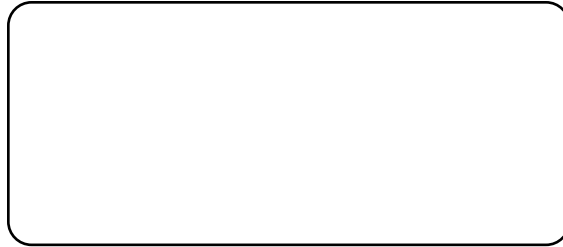


**St. Peter Lutheran  
Church & School**

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

Phone: 989-224-3178  
E-mail: church@stpeterriley.org  
school@stpeterriley.org

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



**THE MESSENGER**  
**January 2025**



**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 XVIII – Of Free Will

*Of Free Will they teach that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, 1 Cor. 2, 14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word. These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his Hypognosticon, Book III:*

*We grant that all men have a free will, free, inasmuch as it has the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby capable, without God, either to begin, or, at least, to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life, whether good or evil. "Good" I call those works which spring from the good in nature, such as, willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn divers useful arts, or whatsoever good pertains to this life. For all of these things are not without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their being. "Evil" I call such works as willing to worship an idol, to commit murder, etc.*

*They condemn the Pelagians and others, who teach that without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching "the substance of the act." For, although nature is able in a manner to do the outward work, (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder,) yet it cannot produce the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.*

Martin Luther famously wrote a book called, "The Bondage of the Will." That work is a treatise on this article of the Augsburg Confession. When it comes to spiritual things, our wills are in bondage to the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We have no power to deliver ourselves out of the devil's grip and bring ourselves to God. God must rescue us. We believe in divine monergism, which is to say, salvation belongs to the LORD. Our salvation is God's work entirely, apart from any work of man. First, in God sending His Son, our Lord, to win our salvation, and then in bringing this victory to sinners by the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments. It is entirely God's work. No one decides to follow Jesus. Jesus himself says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). Our righteousness before God is entirely of his will and working, and none of ours.

But there is a civil righteousness, a righteousness before other men, which we are capable of working. This is an outward righteousness, whereby we are able to refrain from murder and the like and be a good citizen and neighbor. This righteousness avails for nothing before God without the righteousness of faith. This explains why there are "good people" who do not believe in God. By their own power they can produce civil righteousness, but they are entirely incapable of saving faith without God's working by His Holy Spirit.

Because of these reasons, Lutherans do not speak in terms such as, "Ask Jesus into your heart," or "Make a decision for Christ." These are impossibilities for one whose will is bound under the tyranny of Satan. But if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. We believe in him through the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word. God saves us, apart from our works, by His grace. So we confess, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." This is the bondage of the will. But God liberates us by His Spirit, working faith in our hearts, fear of God, and fruit of His Holy Spirit.

-Pastor Bayer

# A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

## My Spirit Rejoices

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation...”

Luke 1: 46-50

Before Jesus was even born, Mary understood the greatness of what was happening. The joy she had in serving her Lord and being a part of the fulfillment of God’s promise is clear in these verses in Luke. I like these verses because they paint such a clear picture of what it means to be a Christian. Like Mary, Jesus came to save us, to claim us as His own. And now we have the privilege of serving through our lives as well.

As we look forward to the new year, I know that God has great things planned for our school. At the end of January, we will celebrate Lutheran Schools Week. Before public schools existed, every LCMS church had to start a school. They understood then, as we do now, the importance of a Christian education. It is important for our children to hear God’s Word daily, for us to share the Gospel, and to train-up students to one day be active parts of their congregations and their communities.

Our congregation plays a pivotal role in supporting our school. From the continuous prayers and financial support to all the time spent volunteering time and talent, your efforts are not in vain. God is working through you and through our school to reach our students and their families. And so, this January, we celebrate. And we continue to move forward, always striving to improve, always focused on Christ.

Blessings in Christ,  
Erika Brown  
Principal/Teacher

# PRESCHOOL NEWS

Happy New Year

We finished the first half of the school year with a wonderful performance of Jesse Tree: Jesus' Family Tree. The whole school did an amazing job at the Christmas program, and we are very proud of all their hard work. A special thank you to Mrs. Stout for all the time and effort she put into the program. We truly appreciate it.

We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a happy new year! We had a great first half of the school year. The children have settled in well and made lots of new friends. It is great to see all the growth and development that has occurred.

January was spent transitioning back into our classroom routine. We look forward to the second half of the school year.

Preschool enrollment will open for the 2025-2026 school year on February 1st, 2025. Please contact us if you or anyone you know would like enrollment information.

Blessings,

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

# A LETTER FROM THE CANTOR

## Why We Do What We Do

Last time we looked at the beginning of the Church year, up through Epiphany. This time we'll go through the rest of the year. And it gets a bit more complicated because it all depends upon those "moveable feasts."

As I mentioned before, the primary feast in this part of the calendar is Easter. This year Easter came on March 31. But first is the season of Lent. It's a period of forty days, instead of the four Sundays like Advent. And if you go back forty days from March 31, you come to February 14, Ash Wednesday. That meant the end of Epiphany, the Feast of the Transfiguration, was Sunday, February 11. Then came "Fat Tuesday," "Shrove Tuesday," "Mardi Gras," "Carnival," the big party before the next day, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Purple is the color of Lent, symbolizing a period of contrition and repentance. The readings center on Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem and the Passion account. The culmination is Holy Week, with Maunday Thursday (the institution of the Lord's Supper), Good Friday (the trial, crucifixion and death), and Holy Saturday (the Easter Vigil).

Then comes Easter! And the Church celebrates the Resurrection, with everything now in that brilliant white of high feasts, just like Christmas. Also like Christmas, Easter isn't over in one day with the disappearance of chocolate bunnies. Instead, it's another forty-day celebration with Scripture lessons that recount Jesus' appearances to his disciples after his resurrection. The Easter season concludes with the Feast of the Ascension, the last time the disciples see him bodily. This year, Ascension Day fell on Thursday, May 9.

Up until now the thread throughout the Church year has been the life of Christ. Now the thread turns to the life of the Church. Just as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we celebrate the birth of the Church. At his ascension our Lord told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received his gift of the Holy Spirit. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, that gift arrived. Pentecost comes from the Latin for "fifty", as it comes fifty days after Easter. We read of the coming of the Spirit in the sound of wind and tongues of fire. That introduces us to a new liturgical color, red, to remind us of the arrival of the Spirit and the tongues of fire. The only other time we see red paraments and vestments is the commemoration of apostles and saints and on the Reformation, October 31.

But then we're back to white for one more feast day, the Sunday for The Holy Trinity. Some time back I wrote about the history of the Athanasian Creed, that no one knows its actual origin. But because it proclaims such a solid theology of the Trinity, "that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance," we use that long Creed for this one Sunday.

From that point on we count "Sundays after Pentecost." Which brings us to where we started last time, with the start of the Pentecost season. The Scripture lessons focus on the life of the Christian and Christ's Church. The paraments and vestments remain green all the way through the Last Sunday of the Church Year. Then, just as our regular calendar starts over again with New Year's Day, so our Church calendar starts over again with the First Sunday of Advent.

There's pattern and rhythm in everything we do as the Church. All of it focuses on growing in our knowledge of our Savior and in growing our faith in life with him now and eternally.

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

## St. Peter Ladies Aid & LWML News

### Ladies Aid News

I am very thankful for everyone that helped with our Advent Brunch. We could not have such a successful Brunch, without everyone's help. Thank you so much! I hope that all that were able to attend, enjoyed themselves. We had 73 in attendance.

I would also, like to thank all of our bakers for all the things that were donated and to all the buyers at our Christmas Bake Sale. Thank you so much!

It was very successful.

Love in our Jesus,  
Kathy

### 2025 CHILI AND CORN BREAD COOK-OFF

Come One...Come All to the 8th Annual St. Peter Chili and Corn Bread Cook-Off on Sunday February 2, immediately following Bible Study. Drinks and table service will be provided. There will be an award for the best chili and corn bread. So get those secret recipes out and put them to the test. Let's see who has the best!

St. Peter Elders

# THANK YOU NOTES

Thank you for lifting up the bright light of Jesus for others to see. I am so deeply thankful to God that He chose you to supply what the work of the LCMS requires. Although giving may seem a simple act, it speaks so forcefully about the kind of Christ-following disciples God has made each of you to be. "Love one another," was Jesus' commandment to his disciples. You are doing just that through this gift, and all other acts of selfless sacrifice you make for the sake of the Gospel message. Even in financially challenging times like these, you are confessing your trust and faith in Christ alone. And I appreciate you. Thank you.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison, President LCMS

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Thank you for your support of missionaries and mission work throughout the world! Your contribution is very much appreciated. God is blessing our ministry through YOU, as together we partner to bring the Good News of Salvation to the world! —Global Lutheran Outreach

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Dear Pastor Bayer and people of God at St. Peter Lutheran,  
Thank you for your donation of \$2,000 in April. Thank you for your prayers for my work with seminary students and the church in Ghana and for Joyce's work with missionaries and missionary programs throughout Africa. We are thankful for your partnership in proclaiming Christ in Africa! P.S. We have a new granddaughter!! —David and Joyce Erber, Together in Mission

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## THANK YOU

A special thank you to the following ladies who made cookies, goodies, prepared the trays and delivered the trays to our over 80 members.

Diane Thurston, Pam Mohr, Kathy Bond, Laurie Flegler, Brenda Flegler, Earlene Schaub, Judy Marten, Lauren VanBeelen, Vicki Pline, Rita Hollis, Amy Martens and Charlene Kennedy. A special thank you to Jeanette Mehney for knitting little mittens, making a hot chocolate gift and making cookies.

Charlene Kennedy

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## 2025 JUBILEE CARNIVAL

St. Peter Lutheran Church would like to invite all church and school families to join us at our annual Jubilee Carnival. We are celebrating our school and all Lutheran schools around the country as we come to the end of Lutheran Schools Week.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 31st**

**6 PM – 8 PM**

**ST. PETER FELLOWSHIP HALL**

GAMES: Cookie Walk, Ring Toss, Fishing, Book Walk, Bingo, Bounce House for Smaller Children, Obstacle Course Blow Up (must wear socks)

THE GAMES ARE FOR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL – 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

FOOD: Sloppy Joe's, Hotdogs, Bags of Chips, Popcorn, and Lemonade

### **FAMILY FUN AND FELLOWSHIP**

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR FOR GAMES

**10 TICKETS FOR \$1.00**

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THIS EVENT ARE GOING TO HELP SUPPORT ST. PETER LUTHERAN SCHOOL.

### **HELP SUPPORT ST. PETER LUTHERAN SCHOOL**

We are looking for volunteers to help us take down the Christmas decorations at St. Peter on Sunday, January 12th after Sunday School. If you are interested in helping out, please just show up. Many hands make light work! This is a great time of fellowship with our brothers and sisters at St. Peter.

Charlene Kennedy, DVM



# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## Memorials



## 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  
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.***

# LCMS FOUNDATION

## Repenting of “Feasts that Know No Fast”

Fresh off the Christmas season and the retail frenzy that accompanies it, January brings a shot of frigid air into the lives of the people we know and love. This is not a meteorological statement either. While it is true that January is one of the colder months for those in North America, the cold front blast that hits us is the full force of credit card spending that fueled the retail frenzy. The bills for the gifts, the parties, the food and the travel have now come due. The credit card makes things convenient, but it also requires more discipline than many can muster. When the bills come in January for December’s celebration, it really puts a damper on things.

Congregations often make the same mistake in stewardship. We often charge forward in doing what we always do or starting new endeavors without counting the cost. But at the end of the month, or the end of year, when the bill comes due, the red ink on the congregational balance sheet smacks the people in the face like a stiff north wind in January. We hunkered down. We circle the wagons. We start to panic. The work of the Gospel suffers.

The fifth verse of “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788) addresses this January situation. The words penned by William Watkins Reid are very needful for us to hear as we start a new year, while dealing with the bills of past efforts and expense.

“Forgive us, Lord for feast that knows not fast . . .” This hits us hard, doesn’t it? We love when the money is flowing, the parties are going, and things are getting bigger and better. But there is a time in life, and most especially in our spiritual disciplines, that we need to fast. The purpose of a fast is to step back, lay something aside for a time, and replace it with meditation on Scripture and prayer. This is designed to keep us from turning something that may well be good into an idol that separates us from the God who loves us in Christ.

“For joy in things that meanwhile starve the soul . . .” In “The Parable of the Sower,” we hear Jesus talk about how the worries and cares of life choke out the growth of the seed of the Word that was planted. We know how this happens in our lives. Professional and youth sports do this. Materialism does this. Travel and leisure and do this. There is a list of things that we enjoy that starve the soul.

But it also happens in our congregations. When corporate stewardship is not managed in a responsible way, it can and does destroy individual stewardship. Is it good individual stewardship to support a ministry that doesn’t take its corporate responsibility seriously?

“For walls and wars that hide your mercies vast and blur our vision of the Kingdom goal.” This is the ultimate end of the idolatry of failed stewardship. We build walls between believers within the church and hamper those who are outside from coming to the Light of Life that is Jesus. The wars we fight over money and its impact on ministry do the same. It eventually blurs our vision of what we are here to do: share the Good News of Jesus. When the wintry blast of January hits us in this fashion, we are called to repent.

When the Holy Spirit uses the cold front of the call to repentance, we meet the God who forgives and restores. That is what He does for individual and corporate stewards. When the bills hit, they call us back to Jesus. He is the One who indeed forgives us our shallow thankfulness and leads us into the bounty of His mercy yet again.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## St. Peter School...

### **Accelerated Reader Prizes**

We are starting a school-wide accelerated reader store this year. Kindergarten through 8th-grade students can take tests on the books they read in order to earn points through the AR program. They can then use those points once a month to purchase items from the AR store. We need your help accumulating prizes for the store. There is a box on the counter in the office where prizes can be dropped off.

Examples of items that could be purchased: **Some new ideas have been added.**

Large squishes, fun socks, Chapstick, large bouncy balls, small lego kits, football cards, soccer cards, card games, TCG Pokémon Pack, small toys, new books, craft/art projects and supplies, gift cards to local businesses (\$5-\$10). Some larger prizes are needed, check with a teacher first to help with these.

December 13, 2024

Dear St. Peter Families:

I am writing to inform you that our preschool teachers, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Fletcher will not be returning to St. Peter for the 2025/2026 school year. I am grateful for their many years of dedicated service to our school. During their time at St. Peter, they had a positive impact on students and families. I have personally seen the care they show students and the growth their students make during their time at our school.

The school board is already hard at work to plan for the 2025/2026 year. We will begin looking for a new Early Childhood Director right away to ensure a smooth transition when they leave. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding these changes. God has blessed our school in many ways and will continue to do so.

Blessings,

Erika Brown

# 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*