

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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March Newsletter

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH LC-MS

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LET US KNOW...

If you have a change in address, phone or email, have a loved one who is or hospitalized, have a new baby, would like a pastoral visit, or if you would like a special prayer during the prayers of the church on Sunday, please contact Pastor Koeppe or the church office.

DO YOU...

want to put something in the bulletin or newsletter?

Have a prayer request? Birth/Anniversary/Graduation announcements?

If so, please submit the information as you want it to appear in the bulletin or newsletter by the deadlines listed below to the church secretary at immanuellutheran@iowatelecom.net.

Deadline for submitting in the weekly bulletin is Thursdays by noon.

Deadline for the monthly newsletter is the 15th of each month.

For those of you without email access, please call or submit your written request to the church secretary.

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• HAPPY •

March

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A Message from our Pastor



This Lenten season, we are taking time to reflect upon the Sixth Chief Part of the Catechism; the Sacrament of the Altar. For your joy and edification, I share with you Luther's Large Catechism on the Sacrament of the Altar, as well as his inseparable piece to it, his Brief Exhortation to Confession. It is long, but take time and chew through it slowly all month. Enjoy!

1 As we treated Holy Baptism under three headings, so we must deal with the second sacrament in the same way, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All these are established from the words by which Christ instituted it.

2 So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and go to the sacrament should be familiar with them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come. The words are these:

3 *"Our Lord Jesus Christ on the night when he was betrayed took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"*

"In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"

4 We have no wish on this occasion to quarrel and dispute with those who blaspheme and desecrate this sacrament; but as in the case of Baptism, we shall first learn what is of greatest importance, namely, God's Word and ordinance or command, which is the chief thing to be considered. For the Lord's Supper was not invented or devised by any man. It was instituted by Christ without man's counsel or deliberation.

5 Therefore, just as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed retain their nature and value even if we never keep, pray, or believe them, so also does this blessed sacrament remain unimpaired and inviolate even if we use and handle it unworthily.

6 Do you think God cares so much about our faith and conduct that he would permit them to affect his ordinance? No, all temporal things remain as God has created and ordered them, regardless of how we treat them.

7 This must always be emphasized, for thus we can thoroughly refute all the babbling of the seditious spirits who regard the sacraments, contrary to the Word of God, as human performances.

8 Now, what is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer: It is the true body and blood of the Lord Christ in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by Christ's word to eat and drink.

9 As we said of Baptism that it is not mere water, so we say here that the sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread or wine such as is served at the table. It is bread and wine comprehended in God's Word and connected with it.

10 It is the Word, I maintain, which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine and constitutes it a sacrament which is rightly called Christ's body and blood. It is said, "*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,*" that is, "When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament." This saying of St. Augustine is so accurate and well put that it is doubtful if he has said anything better. The Word must make the element a sacrament; otherwise, it remains a mere element.

11 Now, this is not the word and ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the divine Majesty at whose feet every knee should bow and confess that it is as he says and should accept it with all reverence, fear, and humility.

12 With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and declare: “Let a hundred thousand devils, with all the fanatics, rush forward and say, ‘How can bread and wine be Christ’s body and blood?’ Still, I know that all the spirits and scholars put together have less wisdom than the divine Majesty has in his little finger.

13 Here we have Christ’s word, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ ‘Drink of it, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood,’ etc. Here we shall take our stand and see who dares to instruct Christ and alter what he has spoken.

14 It is true, indeed, that if you take the Word away from the elements or view them apart from the Word, you have nothing but ordinary bread and wine. But if the words remain, as is right and necessary, then in virtue of them they are truly the body and blood of Christ. For as we have it from the lips of Christ, so it is; he cannot lie or deceive.”

15 Hence it is easy to answer all kinds of questions which now trouble men—for example, whether even a wicked priest can administer the sacrament, and like questions.

16 Our conclusion is: Even though a knave should receive or administer it, it is the true sacrament (that is, Christ’s body and blood) just as truly as when one uses it most worthily. For it is not founded on the holiness of men but on the Word of God. As no saint on earth, yes, no angel in heaven can transform bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood, so likewise no one can change or alter the sacrament, even if it is misused.

17 For the Word by which it was constituted a sacrament is not rendered false because of an individual’s unworthiness or unbelief. Christ does not say, “If you believe, or if you are worthy, you receive my body and blood,” but, “Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood.” Likewise, he says, “Do this,” namely, what I now do, what I institute, what I give you and bid you take.

18 This is as much as to say, “No matter whether you are unworthy or worthy, you here have Christ’s body and blood by virtue of these words which are coupled with the bread and wine.”

19 Mark this and remember it well. For upon these words rest our whole argument, protection, and defense against all errors and deceptions that have ever arisen or may yet arise.

20 We have briefly considered the first part, namely, the essence of this sacrament. Now we come to its power and benefit, the purpose for which the sacrament was really instituted, for it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain there.

21 This is plainly evident from the words just quoted, “This is my body and blood, given and poured out *for you* for the forgiveness of sins.”

22 In other words, we go to the sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because the words are there through which this is imparted! Christ bids me eat and drink in order that the sacrament may be mine and may be a source of blessing to me as a sure pledge and sign—indeed, as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evils.

23 Therefore, it is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man. While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, at times even stumble.

24 The Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger.

25 For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses.

26 Meanwhile it must suffer much opposition. The devil is a furious enemy; when he sees that we resist him and attack the old man, and when he cannot rout us by force, he sneaks and skulks about everywhere, trying all kinds of tricks, and does not stop until he has finally worn us out so that we either renounce our faith or yield hand and foot and become indifferent or impatient.

27 For such times, when our heart feels too sorely pressed, this comfort of the Lord's Supper is given to bring us new strength and refreshment.

28 Here again our clever spirits contort themselves with their great learning and wisdom, bellowing and blustering, "How can bread and wine forgive sins or strengthen faith?" Yet they know that we do not claim this of bread and wine—since in itself bread is bread—but of that bread and wine which are Christ's body and blood and with which the words are coupled. These and no other, we say, are the treasure through which forgiveness is obtained.

29 This treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words, "given and poured out for you." Here you have both truths, that it is Christ's body and blood and that these are yours as your treasure and gift.

30 Christ's body can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, impotent and useless. Yet, however great the treasure may be in itself, it must be comprehended in the Word and offered to us through the Word, otherwise we could never know of it or seek it.

31 Therefore it is absurd to say that Christ's body and blood are not given and poured out for us in the Lord's Supper and hence that we cannot have forgiveness of sins in the sacrament. Although the work was accomplished and forgiveness of sins was acquired on the cross, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How should we know that this has been accomplished and offered to us if it were not proclaimed by preaching, by the oral Word? Whence do they know of forgiveness, and how can they grasp and appropriate it, except by steadfastly believing the Scriptures and the Gospel?

32 Now, the whole Gospel and the article of the Creed, “I believe in the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins,” are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word. Why, then, should we allow this treasure to be torn out of the sacrament? Our opponents must still confess that these are the very words which we hear everywhere in the Gospel. They can say that these words in the sacrament are of no value just as little as they dare say that the whole Gospel or Word of God apart from the sacrament is of no value.

33 So far, we have treated the sacrament from the standpoint both of its essence and of its effect and benefit. It remains for us to consider who it is that receives this power and benefit. Briefly, as we said above concerning Baptism and in many other places, the answer is: It is he who believes what the words say and what they give, for they are not spoken or preached to stone and wood but to those who hear them, those to whom Christ says, “Take and eat,” etc.

34 And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sins, it cannot be received except by faith. This faith he himself demands in the Word when he says, “Given *for you*” and “poured out *for you*,” as if he said, “This is why I give it and bid you eat and drink, that you may take it as your own and enjoy it.”

35 Whoever lets these words be addressed to him and believes that they are true has what the words declare. But he who does not believe has nothing, for he lets this gracious blessing be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy it. The treasure is opened and placed at everyone’s door, yes, upon everyone’s table, but it is also your responsibility to take it and confidently believe that it is just as the words tell you.

36 This, now, is the preparation required of a Christian for receiving this sacrament worthily. Since this treasure is fully offered in the words, it can be grasped and appropriated only by the heart. Such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the hand.

37 Fasting and prayer and the like may have their place as an external preparation and children’s exercise so that one’s body may behave properly and reverently toward the body and blood of Christ. But what is given in and with the sacrament cannot be grasped and appropriated by the body. This is done by the faith of the heart which discerns and desires this treasure.

38 Enough has been said now for all ordinary instruction on the essentials of this sacrament. What may be further said belongs to another occasion.

39 In conclusion, now that we have the right interpretation and doctrine of the sacrament, there is great need also of an admonition and entreaty that so great a treasure, which is daily administered and distributed among Christians, may not be heedlessly passed by. What I mean is that those who claim to be Christians should prepare themselves to receive this blessed sacrament frequently.

40 For we see that men are becoming listless and lazy about its observance. A lot of people who heard the Gospel, now that the pope's nonsense has been abolished and we are freed from his oppression and authority, let a year, or two, three, or more years go by without receiving the sacrament, as if they were such strong Christians that they have no need of it.

41 Some let themselves be kept and deterred from it because we have taught that no one should go unless he feels a hunger and thirst impelling him to it. Some pretend that it is a matter of liberty, not of necessity, and that it is enough if they simply believe. Thus, the majority go so far that they have become quite barbarous, and ultimately despise both the sacrament and the Word of God.

42 Now it is true, we repeat, that no one should under any circumstances be coerced or compelled, lest we institute a new slaughter of souls. Nevertheless, let it be understood that people who abstain and absent themselves from the sacrament over a long period of time are not to be considered Christians. Christ did not institute it to be treated merely as a spectacle, but commanded his Christians to eat and drink and thereby remember him.

43 Indeed, true Christians who cherish and honor the sacrament will of their own accord urge and impel themselves to come. However, in order that the common people and the weak, who also would like to be Christians, may be induced to see the reason and the need for receiving the sacrament, we shall devote a little attention to this point.

44 As in other matters pertaining to faith, love, and patience it is not enough simply to teach and instruct, but there must also be daily exhortation, so on this subject we must be persistent in preaching, lest people become indifferent and bored. For we know from experience that the devil always sets himself against this and every other Christian activity, hounding and driving people from it as much as he can.

45 In the first place, we have a clear text in the words of Christ, “*Do this* in remembrance of me.” These are words of precept and command, enjoining all who would be Christians to partake of the sacrament. They are words addressed to disciples of Christ; hence whoever would be one of them, let him faithfully hold to this sacrament, not from compulsion, coerced by men, but to obey and please the Lord Christ.

46 However, you may say, “But the words are added, ‘as often as you do it’; so, he compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice.”

47 I answer: That is true, but it does not say that we should never partake. Indeed, the very words, “as often as you do it,” imply that we should do it often. And they are added because Christ wishes the sacrament to be free, not bound to a special time like the Passover, which the Jews were obliged to eat only once a year, precisely on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first full moon, without variation of a single day. Christ means to say: “I institute a Passover or Supper for you, which you shall enjoy not just on this one evening of the year, but frequently, whenever and wherever you will, according to everyone’s opportunity and need, being bound to no special place or time”

48 (although the pope afterward perverted it and turned it back into a Jewish feast).

49 Thus you see that we are not granted liberty to despise the sacrament. When a person, with nothing to hinder him, lets a long period of time elapse without ever desiring the sacrament, I call that despising it. If you want such liberty, you may just as well take the further liberty not to be a Christian; then you need not believe or pray, for the one is just as much Christ’s commandment as the other. But if you wish to be a Christian, you must from time to time satisfy and obey this commandment.

50 For this commandment should ever move you to examine your inner life and reflect: “See what sort of Christian I am! If I were one, I would surely have at least a little longing to do what my Lord has commanded me to do.”

51 Indeed, since we show such an aversion toward the sacrament, men can easily sense what sort of Christians we were under the papacy when we attended the sacrament merely from compulsion and fear of men’s commandments, without joy and love and even without regard for Christ’s commandment.

52 But we neither force nor compel anyone, nor need anyone partake of the sacrament to serve or please us. What should move and impel you is the fact that Christ desires it, and it pleases him. You should not let yourself be forced by men either to faith or to any good work. All we are doing is to urge you to do what you ought to do, not for our sake but for your own. He invites and incites you; if you despise this, you must answer for it yourself.

53 This is the first point, especially for the benefit of the cold and indifferent, that they may come to their senses and wake up. It is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as everyone will find in his own case, that if a person stays away from the sacrament, day by day he will become more and more callous and cold, and eventually spurn it altogether.

54 To avoid this, we must examine our heart and conscience and act like a person who really desires to be right with God. The more we do this, the more will our heart be warmed and kindled, and it will not grow entirely cold.

55 But suppose you say, “What if I feel that I am unfit?” Answer: This also is my temptation, especially inherited from the old order under the pope when we tortured ourselves to become so perfectly pure that God might not find the least blemish in us. Because of this we became so timid that everyone was thrown into consternation, saying, “Alas, I am not worthy!”

56 Then nature and reason begin to contrast our unworthiness with this great and precious blessing, and it appears like a dark lantern in contrast to the bright sun, or as dung in contrast to jewels. Because nature and reason see this, such people refuse to go to the sacrament and wait until they become prepared, until one week passes into another and one-half year into yet another.

57 If you choose to fix your eye on how good and pure you are, to work toward the time when nothing will prick your conscience, you will never go.

58 For this reason we must make a distinction among men. Those who are shameless and unruly must be told to stay away, for they are not fit to receive the forgiveness of sins since they do not desire it and do not want to be good.

59 The others, who are not so callous and dissolute but would like to be good, should not absent themselves, even though in other respects they are weak and frail. As St. Hilary has said, "Unless a man has committed such a sin that he has forfeited the name of Christian and has to be expelled from the congregation, he should not exclude himself from the sacrament," lest he deprive himself of life.

60 No one will make such progress that he does not retain many common infirmities in his flesh and blood.

61 People with such misgivings must learn that it is the highest wisdom to realize that this sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. We are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we come to confession pure and without sin; on the contrary, we come as poor, miserable men, precisely because we are unworthy. The only exception is the person who desires no grace and absolution and has no intention to amend his life.

62 He who earnestly desires grace and consolation should compel himself to go and allow no one to deter him, saying, "I would really like to be worthy, but I come not on account of any worthiness of mine, but on account of thy Word, because Thou hast commanded it and I want to be thy disciple, no matter how insignificant my worthiness."

63 This is difficult, for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to contend with, that we concentrate more upon ourselves than upon the words that proceed from Christ's lips. Nature would like to act in such a way that it may rest and rely firmly upon itself; otherwise, it refuses to take a step. Let this suffice for the first point.

64 In the second place, a promise is attached to the commandment, as we heard above, which should most powerfully draw and impel us. Here stand the gracious and lovely words, "This is my body, given *for you*," "This is my blood, poured out *for you* for the forgiveness of sins."

65 These words, I have said, are not preached to wood or stone but to you and me; otherwise, Christ might just as well have kept quiet and not instituted a sacrament. Ponder, then, and include yourself personally in the "you" so that he may not speak to you in vain.

66 In this sacrament he offers us all the treasure he brought from heaven for us, to which he most graciously invites us in other places, as when he says in Matt. 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you."

67 Surely it is a sin and a shame that, when he tenderly and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, we act so distantly toward it, neglecting it so long that we grow quite cold and callous and lose all desire and love for it.

68 We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also. Why, then, do we act as if the sacrament were a poison which would kill us if we ate of it?

69 Of course, it is true that those who despise the sacrament and lead unchristian lives receive it to their harm and damnation. To such people nothing can be good or wholesome, just as when a sick person willfully eats and drinks what is forbidden him by the physician.

70 But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament, you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death and the devil and all evils.

71 Thus you have on God's part both the commandment and the promise of the Lord Christ. Meanwhile, on your part, you ought to be impelled by your own need, which hangs around your neck and which is the very reason for this command and invitation and promise. Christ himself says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," that is, those who labor and are heavy-laden with sin, fear of death, and the assaults of the flesh and the devil.

72 If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort, and strength.

73 If you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you must stay away from it forever.

74 In such a case Christ pronounces the judgment, "If you are pure and upright, you have no need of me and I have no need of you." Therefore, they alone are unworthy who neither feel their infirmities nor admit to being sinners.

75 Suppose you say, "What shall I do if I cannot feel this need or experience hunger and thirst for the sacrament?" Answer: For persons in such a state of mind that they cannot feel it, I know no better advice than to suggest that they put their hands to their bosom and ask whether they are made of flesh and blood. If you find that you are, then for your own good turn to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians and hear what are the fruits of the flesh: "The works of the flesh are plain: adultery, immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and the like."

76 If you cannot feel the need, therefore, at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself do. Yes, and St. Paul concludes in Rom. 7:18, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh." If St. Paul can speak thus of his flesh, let us not pretend to be better or more holy.

77 But the fact that we are insensitive to our sin is all the worse, for it is a sign that ours is a leprous flesh which feels nothing though the disease rages and rankles.

78 As we have said, even if you are so utterly dead in sin, at least believe the Scriptures, which pronounce this judgment upon you. In short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the sacrament and seek a remedy.

79 Again, look about you and see whether you are also in the world. If you do not know, ask your neighbors about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be any lack of sins and needs. Just begin to act as if you want to become good and cling to the Gospel, and see whether you will not acquire enemies who harm, wrong, and injure you and give you occasion for sin and wrong-doing. If you have not experienced this, then take it from the Scriptures, which everywhere give this testimony about the world.

80 Besides the flesh and the world, you will surely have the devil about you. You will not entirely trample him under foot because our Lord Christ himself could not entirely avoid him.

81 Now, what is the devil? Nothing else than what the Scriptures call him, a liar and a murderer. A liar who seduces the heart from God's Word and blinds it, making you unable to feel your needs or come to Christ. A murderer who begrudges you every hour of your life. 82 If you could see how many daggers, spears, and arrows are at every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the sacrament as often as possible. The only reason we go about so securely and heedlessly is that we neither acknowledge nor believe that we are in the flesh, in this wicked world, or under the kingdom of the devil.

83 Try this, therefore, and practice it well. Just examine yourself, look around a little, cling to the Scriptures. If even then you feel nothing, you have all the more need to lament both to God and to your brother. Take others' advice and seek their prayers, and never give up until the stone is removed from your heart.

84 Then your need will become apparent, and you will perceive that you have sunk twice as low as any other poor sinner and are much in need of the sacrament to combat your misery. This misery, unfortunately, you do not see, though God grants his grace that you may become more sensitive to it and more hungry for the sacrament. This happens especially because the devil so constantly besieges you and lies in wait to trap and destroy you, soul and body, so that you cannot be safe from him one hour. How quickly can he bring you into misery and distress when you least expect it!

85 Let this serve as an exhortation, then, not only for us who are grown and advanced in years, but also for the young people who ought to be brought up in Christian doctrine and a right understanding of it. With such training we may more easily instill the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer into the young so that they will receive them with joy and earnestness, practice them from their youth, and become accustomed to them.

86 For it is clearly useless to try to change old people. We cannot perpetuate these and other teachings unless we train the people who come after us and succeed us in our office and work, so that they in turn may bring up their children successfully. Thus, the Word of God and the Christian church will be preserved.

87 Therefore let every head of a household remember that it is his duty, by God's injunction and command, to teach or have taught to his children the things they ought to know. Since they are baptized and received into the Christian church, they should also enjoy this fellowship of the sacrament so that they may serve us and be useful. For they must all help us to believe, to love, to pray, and to fight the devil.

Here follows an exhortation to confession.

A Brief Exhortation to Confession

1 Concerning confession, we have always taught that it should be voluntary and purged of the pope's tyranny. We have been set free from his coercion and from the intolerable burden he imposed upon the Christian church. Up to now, as we all know from experience, there has been no law quite so oppressive as that which forced everyone to make confession on pain of the gravest mortal sin.

2 Moreover, it so greatly burdened and tortured consciences with the enumeration of all kinds of sin that no one was able to confess purely enough.

3 Worst of all, no one taught or understood what confession is and how useful and comforting it is. Instead, it was made sheer anguish and a hellish torture since people had to make confession even though nothing was more hateful to them.

4 These three things have now been removed and made voluntary so that we may confess without coercion or fear, and we are released from the torture of enumerating all sins in detail. Moreover, we have the advantage of knowing how to use confession beneficially for the comforting and strengthening of our conscience.

5 Everyone knows this now. Unfortunately, men have learned it only too well; they do whatever they please and take advantage of their freedom, acting as if they will never need or desire to go to confession any more. We quickly understand whatever benefits us, and we grasp with uncommon ease whatever in the Gospel is mild and gentle. But such pigs, as I have said, are unworthy to appear in the presence of the Gospel or to have any part of it. They ought to remain under the pope and submit to being driven and tormented to confess, fast, etc., more than ever before. For he who will not believe the Gospel, live according to it, and do what a Christian ought to do, should enjoy none of its benefits.

6 What would happen if you wished to enjoy the Gospel's benefits but did nothing about it and paid nothing for it? For such people we shall provide no preaching, nor will they have our permission to share and enjoy any part of our liberty, but we shall let the pope or his like bring them back into subjection and coerce them like the tyrant he is. The rabble who will not obey the Gospel deserve just such a jailer as God's devil and hangman.

7 To others who hear it gladly, however, we must preach, exhorting, encouraging, and persuading them not to lose this precious and comforting treasure which the Gospel offers. Therefore, we must say something about confession to instruct and admonish the simple folk.

8 To begin with, I have said that in addition to the confession which we are discussing here there are two other kinds, which have an even greater right to be called the Christians' common confession. I refer to the practice of confessing to God alone or to our neighbor alone, begging for forgiveness. These two kinds are expressed in the Lord's Prayer when we say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," etc.

9 Indeed, the whole Lord's Prayer is nothing else than such a confession. For what is our prayer but a confession that we neither have nor do what we ought and a plea for grace and a happy conscience? This kind of confession should and must take place incessantly as long as we live. For this is the essence of a genuinely Christian life, to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace.

10 Similarly the second confession, which each Christian makes toward his neighbor, is included in the Lord's prayer. We are to confess our guilt before one another and forgive one another before we come into God's presence to beg for forgiveness. Now, all of us are debtors one to another, therefore we should and we may confess publicly in everyone's presence, no one being afraid of anyone else.

11 For it is true, as the proverb says, "If one man is upright, so are they all"; no one does to God or his neighbor what he ought. However, besides our universal guilt there is also a particular one, when a person has provoked another to anger and needs to beg his pardon.

12 Thus we have in the Lord's Prayer a twofold absolution: our debts both to God and to our neighbor are forgiven when we forgive our neighbor and become reconciled with him.

13 Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother. When some problem or quarrel sets us at one another's throats and we cannot settle it, and yet we do not find ourselves sufficiently strong in faith, we may at any time and as often as we wish lay our complaint before a brother, seeking his advice, comfort, and strength.

14 This kind of confession is not included in the commandment like the other two but is left to everyone to use whenever he needs it. Thus, by divine ordinance Christ himself has entrusted absolution to his Christian church and commanded us to absolve one another from sins. So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires consolation, it has here a sure refuge when it hears in God's Word that through a man God loses and absolves him from his sins.

15 Note, then, as I have often said, that confession consists of two parts. The first is my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work which God does, when he absolves me of my sins through a word placed in the mouth of a man. This is the surpassingly grand and noble thing that makes confession so wonderful and comforting.

16 In the past we placed all the emphasis on our work alone, and we were only concerned whether we had confessed purely enough. We neither noticed nor preached the very necessary second part; it was just as if our confession were simply a good work with which we could satisfy God. Where the confession was not made perfectly and in complete detail, we were told that the absolution was not valid and the sin was not forgiven.

17 Thereby the people were driven to the point that everyone inevitably despaired of confessing so purely (which was impossible), and nobody could feel his conscience at peace or have confidence in his absolution. Thus, the precious confession was not only made useless to us but it also became burdensome and bitter, to the manifest harm and destruction of souls.

18 We should therefore take care to keep the two parts clearly separate. We should set little value on our work but exalt and magnify God's Word. We should not act as if we wanted to perform a magnificent work to present to him, but simply to accept and receive something from him. You dare not come and say how good or how wicked you are.

19 If you are a Christian, I know this well enough anyway; if you are not, I know it still better. But what you must do is to lament your need and allow yourself to be helped so that you may attain a happy heart and conscience.

20 Further, no one dare oppress you with requirements. Rather, whoever is a Christian, or would like to be one, has here the faithful advice to go and obtain this precious treasure. If you are no Christian, and desire no such comfort, we shall leave you to another's power.

21 Hereby we abolish the pope's tyranny, commandments, and coercion since we have no need of them. For our teaching, as I have said, is this: If anybody does not go to confession willingly and for the sake of absolution, let him just forget about it. Yes, and if anybody goes about relying on the purity of his confession, let him just stay away from it.

22 We urge you, however, to confess and express your needs, not for the purpose of performing a work but to hear what God wishes to say to you. The Word or absolution, I say, is what you should concentrate on, magnifying and cherishing it as a great and wonderful treasure to be accepted with all praise and gratitude.

23 If all this were clearly explained, and meanwhile if the needs which ought to move and induce us to confession were clearly indicated, there would be no need of coercion and force. A man's own conscience would impel him and make him so anxious that he would rejoice and act like a poor miserable beggar who hears that a rich gift, of money or clothes, is to be given out at a certain place; he would need no bailiff to drive and beat him but would run there as fast as he could so as not to miss the gift.

24 Suppose, now, that the invitation was changed into a command that all beggars should run to the place, no reason being given and no mention of what they were to look for or receive. How else would the beggar go but with repugnance, not expecting to receive anything but just letting everyone see how poor and miserable he is? Not much joy or comfort would come from this, but only a greater hostility to the command.

25 In the same way the pope's preachers have in the past kept silence about this wonderful, rich alms and this indescribable treasure; they have simply driven men together in hordes just to show what impure and filthy people they were. Who could thus go to confession willingly?

26 We, on the contrary, do not say that men should look to see how full of filthiness you are, making of you a mirror for contemplating themselves. Rather we advise: If you are poor and miserable, then go and make use of the healing medicine.

27 He who feels his misery and need will develop such a desire for confession that he will run toward it with joy. But those who ignore it and do not come of their own accord, we let go their way. However, they ought to know that we do not regard them as Christians.

28 Thus we teach what a wonderful, precious, and comforting thing confession is, and we urge that such a precious blessing should not be despised, especially when we consider our great need. If you are a Christian, you need neither my compulsion nor the pope's command at any point, but you will compel yourself and beg me for the privilege of sharing in it.

29 However, if you despise it and proudly stay away from confession, then we must come to the conclusion that you are no Christian and that you ought not receive the sacrament. For you despise what no Christian ought to despise, and you show thereby that you can have no forgiveness of sin. And this is a sure sign that you also despise the Gospel.

30 In short, we approve of no coercion. However, if anyone refuses to hear and heed the warning of our preaching, we shall have nothing to do with him, nor may he have any share in the Gospel. If you are a Christian, you should be glad to run more than a hundred miles for confession, not under compulsion but rather coming and compelling us to offer it.

31 For here the compulsion must be inverted; we must come under the command and you must come into freedom. We compel no man, but allow ourselves to be compelled, just as we are compelled to preach and administer the sacrament.

32 Therefore, when I urge you to go to confession, I am simply urging you to be a Christian. If I bring you to this point, I have also brought you to confession. Those who really want to be good Christians, free from their sins, and happy in their conscience, already have the true hunger and thirst. They snatch at the bread just like a hunted hart, burning with heat and thirst,

33 As Ps. 42:1 says, “As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.” That is, as a hart trembles with eagerness for a fresh spring, so I yearn and tremble for God’s Word, absolution, the sacrament, etc.

34 In this way, you see, confession would be rightly taught, and such a desire and love for it would be aroused that people would come running after us to get it, more than we would like. We shall let the papists torment and torture themselves and other people who ignore such a treasure and bar themselves from it.

35 As for ourselves, however, let us lift up our hands in praise and thanks to God that we have attained to this blessed knowledge of confession.

+ Soli Deo Gloria +
Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepp

Women of Immanuel



Immanuel's LWML has the pleasure of hosting
our Zone LWML Spring Gathering on
Saturday, April 29, 2023.

All women in our zone are invited to attend.

Rev. Dan Johnson will be the morning speaker and
Pastor Koepp will have a Bible study in the
afternoon. There will be skits, lunch, and a
business meeting - a fun day of
learning how the LWML contributes
to the missions of our Synod.

Please consider attending!

President's Piece for Peace

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

While this title might sound like I am going to review an old Clint Eastwood movie, I am actually describing the impact that a digital world is having on the sheep of our flocks. To be sure, there are good things that have come by way of the digital community. Information is at our fingertips. Access to cultural and theological questions can be answered by experts in each field. Communication with family and friends no longer takes a week or more to arrive. All this is instantaneous or at least close to it. These are but a few examples of *the good*.

At the same time there is also *the bad* which leads to *the ugly*. That is what I will focus on in this article. The digital world has given access to sin in a manner that can be privatized and kept from the public eye. I speak of the immoral websites featuring women and men posing in provocative pictures. There are solicitations to engage in violations of the Sixth Commandment. That alone is a danger to the Faith, and yet there is more. The participant can convince themselves they are not really doing anything terribly wrong because they are not physically having sex, but merely viewing it. This is *the ugly*. Participating in such sites is a violation against the person being viewed as well as a violation against the one to whom a vow was taken to forsake all others and cling only to one's spouse.

The shame of this vice is so easily overlooked when it is overtaken by vanity. Not only is viewing it a violation of God's Law but displaying it for others to see is the same. The covetous nature of wanting to be desired, receive accolades from others, being able to claim thousands of followers, etc. clouds the moral mind to what is appropriate to our baptism and what is not. So many use transgression of the Sixth Commandment in order to violate the Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

If temptation against Commandments six, nine and ten are not enough; there is also the iniquity against the Eighth Commandment. The information shared about others over the internet, with its many forms to do so, often includes criticisms and negative comments about others. Doing this over the internet only serves to condemn rather than bring a sinner to repentance for the sake of reconciliation.

Communications over the web ought to be for the purpose of encouraging, sending words of comfort, or setting up a time to meet face to face. It is too simple to think conflict can be resolved by writing in a blog or a nonverbal dialog over an issue. It is also too easy to write what one would never say were they in the presence of the person they are writing about. Resolving conflicted issues is best, and some might say only resolved, by speaking face to face with the other person. Meeting face to face (in person is best rather than Zoom) you can show the face of Christ from your face and vice-versa. Most of communication is nonverbal which means we hear as much if not more with our eyes than we do with our ears. What one says with their mouth is also communicated with the rest of their body. The same is true with hearing. To comprehend how you are being received, it is good to look also for the body language.

With *the bad* of the digital world displaying itself in ugly ways, my concern for the Church is whether pastors are taking account of these things and preaching the Law of God to these issues. It is first and foremost important that the pastor not be a violator of these digital ugly's. Preaching the Law is difficult enough but even more so when the pastor is guilty of the very malady he is addressing. The Law of God prepares us to desire some good news, The Good News that God is not against us but for us in Christ Jesus.

While sin is not new, ways to commit it are new every day. The digital world has provided new and various ways to transgress the Law of God and pour gallons of *the ugly* into the life of the Church. Sermons need to address these privatized and secret sins. There is no less damage to the community of believers just because maladies are now easier to hide than before. When one of the Church hurts, we all hurt whether we have details or not.

Preach the Word is the command of Christ to the Church. We are given the charge to preach its fullness. When I place a stole over the shoulders of an ordinand, I use these words: "This stole is a mark that you are yoked to the Word of God.

President's Piece for Peace

You are to preach it never going beyond what it says and never falling short of what it says.”

The digital world in which we live calls for pastors to take heed to the bad and the ugliness of it as well as use it for the good. Taking heed means that the Law must be proclaimed, directed at, and spear the Old Adam which delights in the bad resulting in the ugly. Satan is ever clever in ways to use the good for bad purposes. His head is crushed. Jesus' heel filled his mouth to silence him. The victory Christ earned with His resurrection proves He is life over death.

I pray the preachers of the Church can crush the Old Man in each hearer concerning violations of God's Holy Law. Then the honor and privilege to rescue them with the blessed news of forgiveness of sins and promise of life everlasting flows from the preacher's mouth just as it did from Christ Jesus Himself. The digital age need not be a hinderance. It can be and should be the blessing it is intended to be. Let *the good* outdo and over come *the bad* and eliminate *the ugly*.

Rev. Dr. Brian S. Saunders



*Meals served at 5:00pm
Evening Prayer Service begins at 6:30pm*

March 1

Pastor Nathan Knaus

“How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?”

March 8

Pastor Sam Beltz

“What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?”

March 15

Pastor Jim Lamb

“What is the Lord’s Supper?”

March 22

Pastor Alex Post

“Where is this written?”

March 29

Pastor Joel Koepp

“Who receives this Sacrament worthily?”

Palm Sunday & Holy Week

April 2

9:00am Palm Sunday

April 3, 4, 5

Noon Prayer & Preaching Service

April 6

6:30pm Holy Thursday Divine Service

April 7

6:30pm Good Friday Divine Service

April 8

Noon Holy Saturday Prayer & Preaching Service

6:30pm Easter Vigil Service

*He is
Risen*

April 9

Resurrection of Our Lord Easter Dawn Divine Service

6:30am

Resurrection of Our Lord Easter Day Divine Service

9:00am

Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca



Summer Camp Registration Now Open 2023 Summer Camp Theme: Hear Our Prayer

*Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!
Psalm 143:1*

Prayer. It's so simple that it has to be easy, right? We often close our eyes, bow our heads, fold our hands, and then speak to God. Sometimes, we have plenty to say and ask for. Other times, we may struggle to come up with the words to say. However, we might often wonder if our prayers are any good. Is God even listening? Are our problems too big or too little to trouble God with? On top of this, our sins plague us and, out of shame, we might think that God probably doesn't want to hear from us.

Thankfully, the Bible gives us real answers about what to pray for, especially in The Lord's Prayer. As we dig through Scripture, we'll answer the questions of when to pray, where to pray, how God answers prayer, and perhaps most importantly, what prayer teaches us about God and who He is. Jesus himself teaches us how and what to pray for. In our greatest joys and our deepest sorrows and despair, we learn that we have a God, Our Father in Heaven, who is eager to hear from us, His children. We learn that we have a God who provides for our needs and forgives us our sins. More than this, through a diet of God's Word, we understand and trust that our prayers are heard and answered by God, who gives us what's best for us in His time.

This summer, our campers will get to learn about prayer so that with all boldness and confidence they can say, "HEAR OUR PRAYER." We look forward to a fantastic and safe summer in 2023 as our campers learn about Christ as we study prayer at Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca!

Registration is available at our website where you can select between online registration or downloading and mailing in a registration form with your deposit. Be sure to keep an eye out for summer camp brochures at your church or school, as well! If your family is new to Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca, Family's First Camper is a scholarship program that brings down the cost of campers coming from families who have never sent children to Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca, so be sure to claim that if applicable! Additional financial aid is available for those needing assistance, but be sure to have the camp scholarship application in by May 1, 2023.

As we gear up for summer, we're looking for all of the components that make a great camp experience, and that starts with summer staff! We need college-aged young adults to serve as Christian role models, teachers, activity leaders, and friends to the children that pass through our gates. For more information, head to our website at <https://campiodiseca.org/summer-camp-3/staff/> for more information and to get started on completing an application.

Registrations have already started coming in, so be sure to get signed up for Camp today by heading over to our website at <https://campiodiseca.org/summer-camp-3/registration/>. We look forward to seeing you on camp this summer!



***The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS
Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article***

Lenten Discipline: Denying the Self

We are at the beginning of Lent. During the Lenten season, the church calls to our attention the sufficiency of what God gives. It points to the sufficiency of God's grace in the atoning work of Jesus. It shows us the sufficiency of faith in Jesus' work for us. It makes known the sufficiency of God's Word in faith and life.

But Lent doesn't just remind us of the sufficiency of God's spiritual gifts — the gifts that pertain to our redemption and salvation. Lent also reminds us of the sufficiency of the physical, temporal gifts of God which pertain to this body and life. In other words, it reminds us of the importance of godly contentment and of outward discipline and training of the body.

This outward training of the body teaches us not to give in to every desire of our flesh, but to learn to say no to them. And it does this in such a way that if you fail, it is no sin. It is a way to practice without putting yourself into a compromising situation.

Fasting is a good example of this outward training. When you fast, you are practicing saying no to the desires of your body. But if you fail in this, if you break your fast, you have not sinned. But you have learned something about how your flesh works, how difficult it is to fight against it, and how you need help from above to discipline the desires of your body.

Another example is almsgiving. An increase in giving to the church and its mission during Lent is also a form of outward training. We all know that our flesh finds security in money and stuff. By committing to give more to the church, you are training your flesh. You are, by this outward discipline, training yourself to be content with what God gives. You are practicing saying “no” to your desires. Again, if you fail, you have not sinned. But you’ve learned just how powerful your flesh is — it leads you instead of you leading it. You’ve learned how you need help from above in being content with what God gives.

This is why St. Paul instructs young Pastor Timothy in this way:

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Tim. 6:6–10)

Our sufficiency is not of ourselves; it is in God. Let us learn this without sin by training our flesh this Lenten season.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



**MEMORY WORK
FOR THE
MONTH OF MARCH**

**5th & 6th Grades Confirmation Memory Work
Classtime Wednesdays 4:00pm — 5:00pm**

- March 1: Lord's Prayer: Introduction and meaning
- March 8: Lord's Prayer: First Petition and meaning
- March 15: No Class
- March 22: Lord's Prayer: Second Petition and meaning
- March 29: Lord's Prayer: Third Petition and meaning

**7th Grade Confirmation Memory Work
Classtime Wednesdays 5:00pm — 6:00pm**

- March 1: Third Article and Meaning
- March 8: Third Article and Meaning
- March 15: No Class
- March 22: Lord's Prayer: Introduction & Meaning
- March 29: Lord's Prayer: 1st & 2nd Petitions & Meanings



From the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education

Is there a young man in your congregation you would like to encourage to consider becoming a pastor? How about someone who would be a great Lutheran school teacher, deaconess or DCE? Jesus gives His church people who work full time in service to the Gospel. He told us to pray for such workers. Along with our prayers, the LCMS has begun Set Apart to Serve (SAS), an intentional effort to encourage young people to consider church work as their career. Your opinion can help improve SAS.

Please take a brief survey at lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve-survey and let us know how you think SAS can be beneficial to your congregation.

Thank you.



Two bus trips June 5-9 and December 4-8 to the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter are planned for 2023 two trips are basically the same. However, the December trip also includes an addition Imax show "The Christmas Star" and a Christmas dinner in the cafeteria and the spectacular Christmas lights.

Currently, there are still seats available. A \$100 deposit per person is required to reserve your seat on the bus. A deposit can be mailed to:

Roger and Ellen Bauer
806 Juhl Avenue
Waverly, Iowa 50677

The 56 passenger Windstar bus leaves from the Waverly Walmart parking lot at 6:00am Monday morning. We make pickup stops in Waterloo, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City on the way. The bus ride is edu-tainment to help you understand what you will be seeing. Monday is a travel day, Tuesday and Wednesday at the Creation Museum, Thursday at the Ark, and Friday we travel home. Check out their websites at creationmuseum.org or arkencounter.com. For additional information: 319-610-2623 or bauerr@mchsi.com

PRAY FOR Cody and Aurelie Mock
IT Project Manager
Serving the Lord in Latvia



Cody and Aurelie Mock serve the Lord through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in Riga, Latvia. As IT project manager, Cody works alongside the Luther Academy in Riga and the mission team in Eurasia to provide support for various IT systems and services. He also helps identify and implement new technology solutions within the region's projects and provides training for staff on how to use those technologies.

Cody is from Pella, Iowa, and his home congregation is St. John Lutheran Church, Oskaloosa, Iowa. He attended Iowa State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems. Before becoming a missionary, he held several roles in the industry, including help desk technician, web developer, assistant programmer and systems administrator. In his free time, he enjoys tinkering with electronics, fixing and restoring things, and brewing his own beer.

Aurelie was born in Tacoma, Wash. She holds a bachelor's degree in international studies from the University of Nebraska Kearney. She worked for libraries in Kansas for several years before becoming a stay-at-home mother and homeschool teacher for their two daughters, Eva and Moriah. In her free time, Aurelie enjoys taking long walks, gardening, reading, learning languages and collecting books.

Pray for the Mock family as they serve in Riga. Ask God to help them successfully integrate into the community and serve Him to the best of their ability. Pray that God would give Cody wisdom to leverage technology in ways that help the mission team clearly communicate the Gospel throughout the region. Let us give thanks that the Mocks are serving God's children in this part of the world.

BIRTHDAYS: Cody — Aug. 31,
Aurelie — March 10, Eva — July 7,
Moriah — Nov. 25

ANNIVERSARY: March 23

HOME DISTRICT: Iowa East



Pray daily for Cody and Aurelie – and how you can support and tell others about their ministry. Visit lcms.org/mock

Learn about LCMS international work at international.lcms.org

Support an international worker. Call 888-930-4438

