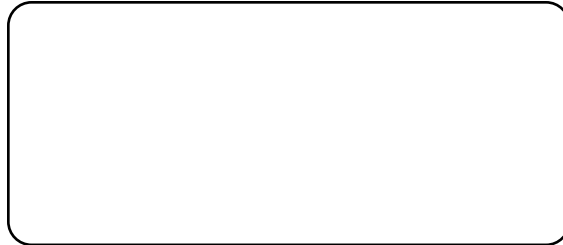


**St. Peter Lutheran
Church & School**

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



THE MESSENGER
FEBRUARY 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 XIX – Of the Cause of Sin

Of the Cause of Sin they [our churches] teach that, although God does create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says in John 8, 44: When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.

This short Article of the Augsburg Confession proved important even before the Book of Concord reached its completed state in 1580, fifty years after Augsburg. For there arose a teaching within the Lutheran Church, advocated by Matthias Flacius, which stated that after the fall, sin is the very nature of man. This article proves this teaching false. For God continues to create and preserve nature, including people. And God is never the source or author of evil. Therefore, human nature cannot *be* sin in its very essence, for that we mean God is the cause of sin. Thankfully, the Formula of Concord dealt decisively with Flacius' error and is included as the last document of the Book of Concord.

This article rightly confesses that the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, the devil and ungodly men. This will, unaided by God, will in fact only sin, but this comes from the wicked man's will, not from God. Human nature is not to be equated with sin, but instead human nature is correctly described as having the condition of sin. If human nature were sin itself, then God in Christ has redeemed sin, which of course is false. If human nature were sin in its essence, then sin will rise to live before God in the resurrection, which of course is false. And most shockingly, if human nature is by its very essence sinful, than God's Son has assumed sin into God at the incarnation. Our nature is utterly corrupted by sin, and there is no faculty of body, mind, and spirit that is not affected by sin, but a distinction between human nature and sin must be maintained.

This story teaches us a valuable lesson, for Matthias Flacius was reacting to the false teaching that man is able to cooperate with God and contribute to his own salvation, which the correct teaching of Original Sin denies. Flacius, in reaction to error, over-compensated and swayed off in the other direction into more error. So it is with the truth. We always run the risk of falling off in either direction into error, and this happens even as we attempt to be the defenders of the truth. The Word of God must reign supreme to protect us from error. Our reason must ever be in subjection to the Word of God and at its service. Otherwise, our best intentions of preserving the truth will lead us only into more error..

-Pastor Bayer

A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Running with Endurance, Looking to Jesus

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Hebrews 12: 1-3

January wrapped up and February began with our Lutheran Schools Week celebration. Here are some highlights from our week. The celebration kicked off with family bowling in Fowler on a Saturday afternoon. The next day, the kindergarten through 8th grade students sang at church. On Wednesday, we heard from Pastor Clark about Lutherans for Life. This is where student chapel offerings were sent for the week. That afternoon, students traveled to Hawk Island Park in Lansing for some snow tubing fun. We concluded the celebration on Friday with our annual Jubilee, put on by members of our congregation.

Throughout the week, students also spent time learning more about our theme verse. Hebrews 12:1-3. We talked about confessing our sins, seeking God's guidance, and remaining rooted in His Word in order to become better equipped to grow in faith and live as His disciples. The students wore their favorite sunglasses to school on Tuesday as we talked about fixing our eyes on Christ and looking to Him to be our example and our strength. We reflected on Christ's suffering and sacrifice in His death on the cross so that we can have eternal life. We talked about the joy and hope we have in Jesus Christ. We wrapped up the week discussing the endurance we must have in our Christian lives.

There are no other events taking place in the month of February. We are back to normal learning routines for students after a busy Christmas season and the interruption of snow days in January. When there is snow, and it isn't below freezing, we will be headed outside to enjoy sledding and time playing in the snow.

Blessings in Christ,
Erika Brown
Principal/Teacher

PRESCHOOL NEWS



FEBRUARY PRESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the month of February! We have an exciting schedule filled with fun and educational activities for the little ones.

We will celebrate Valentine's Day with a special party on **February 13th**. It will be a wonderful opportunity for the children to express love and friendship. We will encourage everyone to wear red or pink to add to the festive spirit!

Throughout February, we will be exploring the fascinating world of penguins and other Arctic animals. The children will learn about Penguins and their habitats and how they adapt to cold climates. We will also talk about polar bears, arctic foxes, and seals.

We will also get to enjoy a mid-winter break this month and hope families can find time to enjoy a winter day outdoors or snuggle up watching a family movie.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in our preschool community. We look forward to a fantastic February!

Blessings Always,

Mrs. Fletcher, Lead Preschool Teacher
preschool@stpeterriley.org



And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together Colossians 1:17

A LETTER FROM THE CANTOR

Why We Do What We Do

A number of years ago there was a movement within American Protestant churches known as “Church Growth,” epitomized by Baptist minister Rick Warren. The concept was to do whatever would make people attending your church to feel comfortable. So get rid of things people find offensive or confusing, like crosses, paraments, vestments, confession, old-fashioned liturgy, even removing “Lutheran” or “Church” from the name. Come in with a praise band, jeans, religious songs, and multi-media presentations. It’s the same kind of radical reform Martin Luther dealt with when Andreas Karlstadt went around destroying church interiors, altars, stained glass windows, crucifixes.

Now there are some things about Church Growth that are helpful, such as having accessible parking, ensuring people are warmly welcomed as they come in, having clear signage for things like the entrance, restrooms and the like. But the movement starts from a faulty premise – If you DO these certain things, the Church will grow.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a Lutheran pastor, theologian and martyr in Hitler’s Nazi Germany, pointed out the fallacy of that thinking:

It is not we who build. [Christ] builds the church. No man builds the church but Christ alone. Whoever is minded to build the church is surely on the way to destroying it; for we build a temple to idols without wishing or knowing it. We must confess – he builds. We must pray to him – that he may build.

We do not know his plan. We cannot see whether he is building or pulling down. It may be that the times which by human standards are times of collapse are for him the great times of construction. It may be that the times which from a human point of view are great times for the church are times when it is pulled down.

It is a great comfort which Christ gives to his church: you confess, preach, bear witness to me and I alone will build where it pleases me. Do not meddle in what is my province. Do what is given to you to do well and you have done enough. But do it well. Pay no heed to views and opinions. Don’t ask for judgments. Don’t always be calculating what will happen. Don’t always be on the lookout for another refuge! Church, stay a church! But church, confess, confess, confess! Christ alone is your Lord; from his grace alone can you live as you are. Christ builds. (*No Rusty Swords*, trans. & ed. Edwin H. Robertson, New York, Harper & Row, 1965, p. 216-217)

When we get anxious about numbers and believe we have to DO something, it can be helpful to remember Bonhoeffer’s words.

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

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!

Come and help decide who makes the best Chili and Corn Bread!

Cost is \$10 a person, 18 and under eat free.

Money raised from the Chili and Corn Bread Cook-off is going towards a piano for the school!

St. Peter Elders

Pop Can Tabs and Other Aluminum Cans Tabs.

If you could save your tabs for the next couple of months, we would collect them. You can give them to Mary Hoy or drop them off at the back of the Church.

The Ronald McDonald House in Lansing can recycle them and use the money to pay some of its utility bills.

THANK YOU NOTES

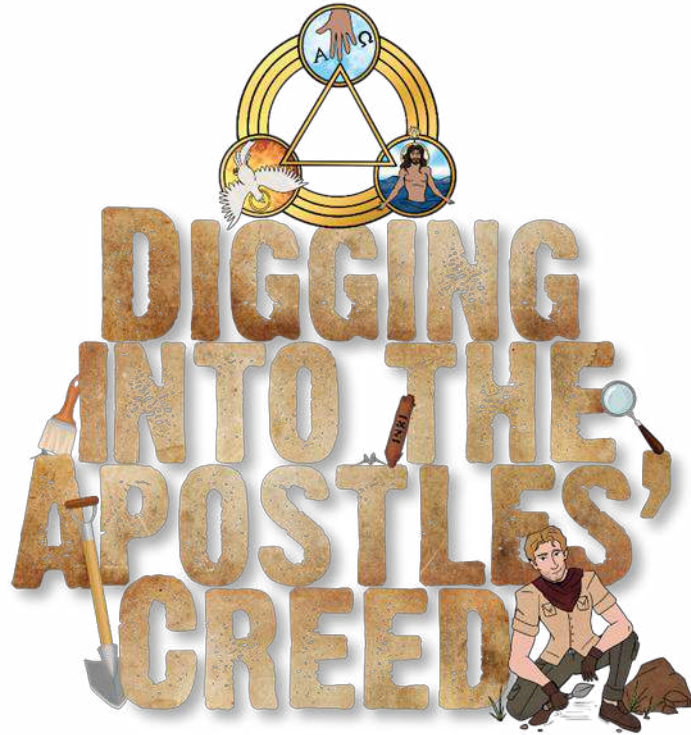
Thank you for lifting up the bright light of Jesus for others to see. I am so deeply thankful to God that He chose you to supply what the work of the LCMS requires. Although giving may seem a simple act, it speaks so forcefully about the kind of Christ-following disciples God has made each of you to 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

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

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

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS



ST PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Monday June 16 through Friday June 20, 2024

5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

K through 6th grade

Call 989-224-3178 to register, or

Email church@stpeterriley.org

As Summer nears we are looking for volunteers to help with VBS. The dates are June 16-20, from 5:30pm to 8:30pm. We will be “Digging into the Apostles Creed” with the kids, K-6 grade.

Please talk with Richard Gallo if you would like to help out this year. Additionally, a VBS planning committee will be formed in order to start organizing the program. If you would like to be a part of planning and/or running the program please talk with Richard. Thank you.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

Memorials

Rob Lyon \$20



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
Bill Flegler
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

“Christ’s Life, and Love, and Light”

Open our eyes Lord to see Your love’s intent,

To know with minds and hearts its depth and height

May thankfulness be days in service spent

Reflection of Christ’s life, and love, and light. (LSB 788)

As stewards enter the month of February, it is fitting that we look at the last stanza of the stewardship hymn, “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788). It is in these words that we see that the heart of stewardship is indeed love. Love has flowed from our Lord to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This love is then to flow from us to others. Being a conduit of love is really the central task of what it means to be a steward. The Lord entrusts us with His love that reconciles us to Himself, so that we might be stewards of the Gospel reconciliation that is freely given through us to those around us.

If we don’t see this love from God to us, then through us, to others, our eyes will be closed not just to the needs of those around us. They will also be closed to the very heart of the Gospel itself. This is why the hymnist prays that the Lord would “Open our eyes, Lord, to see Your love’s intent, To know with minds and hearts its depth and height.”

Only when we are immersed in God’s Holy Word, washed in Holy Baptism’s life-giving water and fed on the holy, precious, body and blood of Jesus in the Holy Supper, will the Spirit be able to open our eyes to see the Lord’s loving intent for us, and those we know and love. Sin blinds us. It makes us think that we are the center of our world, and our pleasure is the key.

In the Word, the Lord shows us the depth and height of His love. The depth of that love is what moved Him from His throne in heaven into our world. There He would don our human flesh, walk the dusty roads of Palestine, and set His face toward Jerusalem. Once there we get to see the height of His love, as He is elevated on a Roman cross to die a death that we deserve. But that would not be the end. He would be lowered into a tomb for three days. On that third day we then see the heights of love ascended to in His resurrection. This resurrection is already ours too!

The depth and height of this love poured out on us by the Holy Spirit then is distributed through us to others. Christ’s servant love is shown in our servant love. The hymn utters the prayer of every Christian steward:

May thankfulness be days in service spent

Reflection of Christ’s life, and love, and light.

This is the task for which stewards were originally created. Bearing the image of creation and redemption, we reflect Christ’s love to those around us. The light of Christ shining through us to others is the true stewardship to which we are called. It takes place in our homes. It is lived out in our workplaces and classrooms. As we bear the life, love and light received in Word and Sacrament, we carry it out in service to our neighbor and for the glory of God!

Forgive us, Lord, when our stewardship of thankfulness is shallow or lacking! Fill us with Your life, love and light! Not just for us, but through us to those we know and love, that they may know Your life, love and light for them!

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 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*

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.

[Thrivent Choice Dollars®](#)

Eligible clients with membership can recommend where Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funds by directing Thrivent Choice Dollars® to enrolled nonprofit organizations, including churches. You have only until March 31st to do this. You can do it online at: www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 800-THRIVENT.

Lisa Smith has left her position as Preschool Director. Her last day was, January 10th.

We are actively searching for a new Preschool Director.

If you have any questions, please contact the Church office.