from their labors rest, Who Thee by faith before the world confessed, Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Alleluia! Alleluia!" We observe this holiday this year on Sunday, November 4th.



Faith That Justifies

Martin Luther was an outlaw. This, decreed by the Holy Roman emperor Charles V in 1521, kept Luther (for fear of his life) from traveling to the city of Augsburg, Germany in 1530 as his and his fellow Lutheran reformers' confession was to be presented. Charles had summoned the reformers to Augsburg to explain their theological positions before an imperial diet (an assembly of the imperial estates). Charles, who had no love for the doctrines espoused by the reformers, was in a hurry to force a peace upon the churches of his land so that he could deal with the impending threat of a Muslim jihad invasion.

In Luther's stead, his fellow reformer, Philip Melanchthon, would journey to Augsburg. Drawing on several foundational confessional documents that had been penned by the Lutheran reformers over the years leading up to this diet, Melanchthon would pen what would become forever known as *The Augsburg Confession*.[5] In its preface Melanchthon wrote,

> In most humble obedience to Your Imperial Majesty, we offer and present a confession of our pastors' and preachers' teachings as well as of our faith, setting forth on the basis of the divine Holy Scripture what and in what manner they preach, teach, believe, and give instruction in our lands, principalities, dominions, cities, and territories (*Preface to the Augsburg Confession*).

The entire confession bears careful study (I use the first half in my new member classes), but for our purposes we will zero in on its most famous and foundational article: Article IV Concerning Justification. It reads:

> It is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5].

This simple paragraph (along with most of the rest of *The Augsburg Confession*) that extolls faith and the benefits it receives from Christ was vociferously rejected by the Roman Catholic responders (in a document call *The Confutation*). In order to defend the confession presented at Augsburg, the Lutheran Reformers penned *The Apology* (Defense) *of the Augsburg Confession*. The rest of this article will zero in on the defense of the above article. Of special interest to us is the article's emphasis on and definition of justifying faith.

Before progressing to *The Apology*, though, let's make sure we understand the word *justification*. In Greek, the words *justification*, *justify*, *righteous* and *righteousness* are the same root word. So, when the Lutheran reformers wrote about *being made righteous*, they were saying the same thing

[5] On many Lutheran Church cornerstones (including Zion's) the initials U.A.C. appear, which stand for Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

as *being justified*. In other words, they were talking about being restored to a right relationship with God. And the question before them was: *How are we restored to a right relationship with God?* Article IV of *The Augsburg Confession* answered that simply by pointing to Christ and His promises that are received by faith. The Roman Catholic Church rejected this.

The next several paragraphs are direct quotes from *The Apology* (Defense) *of the Augsburg Confession* on Justification and justifying faith. They are of the utmost importance. Take your time reading them and pay special attention to the way they speak of faith.

> [***T***he Roman Catholic opponents] condemn us for teaching that people receive the forgiveness of sins not on account of their own merits but freely on account of Christ, by faith in Him. They condemn us both for denying that people receive the forgiveness of sins on account of their own merits and for affirming that people receive the forgiveness of sins by faith and are justified by faith in Christ… this controversy deals with the most important topic of Christian teaching, which rightly understood, illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings the abundant consolation that devout consciences need… AP IV: 1-2

> ***T***he faith that justifies is not only a knowledge of history; it is to assent to the promise of God, in which forgiveness of sins and justification are bestowed freely on account of Christ… we will add further that to have faith is to desire and to receive the offered promise of the forgiveness of sins and justification. AP IV: 48

> ***W***henever we speak about justifying faith, we must understand that these three elements belong together: the promise itself; the fact that the promise is free; and the merits of Christ as the payment and atoning sacrifice. The promise is received by faith… APIV: 53

> ***F***aith does not justify or save because it is a worthy work in and of itself, but only because it receives the promised mercy. APIV: 56

> ***G***od cannot be dealt with and cannot be grasped in any other way than through the Word. Accordingly, justification takes place through the Word, just as St. Paul notes [Rom. 1:16]: the gospel 'is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith." APIV: 67

> ***F***aith is the very righteousness by which we are reckoned righteous before God, not because it is a work that is worthy in and of itself, but because it receives the promise by which God has pledged that on account of Christ he desires to be gracious to those who believe in him and because it knows that 'Christ Jesus… became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption' [1 Cor. 1:30]. AP IV: 86

Notice the consistent emphasis on the content and object of the faith. As highlighted in the first article ("What We Believe In"), faith saves not because it believes, but because it receives the promises of Christ. This is the faith that justifies. How, then, did the Reformers answer the question *How are we restored to a right relationship with God?* Christ. Christ alone. Christ's work alone. Faith clings to this, and for Christ's sake, God counts us righteous. This is the faith that justifies. – Pastor Conner

Sexually Revolutionizing Baptism:

ELCA Turns Baptism against the Word

This article grieves me to write. Honestly, I *never* expected it would need to be written. I've written numerous articles over the years on the victims of the sexual revolution, victims including children, marriage, human identity, the family, and more.

But I never expected Baptism to be a victim. Further, I never expected a church, let alone a church bearing the name *Lutheran,* to victimize Baptism. But it has happened and great is my grief.

What I'm about to share affects us all, much like the Roman Catholic Church's sexual sins affect us all. We take no delight in another's fall; we grieve for them and with them. So I am not writing to attack another church; I am grieving over their fall. I am writing to defend the truth. The sexual revolution has left countless victims, but we cannot forget that its first victim was truth. And, as the revolution's soldiers continue their march, truth continues to be a target. Sadly, Baptism now stands in its way.

Earlier this summer the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) held its national youth gathering. 31,000 youth gathered to hear a variety of speakers. One of those speakers gave a wholesale endorsement of transgenderism. One, known for her crude blogging,[6] spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit, but never mentioned Jesus. As indicated in previous articles, this is typically intentional because it allows people to bypass Scripture and to co-opt the Spirit into their service.

A third speaker set her sights on Baptism. Here are her words:

> My favorite part of the baptism liturgy is when we ask, 'Do you renounce the devil and all his empty promises?'[7] because there's another name for empty promises and that's outright lies. We Christians who follow the chain-breaking Jesus of Nazareth, we stand up and we renounce lies.
>
> So in closing let me ask you something: Beloved of God, do you renounce the accuser and all his lies and empty promises? If so, say, 'I renounced them!' (youth responded: 'I renounce them!') Do you renounce the lie that queerness is anything other than beauty? (youth responded: 'I renounce them!') Well, me too. Amen. (applause)

Process what was said. First, *queerness* is shorthand for nearly everything that LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) stands for – the undermining of marriage's

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[6] Her blog features these obscene titles: "F*** This S***" and "#ShuttheH***Up." Within her posts are lines like this: The 'American Dream' is code to hold on to white supremacy" and "Whiteness is such a h*** of a drug, white people are willing to blow up the entire f***ing world in order to maintain white supremacy." (Robert Benne writes about this in more detail in an article entitled "ELCA Hits Bottom." His article has provided the original research for my article.)

[7] In the LCMS we break this question into three parts: "Do you renounce the devil?" "Do you renounce all his works?" "Do you renounce all his ways?" The essential meaning, however, is the same; we are rejecting Satan and his lies.

foundation of a man and a woman united in a procreative, one-flesh union and the rejection of the establishment of identity in biology. This, the speaker said, is "beauty." Second, anything and everything that disagrees with this statement belongs to the lies and empty promises of the devil that are to be renounced.

Now, let us consider briefly what Scripture teaches. In Genesis 1 Scripture asserts that mankind has been created as male and female, thereby squarely establishing our identity in our created nature, in our biology (not our feelings or desires, which Genesis 3 teaches are now corrupt and inwardly bent).

Further, Genesis 1 reveals that God has established marriage as the procreative, one-flesh union of a male and a female. Jesus endorses this in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 and Paul, in Romans 1, establishes his sexual ethic on this teaching, asserting that same-sex behavior is "contrary to nature" (i.e. in contradiction to God's creation).

Genesis goes so far to say that God called His created order good, even *very* good. This *good* carries with it not only a moral connotation (i.e. right vs. wrong), but one of pleasantness or beauty. So, in calling His creation *good*, God was also calling it pleasing and beautiful to Him. Procreative/one-flesh marriage between a man and a woman, therefore, is beautiful, as are our created identities as male and female.

But this is the very thing the youth at the ELCA's gathering were exhorted to renounce as lies and empty promises of the devil! Worse, they were told that their baptismal vows included, even required this renunciation! They were essentially told that their baptismal vows obligated them to renounce what God has called good, even beautiful!

Isaiah warned of this:

> Woe to those who call evil good
> and good evil,
> who put darkness for light
> and light for darkness,
> who put bitter for sweet
> and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20)!

How can we not be pierced by grief? And is not made worse by the fact that these lies are being foisted on children? Did not Jesus sternly warn, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:42)?

What then should we do? Despite our grief, we cannot sink into despair. We know that God's Word is powerful. On it, not on the wisdom of man, we will take our stand. Therefore, we must teach the Word with increased vigor and energy. Like us, our youth are daily assaulted by the lies of Satan. I am increasingly asked by confirmation aged children about an increasing array of sex-related terms and behaviors. By and large, they don't know what the Bible teaches. We need to resolve to change this. But before we can teach our children, we ourselves must learn what Scripture teaches. Please don't take this lightly. I have written numerous concise and helpful articles that will go a long way to help you learn what Scripture teaches so that you can communicate them to your children. Please ask me for copies (or I'll email them to you).

And pray. Pray that God's Spirit would work through His Word to open hearts and minds to the truth, the truth that will ultimately liberate us from the lies of Satan and enable us to flourish as God's beloved creations. – Pastor Conner

Preschool Praises for September 2018

School is off to a great start! The first week of September we talked about friends and being polite. The children got to make the letter E and number one with play dough. We take for granted how easy it is to make a "snake" out of play dough, but these little ones need to develop their fine motor skills yet and this is a fun way to do so. We talked about creation day 2 and how God made the water and sky and began practicing our creation song which we will sing at the Pancake Breakfast on October 14th.

The second week was all about feelings! The children now get to post how they feel each day and I'm happy to say that most of them feel happy or loved! We looked at different pictures of children on a felt board and determined how they felt from their facial expressions and body language. We worked on sorting shapes and the letter B. The children got to water color the page for the 3rd day of creation when God made the land and plants. Pastor brought in different gourds for the children to see the creativity of God in creation.

The third week we discussed jobs and now the children each get a job for the day. They are so excited to come in and see what job they have! A big thank you to Kristin Webb, Taylor Potthoff, Dr. Elizabeth Ranniger, Pastor Conner and Officer Sam Hanson for coming in and talking to the children about their jobs and their special God given talents! Mrs. Gore even shared with the afternoon class about her other job as a pet groomer! We asked each child what they would like to be when they grow up and got some interesting answers - princess, police officer, lawyer among some of them. At least all of the answers were human this year! We worked on sorting by size, the letter C, circles and cutting skills. Pastor spoke to the children about when God made the sun, moon and stars on the 4th day and how great He is that he knows all of the stars by name! We can't even count all of them much less know each of them by name!

Week four we spoke about family and we looked at pictures of each child's family and discussed how our families are similar and different. Mom's Night was held on the Tuesday evening and it was so much fun! The children love spending time with their mothers and it is so much fun to share in that special time! We also worked on self-portraits and how to draw a person and the concept of inside vs. outside. The 5th day of creation is so much fun to discuss when we talk about how God made birds and fish all the way from the tiny little humming bird to the great big whale. Pastor elaborated on this and had pictures of different birds and fish for the children to look at.
We are looking for a fun-packed October as we go on a field trip to the apple orchard, have a visit from the Manning Fire Department and get fire truck rides as well as the Pancake Breakfast on the 14th and the Preschool Fall Festival! We are going to be super busy!!! Please spread the word about the Pancake Breakfast as this is our only fundraiser and we want it to be as successful as possible. This preschool has touched so many families in our community and we want to keep this mission field going strong, for that is what it truly is!

There is a remarkable example of our preschool as a mission field that came to complete fruition on September 23rd. We were blessed to have a little boy named Easton Hass join our preschool last year in the 3 year old program. A few months later his parents went through confirmation classes and became confirmed at Zion this last August. On September 23rd Easton and his 3 older siblings were baptized at Zion and became our brothers and sisters in Christ! God is using this preschool to gather his sheep and share his love and we thank you for your support of our mission!

See pictures on page 14!

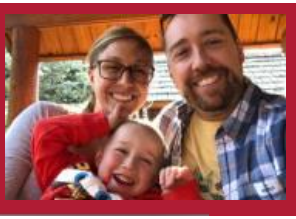
Yours in Christ,
Mrs. Gore and Mrs. Nemitz

ZION
Lutheran Preschool
Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

Preschool Core Values:

1. Christ-centered
2. Child-focused
3. Excellence
4. Safe
5. Family-supporting
6. Community Connecting

SERVING THE LORD IN
PANAMÁ
NEWS FROM THE GAUTHIER FAMILY



September 2018
Vol. 3 Issue IX

What do you do when your plans or projects do not go as planned? How do you deal with failure? These are just some of the questions I have spent some time pondering these last few weeks as we have been driving around the country. As I have shared briefly in these newsletters and a bit during my presentations in your various congregations, there are many challenges on the mission field. In some cases, despite the challenges, plans and projects go off without a hitch. In many cases, projects and plans require wholesale changes.

I shared during my presentations that when I first started offering theology classes in Panamá, nobody came to my first few classes despite visiting the congregations weekly and reminding them. I recall being quite frustrated and a little angry with the people for telling me they would come and then did not. So I returned to their churches and asked what they had going on during the days I was teaching. They told me that they worked on Saturdays (the day I offered the class) or that the fare for a taxi would be too costly for them to make the trip. To be honest, in my first few weeks in Panamá I felt a bit like a failure for not accounting for some of these factors. So how have I dealt with these struggles and seeming failures? While a thick skin and a healthy dose of persistence help, what sustains me is prayer and the Word of God.

I read Isaiah 55 often. Here the prophet explains that the Word of God never returns void or empty but always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:10-11). What does this mean? The mission does not depend on me. The Church in Panamá does not depend on me. It is the Lord's Church and He will grow His Church as He sees fit when and where He wills it. So each Saturday evening, when I drive to the large Lutheran church building in Los Andes II and Venancia is the only person who comes to Bible study, I rejoice because God's Word goes out and does not return empty. Because the Gospel comforts and consoles Venancia with the forgiveness of her sins. Because she takes what she has read and learned and passes it on to her children and grandchildren. I rejoice because one person in Bible study is not a failure. It is a precious child of God hearing the Word of God, asking questions, and growing in her faith. To God be the glory!

Hi everyone! Wow have we traveled a lot in the last few weeks. Dad says we have driven about 4000 miles. I got to hike in the Rocky Mountains where I saw a moose! I went to Mt. Rushmore and saw faces of presidents that had been carved into the rocks. I also went to a place called the Badlands where we hiked on some strange looking rock formations, saw buffalo and dad cooked hot dogs over a fire! We also went to a place called Camp Luther. Mom and dad met there and they were my camp counselors for a few days. They took me canoeing and I saw a bald eagle and some turtles. I also got to shoot a bow and arrow, hike through the woods, play games with a giant parachute, but my favorite activity was playing with a giant ball that looks like the earth. My mom says that when I get older, I can go to Camp Luther for a whole week! My dad has been working a lot in different churches. We have stayed in homes of families in each place and they have been really nice. Thank you for praying for us and welcoming us into your churches and homes.

Pastor, Amanda and Ezra at Zion. Ezra is showing off his new dinosaur, given by the Mission Board.

SERVING THE LORD

ALL OVER ASIA

NEWS FROM THE FERRY FAMILY

Julu 2018

Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, Cassie, Chloe, and Charlotte Ferry

We are guests in Taiwan, just like we were guests in Indonesia. It is only because we have the support of the local church, and the permission of the government, that we are able to live outside the USA to accomplish our work. This fact was driven home again over the last few weeks as we returned to the US for the necessities of life overseas. The Ferry Family was back in "the States" while we renewed passports for the four older kids, and assembled the documentation for our Taiwan visa applications.

This was the first time for the kids to be back on US soil in about a year, and the first time to return to their passport country since we moved to Taiwan. It's also the first time for Charlotte to be in the US at all! We sent off the passports and prayed for the best. While we waited, we had much-needed reconnection time with family, and were able to make a few congregational visits around the Midwest.

We are so grateful for our friends, partners, family members, and other generous people who opened their churches, homes, and schools to us so we could tell them about the transition and the ongoing work we are accomplishing together. It was also an incredible opportunity to meet together with colleagues in person, and to experience some of the wonderful blessings of US life which are so often beyond our reach in Asia.

Once we had valid passports back in hand, and all the proper documentation assembled, authenticated, and notarized, it was time to appear at the Chicago diplomatic office for Taiwan. We were a bit nervous, but the staff was as warm and welcoming as anyone else we've met from Taiwan. The kids greeted the workers in Chinese, and the rest of the visit went very smoothly. Two weeks later, we had our passports back in hand with the fresh resident visas pasted in the middle. Thanks be to God!

To support our work financially, send a tax-deductible gift to: The LCMS, P.O. Box 790089, St. Louis, MO 63179

SELAMAT

Read more online at:
http://ferrys.asia

The Ferry family is now back in Asia, unpacking our suitcases in our new home, and excited to get back to work. We still have some diplomatic tasks to accomplish to obtain our resident cards, but the hard part is over. Many thanks to each of you for your continued prayers, support, and love. We are humbled to begin this new chapter of service in earnest, and we look forward to sharing the updates and pictures.

Being back in the US is always interesting for the Ferry kids. They've lived most of their lives outside the country, so we're never sure how certain things are going to strike them, or how they'll react to things we normally take for granted. This year during a few of our visits, the kids took a turn in helping Daddy present on our work in Asia by answering some questions or even singing a nursery-rhyme song in Chinese. And they're always amazed to see Mommy or Daddy drive a vehicle, since we don't own anything (and don't drive ourselves) in Asia.

Many thanks to all of you for allowing us to continue on this tradition of reaching out with the Gospel truth. We take great joy in the service we can give through our partnership!

Or: Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to **The LCMS**, and mark them "Support of Charles Ferry." Gifts can also be given securely online through our online giving page at *www.lcms.org/ferry*.

Ladies Guild of Zion
September 12, 2018

Pastor Conner led us in prayer then talked to us about the parable of the sower found in Matthew 13. Jesus said the knowledge of the secrets of heaven has been given to the man who hears the word of God and understands it. He, having understood the word, produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. President Buhr then led us in the LWML pledge. Christian Life Chairman, Margaret Backhaus read a piece entitled "You Look Like Your Mother," noting family resemblances. We were then reminded that we were made in God's image. The mite box offering and prayer followed.

President Buhr called the business meeting to order in the name of the Triune God. Roll call was answered by 13 people telling their favorite places to eat out. The secretary read thank you notes from the Kinderfest committee, the family of Robert Hansen and from Priscilla Guild in Manilla. There was no meeting in August and no minutes to be read. Treasurer, Mary Grimm, sent her report. Kitchen treasurer, Darlene Vollstedt gave her balance. Human Care Chairman, Audrey Roe, asked ladies to come on Thursday afternoons to help construct quilts. From the sales of the tea sacks she has been able to buy sheets and fillers. Circle # 1 reported on serving the Robert Hansen funeral, Circle #2 the Lavern Bald funeral, and Circle # 3 the Walt Noelck funeral. Circle # 1 is next to serve.

President Buhr announced the fall zone rally will be held in Glidden on Sunday, September 30th at 1:30. A car pool will leave the church at 12:45. Speaker will be Gary Gruhn. There will also be a woman's retreat at Camp Okoboji on October 5-6. Cost is $100.00 for Friday dinner, concert, and lodging. Jennie Williamson will be the entertainer. LWML Sunday will be noted on October 7th at Manning. A "noisy" coin offering will be taken to support the missions of the LWML that day. The 2019 national LWML convention will be held in Mobile, Alabama. A sign-up sheet was passed for busing to the event. The 2020 LWML Iowa West District Convention at Camp Okoboji will be jointly hosted by Boone and Carroll Zones. There will be various positions to be filled.

Old business was a list of guild collection items. They are postage stamps, box tops for education, soap, computer non-refillable ink cartridges, and cell phones.

New business: There is to be a mission IWD mission banquet at Zion. We were asked if the guild would like to provide the banquet. Sue Puck moved that we not attempt to serve. The motion was seconded and carried. Advent by Candlelight planning was begun. Bev Grundmeier, in charge of tickets, asked for help. Sue Puck volunteered. Sign-up sheets for decorating tables, providing desserts, working in the kitchen, and decorating the fellowship hall will be ready in October. Tickets will be sold beginning November 4th. The event will be held on December 2nd.

Due to Manning's Homecoming celebration on Friday afternoon, the 28th of September there will be no Plaza Bingo that day. The next Guild meeting will be on October 10th with Sue Puck and Mary Grimm as hostesses. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer and the table prayer. Refreshments were served by Laurene Meeves and Sue Schilling.

Sue Puck, secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

October 1 – November 5
Living in Christ: An Exploration of Philippians
Mondays at 9:30 a.m. at Zion
Facilitated by Pastor Riggert

October 11
Thursday morning worship at Trinity, Manilla @ 11:00 a.m.
Light refreshments to follow

October 14
Preschool Pancake Breakfast
Support Zion Lutheran Preschool from 9:00 to Noon by enjoying fantastic pancakes and giving generously.
Worship begins at 8:00 a.m.

November 4
All Saints' Day
Join the Zion family on this meaningful day as we give thanks to God for the grace He has shown to the saints who have gone before us. The names of our loved ones who have died in the faith over the past years will be read and remembered in worship.

November 10
Fieldtrip to Mission Central
Join family and friends from Zion and Trinity for a special Mission Central Field Trip on Saturday, November 10th. Carpools will leave from Zion at 9:00 and Trinity at 9:10. The program begins at 10:17 and will feature three missionaries, a tour of the Creation Theater, and lunch! If you've never been, this is your opportunity! Call Zion (655-2352) or Trinity (654-3031) to register or with questions.

November 11
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Iowa District Mission Banquet at Zion

December 2
Advent by Candlelight (at Zion)
Experience the Christmas story through narration and song in the enchanting candlelight setting of Advent by Candlelight.
Watch for news on ticket prices and table decorating.

October Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1 Eric Rosener
2 Terisa Nelson (T)
Noah Vetter (T)
Ferdonna Zimmerman (T)
3 Marcus Borkowski
Chasity Chedester
Alan Morris
4 Amy Dawson
Robert Ehlers
Charlene Hickman
Camden Morris
5 Bennett Riesberg
Katelynn Wittala
Brian Birks (T)
6 Haleigh Alexander
Benjamin Ramsey
Richard Zinke
8 Marlene Borkowski
Juanita Kurth
9 Amelia Vetter
Bonnie Witt
Susan Mahnke (T)
11 Houston Alexander
Kimber Arp
Drew Doyel
Lynn Kruse
Skyler Sandage
12 Justeen Schwieso
Weston Stribe
14 Wendy Ahrendsen
Lance Gruhn
15 Barbara Doyel
Justin Frank
Lori Lenz
Kaylyn Nelson
Jodi Ramsey
Betty Schroeder
Sandra Sextro
David Weller
16 Miranda Benton
17 Pamela Garvis
Phyllis Lamp
Haven Reese
Gordon Schmarzo
18 Kate Greving
Don Lamb
19 Gloria Ewoldt
Sonia Kuchel
Julie Weller
20 Steve Borkowski
Andrea Nulle
Natalie Nulle
21 Rodney Borkowski
Pam Kusel
Nancy Walters
22 Luella Borkowski
Cynthia Genzen
23 Kyle French
24 Diana Eddy
Wyatt Grabill
Jill Mohr
25 Trevor Booth
Nathan Janssen
26 Zach Rasmussen (T)
Brett Saunders (T)
27 Bobby Doyel
Randy Dreher
Lois Peters
Daniel Tibben
Amos Olson (T)
29 Melissa Nelson (T)
30 Claire Behrens
Mallory Dreier
Geraldine Stripling
Justin Segebart (T)
31 Callan Stribe

Anniversaries

3 Franklin & Arlene Mohr
9 Ryan & Bobby Doyel
10 Neil & Shala Hass
Duane & Kay Otto
12 Gerald & Rita Beck
13 Howard & Audrey Roe
14 David & Julie Weller
16 Dale & Karen Reinke

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

Official Acts

Married:
Tom Bornhoft to Lindsey Bornhoft (Griencewic) - September 2; Pastor Andrew Johnson

Baptisms:
Rylan Avery Hass, Araya Kayann Hass, Kaleal Elizabeth Hass, and Easton Charles Hass, Children of Neil and Shala Hass; September 23; Pastor Jonathan Conner
Axsel Olson (parents Nels & Stephany Olson) - September 15; Pastor Andrew Johnson

Transferred in:
Cassandra Neumann from Zion Lutheran church, Arcadia; September 19

Funerals:
Walter August Noelck; Died August 31; Funeral September 5, (Trinity Lutheran Church); Pastor Jonathan Conner

In Our Prayers

Dave Grundmeier, Heather Kusel, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Susan Lamb, JoAnn Karsten (Georgia Lohrmann's sister), Natalie Mason (Bruce and Mary Grimm's daughter), Bob Henkelman, Judy Reinke, Gage Carlson