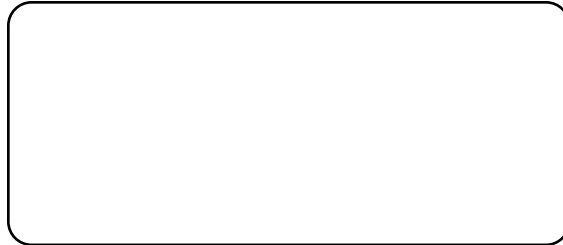


# St. Peter Lutheran Church & School

Rev. Timothy Bayer  
8990 Church Rd.  
St. Johns, MI 48879

Phone: 989-224-3178  
E-mail: [church@stpeterriley.org](mailto:church@stpeterriley.org)  
[school@stpeterriley.org](mailto:school@stpeterriley.org)

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



## THE MESSENGER *May 2024*



### **Church Services**

Divine Service – Sundays at 9:30 am  
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 XI – Confession

*Of confession they teach that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible according to the Psalm: Who can understand his errors? Ps. 19, 12.*

Confession—that’s Roman Catholic right? Well, I suppose. It’s also Christian. It’s also instituted by Jesus Christ. Jesus said to his first ministers, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:23). So confession is retained in our churches. But not confession on its own—this would be of little value. Confessing our sins is not a work to merit God’s forgiveness. We retain confession for the sake of the Absolution, the pronouncement that our sins are forgiven freely for Christ’s sake. This Absolution spoken is as valid as if Christ our Lord spoke the words himself. The Roman part that we reject is an insistence that every sin is named—this is impossible.

In the Small Catechism of Dr. Luther, Confession is one of the Six Chief Parts, finding a place among the gifts of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This is rightly so since it is among the chief Gospel gifts instituted by Jesus for the Church. In all these gifts, forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ is proffered and received through faith.

Here in the Augsburg Confession (and in the Catechism) the context for Confession and Absolution is private. Together as a congregation, we can certainly confess our sinfulness, but it is on an individual basis that our particular sins are confessed. Confession helps us to examine ourselves as St. Paul admonishes us (2 Cor. 13:15). This examination involves considering our place in life according to the Ten Commandments. When we do this truthfully, we find only sin and death in ourselves. Therefore, we confess the sins we know and feel in our hearts, together with our entire sinfulness, and we trust in God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. We hear God’s Word of Absolution and believe that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. For we know that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

The question is often raised—can’t I be forgiven without going to confession? Yes, you can. Forgiveness of sins is always received through faith—believing that for Christ’s sake your sins are forgiven. The word of Absolution is Christ’s gift to you to communicate this forgiveness and to strengthen your faith in it. It is the added assurance that the word of Absolution spoken to you is given by Christ and carries his promise that through this word your sins are forgiven.

This gift from our Lord can be a great aid to the Christian, who walks amidst so many dangers and who is plagued by so many sins. Christ doesn’t leave you to fight the battle on your own but gives you a minister to hear your confession and speak his Absolution. He gives you a tangible means through which you can know with certainty your sins (even your own specific sins) are forgiven.

Private Absolution is offered at St. Peter Sunday mornings from 8 to 8:30 in the church.

# A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

## Connected at St. Peter

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of words, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2: 8-10*

Our theme for this year has been Connected. This theme was chosen to go with John 15:1-5. We are Connected to Christ first. He is the vine and we are the branches, he bears fruit through us. Our school, as a mission of our church, works each day to connect our students and their families to Christ.

If you were a part of the big events we had in April, Grandparents Day, and our school gala, then you had the opportunity to see firsthand all of the connections made through our church and school. Grandparents day was a lot of fun. The gym was full, and students and grandparents had fun making crafts and learning more about each other. Thank you to everyone who helped make the delicious food for our brunch, and thank you to those who helped by serving the brunch.

The gala was a great success. I am very grateful to everyone who helped to make that night a fun celebration of our school. First, thank you to everyone on the gala committee who put in endless hours collecting donations, planning, decorating, marketing, and so much more. Thank you to everyone who donated their time, donated items, and made financial contributions. Also, thank you to everyone who purchased a ticket and attended. All of these pieces worked together to help us reach our goals of bringing church members, school families, and community members together to celebrate our school and raise funds for our school.

Looking forward to May, we have some fun field trips planned as well as our preschool graduation. The kindergarten through 4th grade students will visit AgroLiquid. All of the day school students will attend Camp Roger for Outdoor Education. The preschool will visit Boulder Ridge Wild Animal Park. We will wrap up the school year by celebrating the many accomplishments of our students at our Awards Night.

Blessings in Christ,  
Erika Brown  
Principal/Teacher

# A LETTER FROM THE PRESCHOOL

## Preschool Blessings & Celebrations

Wow, we can't believe we are in our last month of preschool. It has been a great and very busy school year. We are very thankful for all our families and their support throughout the year.

Preschool enrollment is now open for the 2024-2025 school year. Please contact us if you or anyone you know would like enrollment information. Children need to be 3 by September 1 to enroll. Spots are filling up so we encourage you to enroll soon to get the days you would like. You can also find information on our website, [www.stpeterriley.org](http://www.stpeterriley.org).

April was a busy month in preschool. We spent a lot of time preparing for the St. Peter Gala and the end of the school year. The Gala was a huge success. We appreciate everyone who helped prepare for it, donated, and attended. We are truly grateful to be able to make school improvements because of your generosity.

We finished our school year with a field trip to Boulder Ridge and Preschool Graduation. We enjoyed celebrating all our wonderful preschoolers. Thank you to all our families that could join us for these events. We hope you all have a wonderful summer!

Blessings,

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

# A LETTER FROM THE CANTOR

## Why We Do What We Do

There are some minor rituals that are part of our Divine Service that are worth explaining. For example, Pastor processes into the church, led by the processional crucifix, at the beginning of the service. That's actually a mini version of an ancient practice, when the minister led the entire congregation into God's presence for worship. We still observe that a couple of times during the year, at Palm Sunday and at the Easter Vigil.

Another procession is the Gospel Procession. On Feast days, you'll see Pastor process to the center of the congregation, again led by the crucifix, to read the Gospel lesson. This makes visual for us the words of St. John. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It also illustrates Christ's own words, "Where two or three have gathered in My name, there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20). Christ is here with us in both Word and Sacrament.

We probably don't think about it in this way, but when the ushers bring the offering forward, it's actually another small procession. In the ancient church, members of the congregation would process to bring their offering to the altar. The gifts of the processions included bread and wine which were then used for the Sacrament. Today the ushers act as the congregation's representatives and process, rather than simply strolling, to the altar with the Church's offering.

Perhaps you've noticed that Pastor begins the Order of Holy Baptism at the back of the church, before the actual start of the Divine Service. This is in recognition that entrance into the Christian Church is through Baptism. In fact, going back again to the ancient church, the Divine Service was only for those who were Baptized. As a result, in some churches you'll see the Baptismal font just inside the entrance of the church. In some churches, especially in Europe, you'll see a separate Baptistry off to the side, or even, as in the Romanesque cathedral in Speyer, Germany, outside the church.

By contrast, you may have also noticed that Confirmation is conducted in the middle of the service, just before the Service of the Sacrament. This also goes back to the ancient church. In the early centuries, after the Service of the Word, those worshipers who were baptized but not yet instructed in the Christian faith were dismissed. These were not ready to know the "mysteries of God." And it protected them from partaking of the Sacrament in an "unworthy manner" and eating and drinking "judgment to himself" (I Cor. 11:28-29). Placing Confirmation just before the Service of the Sacrament declares that the confirmand is now instructed and prepared to receive the Sacrament.

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

# MEXICAN DINNER AND VBS

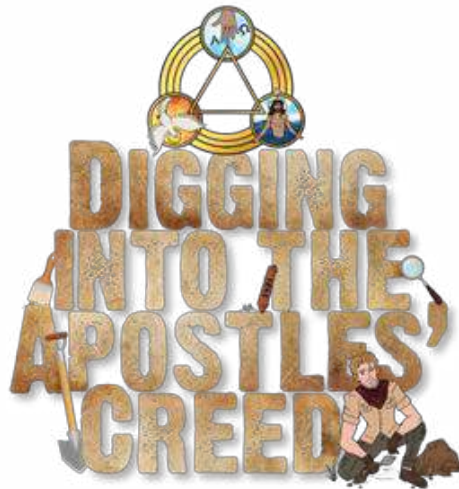
## FIESTA PARTY

Come join us on Sunday, May 19th at St. Peter Lutheran Church and School for our first Fiesta party beginning after the “Sanctity of Life Sunday” presentation with Pastor Clark. Ground beef, shredded chicken, shredded cheese, queso dip, soft shells, hard shells, tortilla chips, salsa, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, sour cream, taco sauces, hot sauce, beverages and table service will be provided.

Please bring a dish to pass for this event. Some suggestions would be deserts, fruit, veggies, nacho cheese dip, refried bean dip or any other favorite item you would like to bring.

Charlene Kennedy

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Mark your calendars for this year's VBS  
Monday June 17 through Friday June 21, 2024  
9Am-Noon  
K- 6th Grade

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS AND EVENTS

## Ladies Aid & LWML

We are still selling our “Hanging Flower Pots” but the deadline to get your order in is Monday April 29th.

We are still in need of sheets for the back of our quilts and also fillings that you think we might be able to use. We also need any kind of material, new or used.

Another of our LWML Mission Proposals where our mites go to is: Equipping Young Leaders - LCMS Youth Ministry \$50,000 Servant Events where they train young leaders and give service to keep young people connected to our church. The grant will allow this program to equip these young people.

Our Mite Sundays are always the last Sunday of each month. You may take one of the Mite Boxes in the Narthex and fill it up with change, bills or even checks (written to LWML Capital Zone).

The LWML Capital Zone Spring Fling will be Saturday, May 4th at Ascension Lutheran Church, East Lansing. If you have any questions, please let me know!

Laurie Flegler and I will be attending the Michigan LWML Convention the last weekend in June at the Amway Convention Center in Grand Rapids.

In Christs Love,  
Kathy Bond

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

If you are a Thrivent member, would you please call our current Event Coordinator, Charlene Kennedy, at 989 224-7106? 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 Charlene. We appreciate your help!



# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!!

**Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is May 19th** here at St. Peter! Pastor Paul Clark of St. Paul will be our guest speaker. He is the LFL president of MI and has much information to offer us on the value of life of ALL ages.

We will gather in the Fellowship Center Gym immediately following Worship. Our LFL team is sponsoring a coffee/sweet breakfast treat hour. A freewill offering will be taken to support life causes. This is also the kickoff for collecting baby items for Shared Pregnancy which is a nonprofit, who helps women to be able to keep their babies rather than abort. We urge you ALL to support us in this endeavor.

Oh, yeah, you're going to want to stay after the presentation for a Mexican Fiesta hosted by the Fellowship Team. Sounds like lots of yummy food will be prepared!! More info on that here in the newsletter.

It will be an awesome day of fellowship!

Thank you!

The LFL team of St. Peter

Vickie Pline, Sara Thurston, Sarah Sills, Kristin Bayer, Diane Thurston

**The following are items that are always needed but you are welcome to purchase whatever you would like for babies:**

**Potty Chairs**

**Baby Bath Towels**

**Diaper Bags**

**Thermometers**

**Humidifiers**

**Diapers (Sizes 2 to 7)**

**New and Gently Used Clothing in sizes Newborn to 4T**

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**Do You Volunteer** at the church or school? We would love to know what you do. Please email me at [pamelam1212@aol.com](mailto:pamelam1212@aol.com) Thank you! Pam Mohr

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## Memorials

Glenn & Jean Bennett  
Keith Kirschenbauer  
Virginia Davis



## 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

Ellie Camburn  
Linda Chant  
Linda Davis  
Rhonda Dedyne  
Ilene Gibson  
Mary Ann Grennell  
Jan Maynard  
Jeanette Mehney  
Charlie Silm  
Evert & Bernita Sillman  
Albert Smith



***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.***

# Lutherans for Life Position Statement on Transgenderism

- WHEREAS, God created man in His image as male and female, with complementary vocations, especially with regard to marriage and procreation (Genesis 1:27, 2:18; Matthew 19:4); and
- WHEREAS, God personally designs each person (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 2:10), bringing together a sperm and an egg of His choosing from father and mother and genetically selecting the sex of each at fertilization; and
- WHEREAS, sex refers to the configuration of the body for procreation as male or female, and gender refers to the carrying out of one's vocations as male or female (with masculinity or femininity); and
- WHEREAS, God connects gender directly to sex (Deuteronomy 22:5); and
- WHEREAS, Gender dysphoria, which consists of significant and persistent tension between one's sex and one's sense of gender, may develop in response to relational trauma, disorders of sexual development, mental health impairments, and social pressures; and
- WHEREAS, Transgenderism is a false and idolatrous belief system that insists that individuals determine their own identities in defiance of created reality and demands that others affirm this sinful pride (Genesis 3:5); and
- WHEREAS, Neither hormones nor pharmaceuticals nor surgical mutilations change the biological sex our Almighty Maker gives from the moment of fertilization (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); and
- WHEREAS, Reliable research concerning "gender-affirming care," including puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and reassignment surgeries, remains lacking; no studies currently and conclusively demonstrate achievement of desired "benefits;" and the repercussions of these measures are serious, life-threatening, and often irreversible (including infertility, cardiovascular disease, emotional distress, and increased risk of suicide or other self-destructive behavior); and
- WHEREAS, For most young persons who experience gender dysphoria, it resolves as they continue development into adulthood, and their sense of gender corresponds to their sex; and
- WHEREAS, We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), including with reference to sexuality and gender, and even within the realm of heterosexuality; and
- WHEREAS, Our Savior Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected to atone for, forgive, rescue, redeem, and relieve all the weaknesses of the flesh, including gender dysphoria and other sexual deviance, and God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4); therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life affirms that one's sex and its corresponding gender is given by God from the moment of fertilization as one of the blessings of abundant life; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life opposes hormonal and surgical manipulations intended to change one's sex or gender, while affirming that neighbors suffering gender dysphoria need appropriate spiritual and psychological care to help them to appreciate their bodies and lives as God's gifts to them; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life advocates for research into possible medical or psychiatric etiologies of gender dysphoria, with the goal of appropriate therapies to treat any underlying causative conditions; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That as Gospel-motivated voices For Life, Lutherans For Life takes these positions out of love and strongly condemns hatred and physical violence toward these individuals; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life affirms that neighbors experiencing gender dysphoria, along with advocates of transgenderism and the rest of humankind, are sinful creatures to whom God extends grace through Jesus Christ, that God's forgiveness is for them, and that they may avail themselves of this Holy Absolution; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That even under pressure from the devil, the world, and the sinful nature, Lutherans For Life affirms that "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

# LCMS FOUNDATION

## More Than a Negative

Even if you've never had to testify in court, a thousand TV shows have made you familiar with the question, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" Why not just make people swear to tell the truth? Or make them promise not to lie?

Any parent who has ever had to interrogate a child about a broken cookie jar or a scuffle over a toy knows the answer. There are plenty of ways to try to get out of trouble without technically lying. You tell just enough of the truth to skate on by.

We often play the game of seeing how close we can get to sinning without technically going over the line.

But in our heart of hearts we know that this is not what God intended when He gave us the commandments. He's not giving us a merely negative rule and challenging us to just barely stay away from this or that. There is much more to each commandment than a prohibition. We shouldn't just avoid murdering people — we should be of service to our neighbor.

For each negative prohibition in the commandments there is a positive good that we are to cherish and protect. In the Eighth Commandment, that gift is the reputation of our neighbor and our relationship with him:

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

Your relationship with your family members (who are your nearest neighbors), the other members of your congregation, your coworkers and your friends is one of the most precious gifts you have been given. You need to exercise good stewardship with this gift just as much as you need to exercise good stewardship with your life, resources, time and income. This is an especially fragile gift because it's easy to ruin a relationship with slander and talking behind someone's back.

But speaking well of your neighbor in Christian love is absolutely free; it costs you nothing, yet it pays you great dividends. If you find this challenging at times, if you are tempted to speak ill of others, just remember that this other person is also a beloved child of God for whom your Lord Jesus suffered and died. Your Lord Jesus loves you both.

# 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*

# OPPORTUNITY FOR GIVING

## Unique Giving Opportunity

St. Peter Lutheran School has discovered a way to keep our Junior High graduates grounded in a scriptural based, classical education through their High School years: Wittenberg Academy.

From their website:

“Wittenberg Academy is a completely online Lutheran school dedicated to forming scholars for life in this world and the next. We are unabashedly Lutheran in our delivery of quality, classical education: scholars receive instruction from teachers who believe, teach, and confess the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.”

We currently have 4 students interested in enrolling this fall. The approximate cost per year is \$5,000 per student. St. Peter will be providing a classroom, but no financial support will be included. (We currently cover approximately 55% of the tuition for our Dayschool students.)

To assist with the financial burden of this wonderful educational opportunity, a Wittenberg Scholarship Fund is being established. Anyone wanting to contribute can contact Dave Bengel or Sally Pontius. Those wanting more information can reach out to Kristin Bayer. Wittenberg’s website is [www.wittenbergacademy.org](http://www.wittenbergacademy.org).

# LCMS INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

David and Joyce Erber  
LCMS International Mission \* Accra, Ghana \* March 13, 2024

Saint Peter Lutheran Church  
8990 Church Rd.  
Saint Johns, MI 48879-9230

Dear Pastor Bayer and people of God at Saint Peter Lutheran Church,

During this past weekend, March 7-10, pastors and delegates from all the congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana met in Bukpuguru (near the Togo border in Northern Ghana) for an annual Delegates Conference. This year's Delegates Conference included the election of church officials including the office of President and others.

The newly elected President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana is Rev. Daniel Akoh. Church elections aren't typical topics for missionary letters. However, Daniel is one of my beloved students. We have spent a lot of time together, both in and out of the classroom. For the past couple of years, Daniel Akoh has been studying at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. When I learned that Daniel did not plan to return to Ghana for the Delegates Conference, I felt the other candidate, a very capable, well liked, pastor was likely to be elected. It was a great personal joy for me to call up President-elect Akoh after the election to congratulate him. He will be installed into office at the end of June.

Also, 'not' re-elected as 1st Vice President was Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Boafo. For the past 6 years. Ebenezer Boafo, a Ghanaian pastor, has served as the 1st Vice President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana. During the same time, he served as the principal of the Lutheran Theological Seminary (here in Ghana). In addition to these responsibilities, Dr. Boafo served as the Africa Coordinator for the International Bible Society.

Today, Dr. Boafo announced that he is retiring from the Bible Society and since he was not re-elected, he is stepping down from serving as 1st Vice President of the church. He will now put all his energy into the seminary. This is great news! One of his major goals is to achieve bachelor's degree accreditation for the seminary. This is a huge undertaking! He indicated that the first accreditation visit to the seminary will take place next month.

These developments are very encouraging to us! We are excited to participate in the work of men like Daniel Akoh and Ebenezer Boafo. We pray our efforts with these church leaders and others result in greater development of seminary training, larger numbers of pastors being trained and more people hearing the Good News of life and salvation in Jesus!

Thank you for your prayers and support!

{Thank you for your donations of \$2,000 on Jan 23 and \$245 on Feb 22!}

Your partners in mission,

David and Joyce Erber

APRIL  
SHOWERS  
BRING  
MAY  
flowers