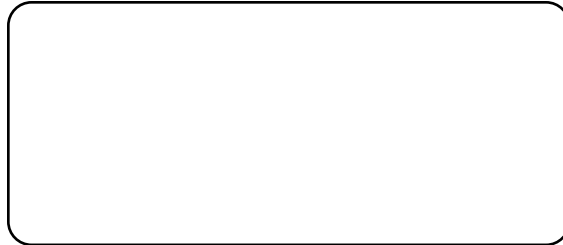


# St. Peter Lutheran Church & School

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**We are on the web!**  
**[www.stpeterriley.org](http://www.stpeterriley.org)**



## **THE MESSENGER** *December 2023*



### **Church Services**

Divine Service – Sundays at 9:30 am  
Office of Matins – Wednesdays at 9 am (when school is in session)  
Advent and Lent – Wednesday services at 7 pm  
Feasts and Festivals – Services as announced in calendar and bulletin

# A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

## Augsburg Confession: Article VI –New Obedience

*Also they [our churches] teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants. Luke 17,10. The same is also taught by the Fathers. For Ambrose says: It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone.*

This article in our Augsburg Confession makes it clear that though we teach that one is justified through faith, apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28), this does not mean that good works are optional. On the contrary, we teach that good works are necessary and must be done by Christians. Good works come from faith as fruit comes from a tree. If good works are not present, faith has died (James 2:26). But the fruit of faith (our good works) do not merit our justification before God. Our justification is merited by Christ alone by his perfect life, all-atoning sacrificial death, and death-defeating resurrection. The gifts he merited, which are forgiveness, life, and salvation, are received freely by us through faith alone.

The new life of obedience springs forth from the Holy Spirit in the life of the regenerate. As the article says, “faith is *bound* to bring forth good works.” Faith is active and living and producing fruit in the lives of the Christians. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, against which there is no law (Ephesians 5:22-23). Though this fruit necessary accompanies faith, there is also a struggle in the life of the Christian. For the motivations given to us by the Spirit are against the motivations of our sinful flesh. In this life, our good works are never wholly pure, and the most sanctified Christian has not kept the law. But Christ has kept the law and died for our sins, and through faith in him, we are justified. So we live freely, daily putting to death the old Adam in us and allowing the new man created in Christ to live in love. We walk by the Spirit, and His fruit is evident in our lives.

We see in the Article the pattern that is often followed in our Confessions. What we believe, teach, and confess is based on the Word of God, and so Scripture is the first support given in the article. Then, however, the Church Fathers are invoked to show that this Scriptural belief is also the belief that has been held by the Church. The Augsburg Confession is not revolutionary but insists repeatedly that this confession is nothing new at all but is the confession of the Church catholic and is based on the unchanging Word of God.

In Christ, Pastor Bayer

# A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

## Abide in Jesus

*And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.*

*Mark 9:7-8*

I write this month's newsletter from the Church Workers' Conference in Grand Rapids. The theme for this year's conference is Abide. How do we abide in Jesus? The opening keynote speaker made a few great points that stuck with me. First, she talked about how we don't need to put so much effort into doing great work in our lives, in our careers, etc. Instead, we need to abide in Jesus, and through Him will come the good works. Another point that struck me was her reminder that when we can Abide in Him, we should then be leading others to abide in Him.

All of us are working together to bring Christ to the students and families at our school. This is a daunting task on our own, but we are not doing it for Him but through Him, and so it will bear much fruit. Just remember, we need to be in His Word and abide in Him for through Him comes all good things.

While the conference is excellent, it is only one of the fun things happening at St. Peter right now. In November, we had a STEM challenge day. The students built a marble roller coaster out of cardstock and tape. They did great work and learned a little physics along the way. We had a group of 6th through 8th-grade students attend the March for Life rally at the capital to learn about and stand up for the sanctity of life. The 5th graders had an opportunity to teach a new math game to the K/1 students and spend some time modeling math thinking for them. In December the students will be singing at the Advent brunch and preparing for the school Christmas Program. We would love for you to join us for the Christmas program to hear the students tell you about Jesus.

Blessings in Christ,  
Erika Brown  
Principal/Teacher

# A LETTER FROM THE PRESCHOOL

## Preschool Blessings

We attended the All-Church Workers Conference at the end of November as staff. The staff enjoyed the opportunity to continue our learning and spend time together. This was also a wonderful opportunity to network with fellow church workers.

We hope everyone had a happy and blessed Thanksgiving!

The preschool class has been enjoying learning about the meaning of Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Our classroom is set up with several different Christmas focused areas for the children to enjoy. We love watching the children play together and enjoy the toys and activities that are available to them.

We have been busy practicing for the Christmas Program that will take place on December 14th at 6:30 pm. We are thankful for all the time and commitment Mrs. Stout has put into making it a wonderful program. We hope to see you on December 14th .

There will be an all-school movie day on December 19th . We will be watching Christmas Classics: Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. Thank you to PTL for providing popcorn, cookies, and milk. This is always a wonderful day for students and staff!

Our last day of preschool for 2023 will be on December 21st . The preschool class will celebrate with a class Christmas party. Thank you for all your prayers and support throughout the year. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Fletcher, and Mrs. Curtin



# A LETTER FROM OUR CANTOR

## Why We Do What We Do

Perhaps you've heard that every Sunday Divine Service is a celebration of a "little Easter." Every Sunday morning we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

But have you thought about the Service as a "little Christmas" as well?

During the Christmas season we always read about the infant Jesus being presented at the temple because he was the first-born son of Mary and Joseph. Luke tells us that as his parents were bringing Jesus, they met a man named Simeon whom God had promised would not die before Simeon had seen the promised Messiah. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he recognized God had kept his promise, took the baby, and praised God with the words we know as the "Nunc Dimittis" (Luke 2:25-35). The title is Latin for "Now you dismiss."

When I was a kid, I always thought the old King James wording, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," was Simeon begging God, "Please, God, let me go now!" It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized I had it all wrong! He's rejoicing! He's saying to the Lord, "Lord, you kept your promise! I have seen the salvation you promised, the thing I have been waiting for all these years. Now I can go in peace."

But isn't this also true for us? Think about it. We have just seen the promised salvation. We've received it by hand and by mouth. The very same Jesus whom Simeon held in his hands, we have received personally and individually as he has come to us in the Sacrament. It's like we just got a Christmas gift! What a time for celebration!

I've written before about how Martin Luther worked to maintain the worship that has been a part of the Christian church since the earliest centuries. One of the interesting changes he made was to ADD the Nunc Dimittis to the liturgy immediately after the Sacrament. It is something distinctive and unique to Lutheran worship. He recognized that ancient Simeon speaks for all of us. We have seen and touched and tasted God's promised salvation. In a very real and personal way we have received the forgiveness of sin from the same Jesus who was born, crucified and rose. We, too, can walk away from the altar in peace, the peace of sin forgiven, the peace of God that passes all understanding.

The Nunc Dimittis, what a song of joy. It's Christmas and Easter all rolled up into one.

I hope to share more of why we do what we do. Perhaps if you have a particular question or concern, you might pass that along to me through the church office.

Your brother in Christ,

Dick Davenport

## CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS AND EVENTS

**Help Wanted!** Are you looking for some way to serve? We are looking for someone to clean the church. You can sign up for every month, once a month, twice a month, etc. The restroom are already being cleaned by Judy Martens (thank you, Judy!) Call the church office to sign up. 989 224-3178

There are many ways to serve at St. Peter Lutheran Church. Right now, there are several positions that need to be filled to best meet the needs of the church and school. We are looking to fill the following positions:

Chairman of the Congregation

Sexton

Elders

Christian Education School Board members

If you are interested in any of these positions or simply want more information about serving at St. Peter, please contact the church office

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***Once again this year, the “Capital Area Chordsmen”*** will join us here at St. Peter for a concert. Make sure to put Friday, December 8th, at 7pm, on your calendar and join us for a great evening of entertainment with refreshments to follow in the Fellowship Center. There is a sign up sheet in the narthex if you would like to provide some goodies for this event! See you there!!

## THANK YOU'S

Thank you for all the cards and gifts received for Pastor Appreciation month. We are blessed to be here at St. Peter and give thanks to God for all of you.

—Pastor Bayer and family

## The Giving Tree



The Giving Tree will be located in front of church on **Sunday, November 19th** and the following weekends until tags are all removed. We are getting an early start on this mission so you can take advantage of the Thanksgiving sales. Please take a tag off the tree as you leave the church, so you may provide a gift for a needy person/family in our community.

Each tag colored shape represents a person/family in need this year. The tag itself identifies an item on that family's "wish list". Pray for the family daily throughout the holiday season. Pray for their health, safety and faith; pray that their daily struggles draw them closer to Jesus.

Wrap the item that you purchased and attach the colored tag carefully with one piece of tape (as it will be removed to attach a permanent tag) on the outside of the gift. Return the gift to the Giving Tree by **Sunday, December 17th** so the gifts can be distributed in a timely manner.

The pink tags are for the "Erber's" our TIM (Together in Mission) family that we support on a regular basis. The monetary gifts for the "Erber's" can be placed in an envelope in the offering plate with the pink tag attached. We have also added Kroger gift cards as an option for the 3 families we serve. We will deliver the gifts the **week of December 17th**. If you have any questions regarding a gift tag, please contact Judy Marten. (517) 574-8104. Thank you for caring!!





# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## Memorials

None



## Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request, please call the church office (989) 224-3178 during office hours. If in the evening or weekend, please call Pam Mohr (989) 292-1686.

The Church will only send out emails if we have permission from the person or family of whom the email is concerning to respect peoples privacy.



## Shut-In Visit List Monthly Visits

Virginia Davis  
Charlie Silm  
Shirley Edwards  
Albert Smith  
Linda Davis  
Glenn Bennett  
Mary Ann Grennell  
Linda Chant  
Rhonda Dedyne  
Jan Maynard  
Ilene Gibson  
Ellie Camburn  
Jeanette Mehney



***Please review our list of Sick and Shut In and show them some love by calling and visiting. Continue to remember them in your daily prayers.***



# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS & EVENTS

## Ladies Aid and LWML

We are having a Bake Sale & Jars (to do your own baking or for gifts) on Sunday, December 10th after services. We are in search of some bakers to bring baked goods to us on that day at the Fellowship Center. All proceeds will be used to replace the countertop of our island in our kitchen.

Our Annual Ladies Advent Brunch is Tuesday, December 5th, and we hope you will come and enjoy the morning beginning at 9:30pm.

There are NEW GREETING CARDS in the Fellowship Center on the tower. They all have Bible verses in them and are only \$1 per card.

Beginning in January, we will regularly have a Quilting Bee on the 2nd Saturday of each month beginning at 9:00am in our gym. Kathy Bond

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## WE'RE LOOKING FOR THRIVENT MEMBERS!!!

If you are a Thrivent member would you please call Charlene Kennedy at 989 224-7106, our current Event Coordinator? Your membership may qualify to sponsor a fund raising or service program we hold here at St. Peter.

Because of the "Privacy Act" Thrivent is unable to release a list of membership. A \$250 gift card is available to us from each membership twice a year. This is a service Thrivent provides and it is free, it does not cost YOU anything. If you have an insurance, health insurance or an annuity policy with them, please call her. We appreciate your help!

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## CHRISTMAS DECORATING OF ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH

If you would be interested in helping to beautify our church for Christmas, please join us on Saturday, December 2nd at 1:00pm. We will "deck the halls" on the inside AND the outside of church. What a great time of fellowship and fun with our brothers and sisters at St. Peter. Please let me know if you can help.

Charlene Kennedy, DVM



# LCMS FOUNDATION

## The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### The Measure of Our Generosity

If you open up the Small Catechism, you'll find a shortened version of the Third Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." But if you look up the list of the Ten Commandments in Exodus, you'll find the full version:

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:8–11)*

Why did Luther shorten this commandment for the Small Catechism? Was it so that the kids wouldn't have so much to memorize? No, it was because Luther knew that all the details of the Third Commandment were part of the "shadow" of the Old Testament (Col. 2:16). Or as St. Paul puts it, there is "letter" in the Old Testament law and "spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6). The details of not working on Saturday were fulfilled by Christ. That part of the Sabbath regulation no longer applies. But the spirit of the law does remain: We need to dedicate sufficient time each week to hearing God's Word and giving it honor and respect. Or as Luther sums it up in the Small Catechism's explanation to the Third Commandment: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

The same sort of analysis applies to our giving. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites so that those men could dedicate their lives to serving in God's house, teaching the people, conducting worship, etc. In the New Testament, there is a rigid requirement listed about handing in your tax forms to church to make sure you've given enough. But the mandate to have a full-time ministry, which is the spirit of that law concerning tithing to the Levites, is right there in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "The Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel."

The New Testament church's job is significantly larger than the job of Old Testament Israel. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations. There was only the temple to maintain in the Old Testament, but we have churches, schools, universities and seminaries, plus missionaries everywhere. So you tell me: Can we really undertake the work of the ministry if our giving doesn't even measure up to Old Testament levels of generosity?

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, AND EVENTS

## *Advent Christmas Eve 7PM Offerings...*

will go to Lutheran Child and Family Service. If you come to the 11PM service, please specify on your envelope where you want the money to go!

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## *Poinsettia Order Forms Deadline is December 11th.*

There are order forms and information that has been going out in the bulletin. You may make checks payable to St. Peter Lutheran Church and either place them in the offering plate in an envelope marked POINSETTIA or turn it into the church office in an envelope marked POINSETTIA. If you are giving cash please make sure your name is included on the envelope.

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## *Secret Prayer Sister (SPS) News*

Another year has passed praying for our SPS and now we have drawn names for the new year. Much fun and fellowship was had by all at the reveal on Saturday, November 11th. We welcome to our group, Monica Hemingway, Deb Besemer and Mary Hoy. It's always great to see some new faces. We are ready for a year filled with many blessing and praying specifically for someone is one of the greatest blessings that we as Christians have. Diane Thurston

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## *Can You Help??*

There is a signup sheet in back of church to support our St. Peter School/Preschool Staff and show them some "love". The idea is to provide an entire meal once a month for 3 months for a specific staff person. The meal can be brought to the school or delivered to their home (whichever you work out). Our St. Peter School/Preschool Staff go above and beyond what is required of them and we would like to show our appreciation with this small gesture. If you feel you can't provide a whole meal (main entrée, veggie/salad, dessert) you can team up with someone who would also like to help and do it together!

**The sign up would be once a month for 3 months and will be located in back of church or you can give Ann Stout a call:** January, February, March or April, May, June

It would be your responsibility to reach out to the teacher you support to let them know when and how to expect the meal, whether dropping off at school or delivering to their home. Their cell number will be provided when you sign up. You can then reach out to them to see if there are allergies, dislikes, etc. Our St. Peter School/Preschool Staff are Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Armbrustmacher, Mrs. Rowe, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Curtin and Mrs. Fletcher. Please contact Ann Stout at (517) 230-8547 with any questions! Thank you.

# LCMS INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

## About the Erbers

Pastor David and Joyce Erber serve as missionaries with LCMS International Mission. We live in Ghana West Africa. David teaches at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana and coordinates the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Online Master of Arts in Theology degree for pastors in Africa. Joyce is the Regional Business Manager for Africa and is responsible for accounting and financial dynamics for LCMS missionaries and projects across Africa.

## How To Connect with David and Joyce

David.Erber@LCMS.org Joyce.Erber@LCMS.org or via: 3809 Westchester, Jackson, MI 49203

## How To Send Financial Support For Our Mission Work In Africa:

1. Write check to: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
  2. On Memo Line, write: "Support for Erbers - Ghana"
  3. Send to: LCMS, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861
- Or go to: [www.lcms.org/givenow/erber](http://www.lcms.org/givenow/erber) Or go to: Mission Central

If you would prefer not to receive these letters, please send us a note.

Please note: These letters are not intended to serve as solicitations for donations. Some recipients uphold us in prayer. Some recipients send a donation once a month, once a year or once every couple of years. Some recipients simply like to hear about what is going on with us from time to time. These letters are intended to be a word of thanks for prayers and support as well as an attempt to stay in touch.

If you have a moment, we would love to hear from you! *David and Joyce*