"Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets," Luke writes, Jesus "interpreted… in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:27). Last month we began exploring how the Old Testament Scriptures testify to Jesus, specifically how the Old Testament establishes a pattern, a messianic profile for Jesus, which primes our expectations for Him as we open the New Testament. This month, in our series on understanding the Old Testament, we consider the *presence* of Jesus in the Old Testament. We consider how Jesus was working and manifesting Himself in the Old Testament.

To be a little more direct, we want to appreciate how the Old Testament features Jesus, how it shows us Jesus present and working. We start in the New Testament, looking with Jude into the Old Testament, where he saw Jesus present and acting. Jude writes, "I want to remind you… that Jesus… saved a people out of the land of Egypt..." (Jude 1:5).

Appreciate what Jude said: Jesus saved a people out of the land of Egypt. Mentally review the acts of the Exodus – the plagues, the Passover, the pillar of fire and the cloud, the parting of the waters, Mt. Sinai, etc. – that was Jesus! He hadn't yet become incarnate, but He was already present and working. But, as you surely know, the Old Testament doesn't use the name *Jesus*. How, then, does it speak of Him? How does it show us Jesus? That's the question we take up now.

The Angel of the Lord / The Messenger of Yahweh

Reflect on these words from Judges 2:

> [The Messenger of Yahweh] said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you…" (Judges 2:1).

We encounter the mysterious figure, the Messenger of Yahweh.[1] He appears throughout the Old Testament. Notice how He is claiming to be the One who has brought Israel out of Egypt. Further, He is promising to keep His covenant with Israel. But who made the covenant with Israel? Wasn't it Yahweh Himself?[2] What's going on? This figure appears to be simultaneously distinct from Yahweh *and* Yahweh Himself. And, remember, Jude sees Jesus here. Jude saw Jesus saving a people out of Egypt. Clearly the Old Testament is trying to tell us something.

[1] The English text renders this Hebrew title *the angel of the Lord.* I have rendered it *the Messenger of Yahweh* to prevent us from mistakenly concluding that the entity being described is merely an angel. He's not. As we'll see, this Messenger is the Lord Jesus Christ appearing in pre-incarnate form.

[2] Moses says to the people of Israel, "The LORD/Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb/Sinai" (Deuteronomy 5:2).

Let's continue our study. In Genesis 16 Hagar is fleeing from Sarah, who apparently was making her life miserable after she conceived with Abraham (this was their ill-conceived attempt to hurry God's promise). Pay close attention to the way Moses narrates the story:

> The **angel of the LORD** found [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The **angel of the LORD** said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The **angel of the LORD** also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the **angel of the LORD** said to her,
>
> 'Behold, you are pregnant
> and shall bear a son.
> You shall call his name Ishmael,
> because **the LORD** has listened to your affliction…'
>
> So **she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her**, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." (Genesis 16:7-13).

Notice how Moses writes of the *angel of the Lord* and *the LORD*. When he narrates what this figure said, he calls him *the angel of the Lord*; when he describes who spoke to Hagar, he calls him *the LORD*. As before, this figure is distinct from the LORD/Yahweh and one with Yahweh.

We see the same pattern in Exodus 3 and the burning bush. Moses writes,

> And the **angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When **the LORD** saw that he turned aside to see, **God** called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**" And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at **God**. Exodus 3:2-6

Notice again how this figure is both distinct from Yahweh and one with Yahweh. The angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in the bush and God called to him out of the bush. Distinct, yet one.

Consider another piece of this narrative: The fire and cloud of God's presence. In Exodus 3, 13, and 23 the Messenger of Yahweh is associated with this fire and cloud of God's presence, but in Exodus 14, 16, 19, 24, and 40 the fire and cloud are connected to Yahweh. The Messenger of Yahweh is distinct from Yahweh, but also Yahweh Himself.

We see this pattern of unity and distinction throughout the Old Testament. For those interested in reflecting more on the Messenger of Yahweh, check out these verses: Genesis 22:11-18, Numbers 22:22-35, Judges 2:1-5; 6:11-24; 13:1-23, 1 Kings 19:1-8, Zechariah 1:7-17, and 1 Chronicles 21:14-27. Through these narratives the Old Testament teaches about the nature of God and how He reveals Himself to man. Appreciate this point: The Old Testament teaches through story. It rarely directly states its point. Instead, it invites readers into its narrative, to meditate on the message being communicated. When you do you come to the realization that God is a multi-personed unity who is simultaneously transcendent, reigning over all creation, and near to us in the mediating person (the Messenger of Yahweh) who is both God and distinct from God.

And James has already told us who this mediating Man is: The Lord Jesus Christ! When Jesus, in our opening verse from Luke 24, said the Old Testament bore witness to Him, He knew what He was talking about – because He was there! We have more to consider on Christ's presence in the Old Testament, which we will take up next month, but how can seeing Jesus present in the Old Testament, like the Emmaus disciples who heard Jesus open the Scriptures to them (in Luke 24), explaining how they bore witness to Him, not likewise set our hearts ablaze? – Pastor Conner

Thank You, VBS Volunteers!

Volunteers for 2025 VBS:

Shannon Walters, Kathryn Schneider, Kimber Opperman, Pastor Conner, Josiah Conner, Jaime, Bode, Cash, & Graham England, Kristen & Steven Bieret, Jason Opperman, Bob Genzen, Nancy Muhlbauer, Linnet Nissen, Linda Vinke, Bonnie Witt, Nancy Wanninger, Martin Wanninger, Cynthia Genzen, Monica Christensen, Joelle Puck, Paula Wulf, Greg Sextro, Larry Mahnke, Pastor Vogel, Tim Kienast, John Schneider, Susan Mahnke, Emma Pryor, Andy Booth, Brogan Eischeid, Barb Page, Grace Carroll, Jayden Bunker, Holly Borkowski, Jessie Blackford, Vivian Blackford, Rebecca Conner, Skyler Sandage, Gloria Ewoldt, Janet Smith, Shirley Ahrendsen, Kari Ranniger, Wade Ranniger, Rachel Stoberl, Jean Ferneding, Mary Grimm, Marlene Borkowski, Ella Sanford, Sandra Sextro, Brian Stoberl

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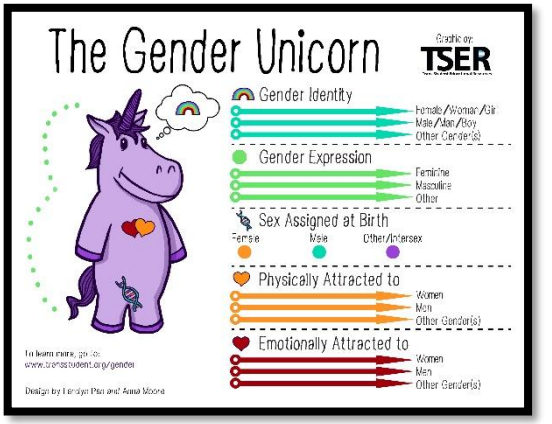
Humans Aren't a Spectrum: Male and Female God Created Them

Humans exist in a gendered spectrum. This is a lie. It's a common lie. It's a repeated lie. It's a lie told to children in colorful and engaging books (that are adorned with the accolades and awards they have received from "experts"), a lie told to students in polysyllabic, high-minded academese (by the degreed intelligentsia), a lie told to parents by certified professionals (claiming the imprimatur of science). But it is a lie. Rev. Max Mons, LCMS campus pastor at the University of Iowa,[3] shares the extent of the lie, explaining that on campus over 70 genders are recognized. To spell this out: students are being told humans are a gendered spectrum ranging from male to female, that from Point A (Male) to Point B (Female) there are at least 70 human genders. This is a lie.

The lie is on display in The Gender Unicorn (see image below), a child-friendly, cartoon unicorn designed to teach the supposed gender spectrum of humans by placing identity somewhere on a continuum marked by gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth,[4] and physical and emotional attraction.[5]



This lie despises the body. It doesn't admit this openly, but it requires denying the message of the created body. Did you realize that the created body, *your* created body, communicates a message from your Creator?

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[3] This is, by no means, unique to the University of Iowa!

[4] *Sex assigned at birth* essentially asserts that the body is irrelevant when it comes to gender. It may be biologically sexed, but that has no bearing on an individual's gender. A person's gender is discovered later in life as they become aware of their inner sense. In short, this ideology believes it wrong for a doctor to say to a new mom, "Congratulations! You have a boy." That, they claim, is assigning sex at birth instead of letting the child discover their gender in their own time.

[5] It appears that the creators of this cartoon illustration do not appreciate the irony of their creature: Unicorns are mythical animals. They do not exist! They have unwittingly undermined what they are trying to promote.

Your body communicates a message about your identity from your Creator. Rosaria Butterfield,[6] a former professor at Syracuse University who identified as lesbian[7] for years before being brought to repentance by Christ to acknowledge the message of her created body, has referred to the body as being stamped with a pattern that reveals a purpose. In other words, as male and female we have been created with sexual complements. That doesn't mean that every human will pair with his or her sexual complement (in male/female marriage) or that they're required to, but it does communicate something about our identity and being. Our bodies tell us something about who we are and the majestic God-given potential hardwired into our sexed bodies (our male or female bodies). Our bodies are not neutral containers defined by our self-discovered/chosen identity; they tell us who we are and why we were created.

Consider, for a moment, the reality of your body. You have two lungs. Do your lungs need to partner with anyone else's lungs to secure oxygen for your blood? No. They are sufficient in themselves. You have a heart. Does your heart need to partner with anyone else's heart to circulate blood to your body? No. It is sufficient in itself. You also have sexual organs. Are they sufficient in themselves to do what they are designed to do? In other words, can they do what they're designed to do by themselves? No. In order to procreate, they must partner with their sexual complement. The body testifies to the sacred potential that God has given to male and female. Again, this does not mean that every individual will or must partner with his or her sexual complement. Some will remain single, a state Scripture recognizes, even celebrates. It means that we have been created as sexual complements. We have sexed bodies and this pattern reveals a purpose.

Scripture minces no words when it declares: *Male and female He created them*. Notice how identity is grounded in the created body. People today are wont to claim *God made me gay* or *God made me trans*. What we must understand is that these claims require the denial of the body, even a silencing of the message the body is speaking. These claims treat the body as a neutral shell that is defined by a person's internal sense and desires. The fact of the matter, though, is that God made us male or female. That's the language of Scripture (and borne out in science, which we'll see in a minute). We may (and surely will) discover desires that are at odds with God's design, but those desires do not alter

---

[6] Rosaria is author of several thoughtful books, including *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* and *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*.

[7] The language here is important. Rosaria *identified* as lesbian. At the time she would have said that she *was* lesbian. After being brought to repentance by the Holy Spirit she was able to appreciate her nature as a creature of God, specifically a female creature. She *wasn't* lesbian. She *was* female. She may have had same-sex desires, but her identity wasn't grounded in her sexual desires; her identity was grounded in her creation (as a female) and her re-creation in Christ.

what God has created. They do not change our identity.

Here's how this Biblical declaration speaks into our cultural context: *Humans aren't a spectrum. Humans are male or female*. To spell that out further: *Humans aren't LGBTQ – we can add H (for heterosexual) – Humans are male or female.* This point needs to be appreciated. We're talking about the is-ness of humans, the essence of humanity. For the Bible, humanity's is-ness is not anchored in any of these letters: L.G.B.T.Q.H. Those are sexualized letters, and while the body is sexed, identity is not sexualized. According to the Bible, humanity's is-ness is anchored in these letters: M(ale) or F(emale). As such, God didn't and doesn't create anyone *gay* or anyone *trans*. We can even add *heterosexual.* A person's is-ness isn't in sexualized terms. Yes, God created males and females as sexual complements. Yes, this is a heterosexual arrangement, but a person's identity is not grounded in this sexualized term. God makes everyone male or female. Identity doesn't belong in desires or internal senses; identity is grounded in creation, in male or female.

That means no one is born in the wrong body. The body is not wrong. A person's desires may be out of line with reality (something that should be no surprise for anyone taking the fall into sin seriously), but the body is not wrong. Sex isn't assigned at birth; it is announced (because the body reveals it). Gender reassignment surgeries do not align a person's body with his/her gender; they mutilate the body God created. The body isn't out of alignment. A person's internal sense or desires may be out of alignment with reality, but the body is reality.

Where a person's desires and internal sense come from is a complicated question beyond the scope of this article, but it shouldn't be too hard to think through this if we broaden the question to all of a person's desires and internal senses. Where does a person's desire for acceptance come from? Where do a person's insecurities come from? Where does a person's yearning for success and recognition come from? Where does a person's arrogance come from? There's no simple answer, but surely it is a mix of culture, worldview, life experiences, and predispositions/inclinations. And when we factor in the reality of the fall's effect on desires and senses, it's not hard to imagine how they go wrong. What we may find is that individuals' God-given desires for belonging, security, and love have been twisted by sinful inclinations, culture, or life experiences.[8]

[8] We must give sober acknowledgement to the power of the social internet to disseminate ideas, both through the ubiquity and universality of the means and by the very means themselves which make certain ways of thinking about the human person (i.e. as a disembodied profile or avatar) conceptually possible. In short, the social internet has the power to spread anti-creational ideas through a two-dimensionalizing, disembodying means. All this contributes to the disparaging and silencing of the created body. For those wishing to think more on this reality, see Samuel James'

Some here raise the question of intersex, suggesting this demonstrates that humans are a spectrum. Intersex is an exceedingly rare biological abnormality in the body that results in the atypical development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomical sex characteristics. These abnormalities may make discerning a person's sex difficult, even impossible. You may have seen claims asserting that intersex is as common as the percentage of people with red hair (approximately 2%). Without getting into the weeds, that claim is false. Those interested in learning more about this can read Dr. Leonard Sax's paper "How Common is Intersex?" in which he demonstrates that true intersex conditions are approximately .0002% (2 out of 10,000 people). But here's what's important to understand in these exceedingly rare cases: Intersex conditions do not create a new gender any more than conjoined twins create a new category of personhood. Scripture's declaration holds: *Male and female He created them*. Intersex (as with conjoined twins) is simply another manifestation of the effect of Adam's sin on creation. This doesn't devalue anyone who has an intersex condition any more than being born with one leg devalues someone. We've all been impacted by Adam's sin. And we all have resurrected Redeemer who gives us hope for our bodies!

We Move now to the findings of science that confirm the Genesis declaration. In a recent article in *Salvo* magazine, Dr. Leonard Sax, MD, PhD, shares findings from multiple studies on the human brain. Dr. Sax responds to specious claims made in a 2017 book entitled *Testosterone Rex: Unmaking the Myths of our Gendered Minds* that audaciously asserted that anyone claiming biological differences between male and female brains (i.e., that the categories of male and female actually reach into the physical body) was perpetuating lies by the heteronormative patriarchy.[9] Sadly, but unsurprisingly, this book received a prestigious award from the Royal Society for the best science book of the year.

Digital Liturgies: Rediscovering Christian Wisdom in an Online Age.

We must also soberly acknowledge how our reproductive technologies are increasingly diminishing the centrality of the sexed body to marriage and children. We used to understand that sex makes babies and that babies need their mom and dad. But our reproductive technologies (ranging from contraception to donor technologies and surrogacy and IVF) have progressively separated (first conceptually and then physically) sex from babies (i.e. we no longer intuitively connect sex and babies, that sex makes babies, and this means something has gone right in the act) and now babies from sex (i.e. we no longer need sex to make babies; we can produce them like any other commodity). This disparages the sexed body and makes the body as shell / human as spectrum idea more intellectually feasible.

[9] This is a pejorative label that some use to demonize what they see as cultural norms that privilege heterosexual sexual relationships (while stigmatizing other sexual identities) and that privilege men in social, political, economic, and familial structures (at the expense of women and non-binary people).

Dr. Sax marshals impressive evidence that demonstrates precisely what this award-winning book was forcefully denying: that male and female are fixed, biological categories which are increasingly becoming visible to the investigative tools of science. Dr. Sax details the findings of researchers from Stanford Medical School who, using deep learning artificial intelligence methods to study brain activity on approximately 1,500 individuals ranging from 20-35, mapped the brain's "fingerprint" (perhaps better termed "brainprint"!). They were looking for overlap between males and females, whether there was a continuum from male to female, whether the "brainprint" showed a spectrum ranging from male to female. Dr. Sax relays their findings: "There wasn't a continuum: the female fingerprints of brain activity were quite different from the male fingerprints of brain activity, with no overlap."

They used similar methods to "map fMRI (functional MRI) patterns of connectivity onto cognitive functions such as intelligence." Dr. Sax shares their findings:

> Whatever determines intelligence in the brains of men is completely different from the determinants of intelligence in women. And whatever determines intelligence in women is completely different from the determinants of intelligence in men.

They concluded,

> Our results provide the most compelling and generalizable evidence to date, refuting this continuum hypothesis and firmly demonstrating sex differences in the functional organization of the human brain.

But! advocates of the "human as spectrum" crowd countered, *These scans only reveal the effect of societal influence on humans, not innate differences*. In other words, these young adults in the study only show what happens in the brains of people who are socialized in a culture that privileges the binary (i.e. male/female over human as spectrum). Dr. Sax offers a second study in which researchers used high resolution MRI scanners to image the brains of unborn babies. He shares their findings, "They found dramatic differences in the connections within the brains of boys compared with those of girls."

And these differences persist into childhood and adulthood. Dr. Sax relays findings from a long-term study on a cohort of children who had their brains scanned yearly. Dr. Sax shares,

> Girls' brains are smaller than boys' brains, at every age, and girls mature faster than boys do. Girls reach the inflection point… roughly the halfway point in brain development – around 11 years of age… Boys don't reach the inflection point until around 15 years of age. Girls reach full maturity in brain development by roughly 22 years of age. Boys don't reach full maturity until about 30 years of age.

Lest someone misread these findings, size does not translate to intelligence. Remember the findings shared before: What determines intelligence differs between male and female. Dr. Sax shares,

> Men's brains are more compartmentalized; women use more areas of the brain for the same task. Women's brains are smaller but develop faster and function more globally. Men's brains are somewhat larger but apparently are more pigeon-holed.

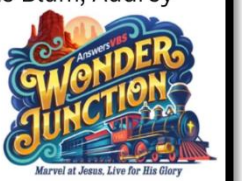
Space prevents unpacking these findings in terms of interpersonal relations between men and women (which would be enlightening and amusing!).[10] What concerns us is Dr. Sax's conclusion:

> The gender binary is not an arbitrary social construct. It is a biological reality, manifest in the organization of the human brain prior to birth. Men and women are different.

In short, humans aren't a spectrum. Humans are male and female. Scripture's assertion holds true: *Male and female He created them*. And, as Scripture says, this is *very good*. It is left to us to appreciate the goodness of God's creation and to celebrate it. – Pastor Conner

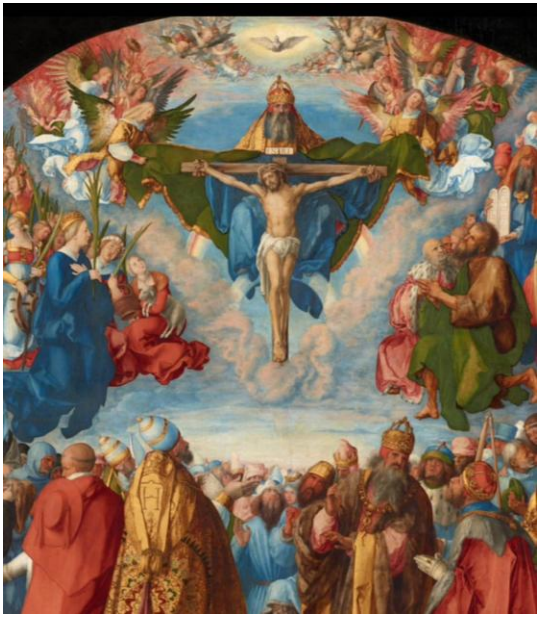
Volunteers cont.

Paul Christensen, Lauren Greving, Kenli Neumann, Catherine Conner, Roslyn Muhlbauer, Kieryn Vetter, Karen Reinke, Jenn Eickman, Weston Stribe, Kendra Arp, Noah Gore, Paisley Lorezen, Shelly Gruhn, Paula Finken, Jada Irlbeck, Kathy Vollstedt, Claire Gore, Rachel Ramsey, Klay Lupardus, Hailee Janssen, Monroe Eischeid, Shelby Heaton, Chelsey Jensen, Adam Albertsen, Westen Snyder, McKenzie Bieker, Amanda Mullenger, Amy Blackwell, Jean Hargens, Susie Ulrickson, Karlee Arp, Harper Morris, Elizabeth Else, Wyatt Lupardus, Beth Booth, Carolyn Kerkhoff, Rylan Mundt, Robbie Gore, Oriah Meiners, Taylor Roe, Joni Kienast, Takara Hoffmeier, Mckenna Benton, Brooklyn Riesberg, Adalyn Stribe, Keatyn Sander, Kora Kusel, Keagan Eischeid, Paula Vogel, Piper Carroll, Jackson Schellhorn, Haylie Irlbeck, Merrick Stribe, Brody Doyel, Annabelle Blum, Audrey Beermann, Nathanael, Gregory, & Isaiah Conner



[10] For those interested in these questions, I recommend Deborah Tannen's book *You Just Don't Understand* and Steven Rhoads' *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*. Caveat: Rhoads approaches this question from an evolutionary perspective. Readers will need to filter out the evolutionary propaganda and bring Biblical discernment to bear. Nevertheless, the findings communicated in the book are fascinating and support Scripture's teaching on God's creation of male and female.

The Blessed Nation



("The Holy Trinity" oil painting on Canvas Albrecht Dürer published in 1511– Public Domain)

Reading: Psalm 33;

Psalm 33:12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage!"

The month of July begins a season of renewed Patriotism when we remember that we belong to the land of the free and the home of the brave. However, we often lose sight of those little words in our pledge of allegiance, "one nation, **under God**," and our nation's official motto, "**In God we trust".**

Psalm 33 reminds us of a simple truth which has become buried under the ever-increasing complexities of life and culture as we know it.

And the simple truth is this, you are blessed when your God is the LORD. And when the whole nation has their God as the LORD, they too are blessed.

Let me unpack this…

There are many gods, but to say that your God is the LORD is to say that you have a very specific God at the exclusion of any other gods.

You cannot serve any two at the same time. Either, your God is the LORD, or your god is false.

It is as simple as that.

The LORD is the specific covenant name of the only true God; we also know this name as Yahweh. The LORD, Yahweh, is the living God.

In Exodus 34:6-7, Yahweh describes Himself, **"6The Lord passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin…"**

Yahweh is a God worthy of our praise and worship and blessing and honor all the days of our lives.

To touch on Psalm 33:12 again, this passage requires you to examine yourself and see whether your God is the LORD [Yahweh] or not. Exodus 34:7 continues that Yahweh, **"...will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."** Similarly in Exodus 20:6 Yahweh describes Himself saying, **"I the Lord your God am a jealous God."**

Our God is Yahweh, and His covenant faithfulness to us is beyond comprehension.

He is just and He is not corrupt at all.

This means that He does not let the guilty go without punishment, and it means that He will never punish the righteous.

So, the question for us at the mention of righteousness becomes, "How then, can a nation be called blessed if no one can be righteous?"

The Psalmist shares who belongs to this nation; namely, "…**the people whom He has chosen as His heritage**!"

The nation whose God is Yahweh, has nothing to do with land or political borders. It has to do with the people whom God Himself has chosen.

With great joy, we recognize that The LORD has chosen each of us at Baptism. He has called you blessed through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the only righteous One.

You are citizens of a new and holy nation in Christ. A nation whose God is truly the LORD.

According to the promise in Christ, an Earthly nation which upholds Yahweh as their God is also counted among the blessed; namely, as those who are in Christ and have the hope of eternal life.

As a final conclusion, whether Earthly nation or a nation according to Baptism, all who are found in the blessed one of God; Jesus Christ, are blessed according to the hope of eternal life, salvation, and the resurrection of the dead on the last day to live before God in everlasting righteousness and joy beyond all measure.

It is our joy and pleasure to be citizens of this nation, as the LORD has chosen each of us to be His heritage forever.

-Pastor Staehr

TRINITY'S JUNE CELEBRATIONS

Trinity celebrated the Baptism of Finn Ertz: Son of Mya and Josh Ertz on June 7th during the Pentecost service.

Trinity also held a volleyball event at the Manilla Wellness Center on June 22nd.

Come Join Us on Our

VBS KICK-OFF EVENT

OUTDOOR SERVICE, BAKE SALE, BARBEQUE, AND MORE!

SATURDAY, JULY 26TH

SCHRAM PARK

FESTIVITIES BEGIN AT 5:00 P.M.

Rainforest Explorers

Jesus Leads the Way

What: Rain Forest Explorers Vacation Bible School

Where: Trinity Lutheran Church-Manilla

When: August 3-5 from 6-8:00 p.m.

Who: Children Pre-school - 6th grade

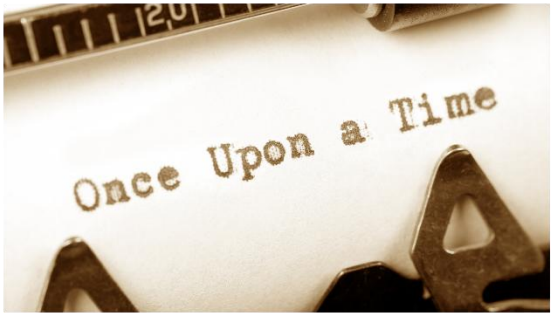
Register now in person or online at www.myvbs.org/trinityrainforestexplorers

Join Trinity for nightly lessons, meals, games, crafts, and more as we explore Jesus and what He can do in our lives!

Zion VBS 2025

Over 200 kids and over 100 volunteers!

And one Jesus celebrated and shared with all!



I love to tell the story!

“So once someone remembers their true name, they’re cured?” Janner asked.

“I wish it were so. We all forget from time to time, and so we need one another to tell us our stories. Sometimes a story is the only way back from the darkness.” The Warden and the Wolf King By Andrew Peterson (Book 4 of the Wingfeather Saga)

Have you ever read a great novel that stays with you and something in it resonates deep in your soul? Maybe you never go back to reread it but the story still lives in you and you go back to it to recall the truth, goodness or beauty it imparted. If you aren’t much of a reader perhaps it was a good movie or mini series that did just that. Story telling has a way of speaking to us in ways that non-fiction simply cannot.

As this week has been particularly rainy, and as I’ve been trying to fight my scrolling addiction, I took it upon myself to finally pick up the fourth book in the Wingfeather Saga and read a little bit. I found myself getting lost in the saga, and reveling in the whimsy and world that Andrew Peterson had created. I have always loved reading for the lessons it can teach us, the ability to escape into another world, and the sheer joy of a hero’s journey. As I sat reading, I stumbled across two profound moments in the story that caused me to stop and think saying to myself, “Wow! That is profoundly true! How amazing that through story something true can be conveyed.” Much like C.S. Lewis’ Narnia, the Wingfeather Saga is written from a Christian worldview and conveys truths of God but not in another retelling of a bible story, but it a new fun story all its own.

Without giving too much away incase you would like to venture into the world of the Wingfeather’s (which I highly recommend), the 4-book saga tells the tale of three siblings. It is filled with dragons, magic, and monsters (people who turned into half human half animal). Evil is winning and yet three children are fighting against the darkness. The last book in the series finds the oldest brother, Janner, talking with one of the mutant monsters. Not all the humans who turned monsters fully embraced the darkness and therefore at times could remember who they were before they changed. They could control the monster within, but at other times the darkness would take over and they would become wild. As Janner conversed with this monster, he learned that helping the monsters remember who they were before they failed and gave into the darkness could cure them.
“So once someone remembers their true name, they’re cured?” Janner asked.

"I wish it were so. We all forget from time to time, and so we need one another to tell us our stories. Sometimes a story is the only way back from the darkness."

The Evil one would have them believe it was no use fighting against their inner nature of darkness and wildness. That there was no hope. Yet they surrounded themselves with others who could help remind them when they were on the brink who they are, their name, their story and this would bring them back.

Oh, how very much alike we as Christians are. We are sinners by nature and often times give in to the old Adam within. Believing the lies of the Evil one that this is who we are, broken, bent, dark and why keep fighting against it? Isn't it easier to just give in? How many times have you and I messed up today, yesterday, this past weekend or year? How many times have we heard the lie and believed it that it's not even worth trying. Why get out of bed and go to church? Why fight the addiction? Why put down the bottle? Why put down the dirty magazine or book? Why even try to stop swearing or joining in with the gossip and filthy conversation? Why try to change? Obviously, you can't. Just give into to the darkness within. There's freedom in the darkness, there's a release. There's power in the darkness to be who you truly were made to be.

"Do not fear for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name you are mine." Isaiah 43:1b.
"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." 2 Corinthians 6:19-20.

At times it feels like all hope is lost. That darkness within us and without is all that there is and the fight is not worth continuing. But God in his goodness and mercy surrounds us with such a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) to remind us who we are and whose we are. We are forgiven sons and daughters of the King of Kings, heirs with Christ Jesus. We are redeemed. We are renewed. We are saved by the blood of the lamb. At one time we were darkness but now we are light in the Lord. So, we should walk as children of the light (Ephesians 5:3). See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. (1 John 3:1)

Oh, how we need this told to us time and time again. Over and over because the enemy over and over tells us lies. Yet we can fight the lies with the truth. So when we, like the monsters in the book, forget from time to time who we truly are and give into the darkness within and without we need others around us to tell us our stories. To tell us the greatest story of who we are in Christ Jesus and what he has done for us. We need to be with other broken, bent, sinful Christians in church, in families, in friendship and in community so that when we feel the darkness closing in, we can speak the truth into the night. We can be told dear sister and brother that the darkness is defeated. That Christ has won the day. That we are forgiven and redeemed children of God. That

is who we are! We can not save ourselves from the darkness but we have a God who already has! Sometimes we just need someone to tell us our story so we remember. So, if no one has told you lately let me tell you your story. You dear reader are loved so much, by the God who created the universe. Who sent his Son Jesus Christ. To live the life, you couldn't live. To die the death, you deserve. So that through his life, death and resurrection you could have the free gift of eternal life that is only found in Christ Jesus. Not by anything you have done but by everything Christ has done. Remember who you are and whose you are in Christ Jesus! Whom the son sets free, oh is free indeed. (John 8:36) You are a child of God, so walk as a children of the light. – DCE Kathryn

Thank You, cont.

Thank you to everyone who donated cookies. We hope we didn't miss anyone but if we did we are truly sorry. We appreciate all of you especially our families who often are voluntold! Several of our volunteers helped in multiple ways from craft prep and decorating to tear down. Thank you!

Special thanks to Sam Musfeldt for the many years that he cut and made stables and supervised the 6th graders in finishing them.

Also special thanks to Pam Kusel for the many years she took our big group picture for VBS and provided us with a print of those pictures! We truly appreciate you both.

Join us in prayer this month for the 21 youth and 5 adults we will be sending to New Orleans for the National Youth Gathering July 18-24th.
Samantha Doyel
Catherine Conner
Katelyn Dreher
Karlee Arp
Brock Kusel
Benjamin Ramsey
Cate Drees
Layton Lorenzen
Karysn Lorenzen
Preston Porter
Mason Benton
Mckenna Benton
Andrew Booth
Emma Pryor
Claire Gore
Lauren Greving
Haylie Irlbeck
Caleb Alexander
Camden Alexander
Merrick Stribe
Adalyn Stribe
Jack Sanford
Jodi Ramsey
Jill Arp
Pastor Staehr
Jennifer Drees
Dan Stribe
ENDURE
2025 LCMS YOUTH GATHERING
HEBREWS 12:1-3

CREATED, FALLEN, REDEEMED
SUMMER SERIES AT HISTORIC TRINITY
6:30 p.m.
June 26
July 24
August 28

Crossroads of Crawford County
FOR LIFE & THROUGH LIFE

We are blessed & grateful to announce:

Our "baby" is here!

Like a newborn needs nurturing caregivers who provide love, nourishment, protection, and care over all the years of childhood, Crossroads needs to do the same for "its baby" in order to help those who come to us care for their baby!

Your ongoing, gracious help through financial fueling, prayerful support, and practical assisting empowers us to walk alongside of them in their decisions, offer practical support, mentor and equip them for parenthood, lead them to home building--God's way.

These LCMS Congregations, through joining with the LCMS Life Ministry Matching Grant, made possible the purchase of initial supplies and auxiliary equipment for operations of the Crossroads' Ultrasound Program:

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD

- Trinity Lutheran
- Odebolt Immanuel Lutheran, Schleswig
- Zion Lutheran, Manning
- Zion Lutheran, Denison

We are blessed with the open-handedness of those who contributed in order to empower Christian relationship with those in difficult and unplanned pregnancy circumstance as they make LIFE decisions and LIVE LIFE. Thank You!

What's Next?

Professional Training
Every ultrasound that Crossroads performs needs to be done within the center's medical grade policy in order to gain full respect of being accurate, life-affirming, and "medically correct". Those performing the ultrasound will be fully trained to offer limited obstetric ultrasound AND to respond in Christian encouragement and compassion. We have training scheduled at our center in late September. We have paid for half the fee and will need to pay the other half plus compensate trainee time.

Professional Insuring
A medical model Pregnancy Resource Center is required to insure each of its medical professionals with professional liability. This will be a new expense and in addition to the other general insurances, is important, yet financially daunting.

Loan Payment
Payment of the modification loan from when we purchased the building. Property taxes on the rented portion of our building have taken a large hike. Additionally, there have been building improvements we hoped could wait. This slowed payoff. We very much need anchoring funding from those who desire to see our ministry grow by SERVING LIFE.

Crossroads offers education about the developing embryo/fetus/baby while seeking to understand the barriers to confident parenthood, and we stand prepared to partner with them in choosing life and the issues involved in the journey of parenthood. We do not offer, recommend, or refer for abortions or abortifacients or birth control.

712.393.4673(HOPE) • 139 N 7th Street, Denison, Iowa 51442 • www.crossroadsofcrawfordcounty.org
Crossroads is a 501c3 charitable organization. Your monetary donation is tax deductible. (ID # 81-0902310)

Crossroads of Crawford County
FOR LIFE & THROUGH LIFE

Trinity, Manilla

Thursday, July 24 2:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.
Friday, July 25 2:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, July 26 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Zion, Manning:

Wednesday, August 6 2:00 p.m. -8:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 7 2:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.
Friday, August 8 2:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, August 9 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 27 2:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 28 2:00-8:30 p.m.
Friday, August 29: 2:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, August 30 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Online Scheduling Available!

To schedule your photography appointment online, go to www.ucdir.com, click on **Photography Session Sign-Up**.

Zion, enter **ia344a** in the Church Code field and enter **photos** in the Church Password field.

Trinity, enter **ia344b** in the Church Code field and enter **photos** in the Church Password field.

Follow the prompts to schedule your family's appointment time. If you have six or more in your family please use two consecutive time slots. The online scheduling option is available Monday through Friday. Appointments fill up quickly, so schedule as soon as possible to secure your preferred date and time.

Questions?

Speak with Shannon Walters, Nancy Muhlbauer, or Paul Christensen.

!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from ***Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas***
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Greetings from your Hispanic ministries of Iowa District West. Like always, we want to thank God, the churches and all our volunteers for making this ministry a great one. Without all of you, this would not be possible.

At Denison, we continue to have our Worship service every Sunday at 2:30 pm. We offer home Bible studies as needed. Bringing new people into the ministry is our priority here. We thank God for helping us and we ask that you pray for our Denison group.

In Storm Lake, we continue at Grace where we have our Sunday worship service at 11am. We also volunteer at St. John's for the swaddling clothes program. Friendships are developing. Our prayer is that this will help in the planning of an ESL class again soon and that these families will visit our Sunday Worship service. We continue to offer Bible study on Wednesdays either at Grace or home depending on schedules.

At St. Paul-Carroll, we continue to have Bible study on Saturday evenings for Praise, Prayer, and Bible study. We continue to work with new families that we met during the spring ESL class. Our Deacons Fili, Noel and Adrian attended the district convention and enjoyed meeting all the pastors and learning more about our church. We had a great time together and amazing fellowship.

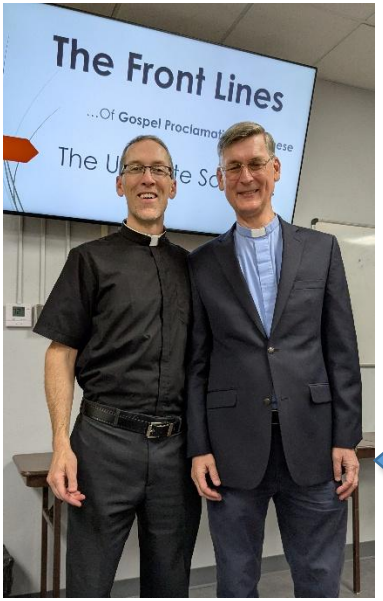
Our new Bible study at Faith-Early is happening. We have a few visitors on and off, but we are hoping to reach out to the Hispanics living there. As of now, Bible studies are held on Mondays at 1pm. We are not sure that we will keep it at this time since contact people have different work schedules. They work at Tysons and run a restaurant six days a week. Please keep this new ministry in your prayers.

At Hartley, we continue to offer Bible studies led by Deacon Noel on Saturdays at 6:30 pm. We are planning a new Bible study at Camp Okoboji with the Hispanics working there and Hispanic families living in the area. Please pray for us, that the Lord enlightens us as we continue to share the Word of God.

Bendiciones a todos. Pastor Lopez

Rev. Pedro Lopez, Asst. to the President Missionary at Large, pedro@iowadistrictwest.org, 571-606-7600

Snapshots of Zion



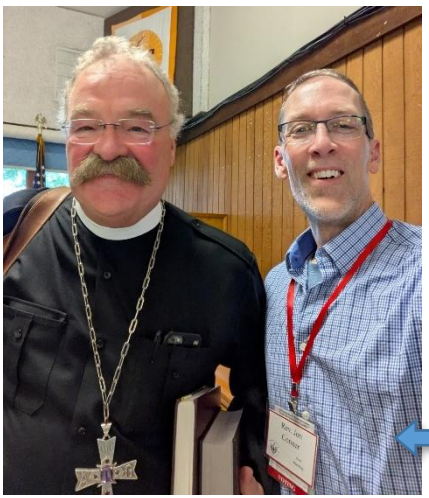
Professor Oliver shares the front-line mission work he is equipping men and women for in Taiwan and throughout Asia.

Children smile at Zion's VBS.

Children ready for Bible study with Pastor Conner.

Worshippers exit Historic Trinity after the first of our three summer services.

Not pictured: We were honored to have Tom and Susie U join Pastor Conner to pray for R&M as they prepare to serve as workers in South Asia



Pastor Conner smiles at the IDW Convention for a picture with LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison

Evelyn G. demonstrates her hula hoop skills (three at once) and Josiah C. gains a better view for a group picture.

Upcoming Events @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

	Bible Study	**Sunday mornings @ Zion following worship**
	July 17	**Afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)**
	July 19-23	**LCMS National Youth Gathering in New Orleans**
	July 24	**Summer Worship Series at Historic Trinity (6:30 p.m.)**

July Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. Heather Adams
   Nathan Jensen
   Keely Loing
2. Becki Ehlers
   Brenna Hodne
3. Jace Kucik
   Landry Wiig
4. Mallory Weitl
6. Janet Smith
7. Leonard Dammann
   Lisa Drier
   Taylor Potthoff
   Hunter Smith
8. Jaidee Porter
   Matthew Weitl
9. Brynli Blackwell
   Reid Neumann
11. Olivia Beck
    Jax Greving
    Jason Kienast
    Jessica Kurth
    Hallie Steckelberg (T)
    Jordan Weller
12. Tisha Hugeback
    Casey Karsten (T)
    Elsie Kienast
    Scott Rosener
    Clark Tibben
13. Arlene Bald
    Jason Ferry (T)
    Kara Havick
    Emma Martin (T)
14. Stephanie Ahrenholtz
    Gregory Conner
    Bary Kienast
    Duane Monson
15. Ben Lorenzen
    Jesse Weitl
16. Dean Genzen
    Beckett Lorenzen
17. Brock Jensen
18. Joni Kienast
    Andrea Morrison (T)
19. Bob Genzen
    Brad Otto
20. Morgan Bruck
    Shala Hass
21. Louise Bruhn
    Kaylee Martin
    Kenny Steckelburg (T)
22. James Karsten
    Axsel Olson (T)
    Alle Stoeckel
23. Jill Saunders
24. Sophie Alexander
25. Nancy Goodwin
    Nick Woebke (T)
26. Grant Lahr (T)
    Susan Schilling
27. Kavin Beam
    Kevin Brus
28. Bricy Lorenzen (T)
30. Doug Havick
    Karsyn Lorenzen
    Howard Roe
31. Markus Neumann
    Lyle Ranniger

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform

Anniversaries

1. Randy & Crystal Dreher
3. Warren & Sue Puck
   Martin & Nancy Wanninger
4. Nate & Jessie Blackford
5. Dennis & Michaela Chapman
8. Brian & Kathy Lage
9. Dan & Cheryl Kerkoff
12. Craig & Debbie Musfeldt
16. Doug & Kate Greving
    Todd & Shelly Gruhn
18. Scott & Beth Stribe
24. Gale & Linda Vinke
25. Pastor Robert & Diane Riggert
    Ron & Sue Soll
27. Nick & Kristin Woebke (T)
29. Pastor Jonathan & Rebecca Conner
    Eric & Jodi Ramsey
31. Steve & Holly Borkowski
    Chris & Mary Greving

Official Acts

Baptism

June 7th, Finn Ertz son of Mya and Josh Ertz, Pastor Staehr

In Our Prayers

Bruce Rutz, Steve Rutz, Athena Bess, Kaui Meyer, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Justeen Schwieso, Sherri Steffes, Judy Reinke (Ernie's sister-in-law), Karen Vollstedt, Stacey Rolenz and Ashley Myers (daughters of Shelly Helmich), Myra Luetje, Becki Ehlers, Denny Grimm, Gene Mahnke, Gary & Joyce Schroeder, Duane Monson