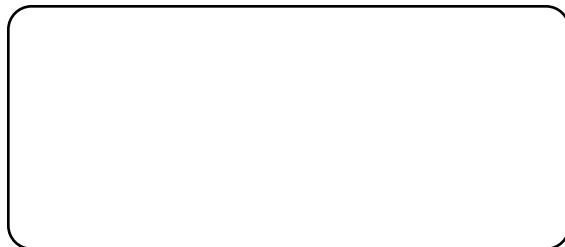


## St. Peter Lutheran Church & School

Rev. Timothy Bayer  
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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

## February 2026



### Church Services

Sundays: Divine Service at 9:30 am  
Monday-Friday: Chapel at 8:35 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 XXVI: Of the Distinction of Meats (continued)

...[8] Second, these traditions have hindered God's commandments, because traditions were placed far above God's commandments. Christianity was thought to stand wholly on the observance of certain holy days, rites, fasts, and vestments. [9] These observances won the exalted title of the "spiritual life" and the "perfect life." [10] Meanwhile, God's commandments, according to each one's vocation, or calling, were without honor. These works include a father raising his children, a mother bearing children, a prince governing the commonwealth—these were considered to be worldly and thus imperfect works, far below the glittering observances of the Church. [11] This error greatly tormented people with devout

consciences. They grieved that they were held in an imperfect state of life, as in marriage, in the office of ruler, or in other civil services. They admired the monks and others like them. They falsely thought that these people's observances were more acceptable to God.

[12] Third, traditions brought great danger to consciences. It was impossible to keep all traditions, and yet people considered these observances to be necessary acts of worship. [13] Gerson writes that many fell into despair, and that some even took their own lives, because they felt that they were not able to satisfy the traditions. All the while, they had never heard about the consoling righteousness of faith and grace. [14] We see that the academics and theologians gather the traditions and seek ways to relieve and ease consciences. They do not free consciences enough, but sometimes entangle them even more! [15] The schools and sermons have been so occupied with gathering these "traditions" that they do not even have enough leisure time to touch on Scripture. They do not pursue the far more useful doctrine of faith, the cross, hope, the dignity of secular affairs, and consolation for severely tested consciences. [16] Therefore, Gerson and some other theologians have complained sadly that because of all this striving after traditions, they were prevented from giving attention to a better kind of doctrine. [17] Augustine forbids that people's consciences should be burdened. He prudently advises Januarius that he must know that they are to be observed as things neither commanded by God nor forbidden, for such are his words.

From "Article XXVI. The Distinction of Meats" in The Augsburg Confession, Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, Pocket Edition. © 2005, 2006 Concordia Publishing House.

Source: [https://bookofconcord.cph.org/en/augsburg-confession/abuses/article\\_xxvi/](https://bookofconcord.cph.org/en/augsburg-confession/abuses/article_xxvi/)

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This article refuted the teaching that the Distinction of Meats and other human traditions are works that merit God's grace. Last month, we examined the beginning of this article, which spoke of how this abuse conflicted with the chief part of the Gospel—the doctrine of grace and the righteousness of faith.

Here, a second and third point are put forward against this abuse—the fact that this and other human traditions had taken prominence in the life of the Church, even above the commandments of God, and therefore had become a burden on godly consciences. People had been led astray to believe that a god-pleasing life was found in these invented works and not in God's commandments. Lutherans rightly cleared away this nonsense and restored the Commandments of God as good works. Good works are done in any upright vocation in which we find ourselves. Good works are works done in faith according to God's commandments—children loving and honoring their parents, husband and wife loving and honoring each other, citizens obeying civil authorities, civil authorities protecting citizens. These are the holy orders and works God has established—not the invented orders of monks and the invented works of human tradition.

Undergirding everything, Lutherans taught and teach the righteousness of faith—that we are counted righteous by God freely through faith, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Not only are human traditions not required, but even by the works of God's Law, no man will be justified. However, having been saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, the new life of obedience is lived according to God's commandments, not according to commandments of men.

-Pastor Bayer

# A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

## Life in Christ

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

*1 Peter 2:9*

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

*James 1:12*

In January, the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students started working on an essay for their religion class. For some of the students, their essays will be submitted to the Lutherans for Life Essay Contest. This year, the theme of the contest is “That they may have life”. As I helped the students research for their essays, I came across an article by Deaconess Chrissie Gillet. This article was a great reminder of why each life is important and why the ministry of our school is so important. We [have the opportunity to](#) teach the children in our school that their identity is found in Christ. To remind them that they are a baptized child of God. We help them to see purpose in glorifying God through all that they do. And no matter what happens, no matter what challenges we face, we are secure in the promises of God.

There are no special events happening at the school in February; it is more of a month of preparation for things to come. The PTL and staff are working to prepare for March is Reading Month. We are planning around [a Noah's](#) Ark theme this year. The PTL is also working on some plans for spring field trips. I will be taking the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8th grade students to Kentucky to visit the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum. You can help support that trip by bringing in empty pop cans/bottles and attending our Trivia Night (date to be determined).

Thank you for all of your continued support for our school. Continue to pray for our students and their families.

Blessings in Christ,  
Erika Brown  
Principal/Teacher

<https://lutheransforlife.org/article/our-identity-our-purpose-our-security/>

# A LETTER FROM THE CANTOR

## Who We Are

Lutherans have always been at the forefront of using new and developing technology in the service of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. Consider how readily Martin Luther turned to the printing press and publishers to print copies of his works for mass distribution to the public. The same is just as true for our Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. If you go to <https://www.lcms.org/resources>, you may be amazed at all the ways the church reaches out to the world. The synod has a presence on all of the social media sites. It has mobile apps for both Apple and Android phones, as well as connections with partners such as The Lutheran Witness. There are YouTube channels and videos for special groups and topics. There are audio podcasts such as *The Lutheran Ladies' Lounge*.

But right now I want to take you back to when the Synod first ventured into the realm of mass media. Walter A. Maier (1893 – 1950) was born in Boston, MA, to German immigrants. In his studies he became skilled in Latin, German and Greek, but his greatest love was Hebrew and the Old Testament. After graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1916, he attended Harvard, where he earned a Ph.D. While at Harvard, he also served as assistant pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Boston, and became a military chaplain in 1918, especially serving German prisoners of war in the Boston area. In 1922 he returned to Concordia Seminary as professor in Old Testament.

Maier saw the opportunity for the Gospel to have a greater reach, even to those who had never heard of Jesus Christ. He advocated for a Christian radio station, and with the support of the Lutheran Laymen's League, KFUO, the first Christian radio station, was established at Concordat Seminary on December 14, 1924. But Maier wanted Christian radio to spread beyond the reach of KFUO. Approaching CBS radio executives, he obtained a contract for a half-hour broadcast by the network's thirty-four stations across the country. On October 2, 1930, *The Lutheran Hour* was born.

The program was off the air from 1931 to 1934 due to financial concerns. But after resuming broadcast, by 1940, *The Lutheran Hour* was heard on 171 stations nationwide. By the time Maier retired as speaker for *The Lutheran Hour* in 1949, the program was heard over more than 1200 radio stations in 55 countries worldwide and translated into 120 languages.

A biography of Walter A. Maier, A Man Spoke, A World Listened (McGraw-Hill, 1963) was written as a loving tribute by his son, the late Rev. Dr. Paul L. Maier, former professor of history at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.

*The Lutheran Hour* is now an element of the International Lutheran Laymen's League and *continues to broadcast* worldwide. There have been a number of speakers for the program since Walter A. Maier. But perhaps the best known was Rev. Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann (1913-2005). Hoffmann graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1936 and served as parish pastor, college professor and director of public relations for the Synod. In 1955 he initiated the 23<sup>rd</sup> season of *The Lutheran Hour*. He continued as its speaker for thirty-three years and broadcast his last program from mainland China on Christmas Day, 1988. Many of his *Lutheran Hour* sermons, including that final program, have been digitally transcribed and preserved at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne. You can listen to them at <https://media.ctsfw.edu/Home/SearchTitle?search=lutheran+hour&authorFacet=Rev.+Dr.+Oswald+C.+J.+Hoffmann+&headingFacet=&journalFacet=&contentFacet=&formatFacet=&dateFacet=>

I'll share more about the people who have shaped our church over time and made us who we are.

Your brother in Christ,  
Dick Davenport

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **St. Peter Lutheran School—Open Positions**

We are still searching for a Lutheran preschool teacher for our program here at St. Peter..

Please share this with anyone you think might be interested in learning more about working at St. Peter. They can contact the church office or contact me directly.

church@stpeterriley.org  
principal@stpeterriley.org

Erika Brown

## **St. Peter Ladies Aid & LWM**

We continue quilting every Thurs. mornings 9 am-noon, join us ,you would enjoy it.

## **2026 CHILI AND CORN BREAD COOK-OFF**

Come One...Come All to the 9th Annual St. Peter Chili and Corn Bread Cook-Off on Sunday February 8, 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

## **February Schedule for Crucifer's**

1st	John Lebal
8th	Ezra Hicks
15th	William Potter
22nd	Leo Faivor

## **Memorial for School Playground Equipment given in Memory of Norma Fitzpatrick, given by:**

Bruce & Jeanette Mehney

Gaylord & Elizabeth Kluckling

Kevin & Michelle Bailey

Charlene Kennedy

Thomas & Rita Hollis

Myron & Audrey Grubaugh

Wayne & Rhonda Dedyne

Charles & Theresa Silm

Ann Shellito

# 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 so much for thinking of me on my 90th birthday. The cards were beautiful with uplifting messages.

Thank you very much.

Ilene Gibson.

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Hope (DeWitt) is hosting a conference on Saturday, February 7th from 8 AM - 2 PM.

Peek-a-boo Jesus: A Conference on Jesus in the Old Testament

Rev. Dr. Jeffery Pulse (CTS, Fort Wayne) will be our speaker

Cost is \$25 or \$15 for students.

Lunch is provided.

R.S.V.P. to [revsikora@gmail.com](mailto:revsikora@gmail.com) or call 517-669-3930 and leave a message.

# CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

## Memorials

### Birthday Gift for Jesus

In Memory of Helen Andersson, given by Harold Anderson

In Memory of Arthur Bloomer, given by Gail Bloomer

In Memory of Mary Grennell, given by Larry Grennell

In Memory of Raymond & Norena Sperry, given by Marvin Sperry

In Memory of Stuart, Charles & Lois Sillman, given by Wayne & Diana Woodbury

In Honor of Kathy & Bruce Bond's Children, Grandchildren, & Great-Grandchildren.



## 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

Jan Maynard

Charlie Silm

Evart Sillman

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.*

# WITTENBERG ACADEMY'S



## TEACHING FOR ETERNITY FUND ONLINE AUCTION QUINQUAGESIMA WEEKEND MMXXVI

*Join Us for our First Online Auction!*

BIDDING OPENS DURING NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK, JAN. 25,  
AND ENDS ON FEB. 15 AT 7 P.M. CT

LEARN ABOUT WITTENBERG ACADEMY DURING OUR LIVE AUCTION SHOW,  
FEB. 13, 7-8 P.M. CT, ON OUR FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE PAGES

[WITTENBERGACADEMY.ORG/ONLINE-AUCTION](http://WITTENBERGACADEMY.ORG/ONLINE-AUCTION)



FOUNDED IN 2012, WITTENBERG ACADEMY SERVES MORE THAN 200 SCHOLARS LOCATED AROUND THE WORLD. SCHOLARS STUDY THE CLASSICAL LIBERAL ARTS AND CATECHESIS IN ORDER TO PREPARE THEM FOR LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT. WITTENBERG ACADEMY IS A FULLY ACCREDITED INSTITUTION THAT OFFERS VIRTUAL COURSES FOR SIXTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL CURRICULUM FOR KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADE. IT IS A RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD.

## LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE -- LWML

“My song is love unknown. My Savior’s love to me, Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be. Oh who am I that for my sake My Lord should take frail flesh and die?

Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine! Never was love, dear King, never was grief like Thine. This is my friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend! LSB 430

In just a few weeks Lent will be here. We will worship on Ash Wednesday, and then reflect on just how much Jesus loves us. He came just for the purpose of telling about His Father’s love and eternal life that we have through belief in Him. Then He suffered and died with our sins upon Him. So we will take the time to meditate and serve Him through this Lenten season.

As you may know, our Piecemakers ladies make quilts for Lutheran World Relief (LWR), and the Safe Center throughout the year. Most every Thursday morning you will find a group tying bottoms, fillers and tops together to create the quilts. In our homes we are collecting sheets and fabric, cutting the squares, sewing tops together, and then hemming the quilts. Each quilt probably takes 10-12 hours to complete. Now think of this, in 2024, 370,818 quilts were distributed by LWR. In 2025, 315,818 quilts were distributed. Just add a zero to those numbers to calculate how many hours quilters all over the country have put into creating warmth for those in need. Quilts were shipped to 15 countries in 2024 and 16 in 2025. LWR also collects and distributes school kits, personal care kits, baby care kits and fabric kits. If you would like to be part of this mission, please see me or Kathy Bond, I am sure we can find a job that you can help us with.

Blessings during this Lenten season as you serve Christ reflecting on His Love for you!

Laurie Flegler

## Table of Duties: The Forgotten Stewardship Tool

Luther's Small Catechism is a magnificent tool. Joined with a well-used copy of the Holy Scriptures and an orthodox hymnal, and the Christian is well equipped to live a life of faithfulness to the Lord and service to the neighbor. First in German and now in English and just about any language known to man, this handy masterpiece has introduced generations of people to the central doctrine of justification by grace, through faith, on account of Jesus Christ. The Six Chief Parts have proven to be a faithful framework for a clear confession of the truth of the

But more than a textbook, the Small Catechism also serves well as a handbook for Christian living. As a part of its treasure, there is an element that teaches an extraordinarily strong message of stewardship. That hidden treasure that needs to be rediscovered is called the Table of Duties.

The Table of Duties is really nothing more than a categorized gathering of Bible verses. These verses are set apart for "various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities." Addressing pastors and people, government and citizens, husbands, wives, children, youth, workers and so many more, it very clearly lays out what faithful stewardship looks like. Even better, these assembled passages teach one important truth: we are stewards of one another!

The Table is much more than a "how-to" tool; it also lays out the interconnectedness that exists within the body of Christ. Pastors are described by what they are to be as stewards of the Word. 1 Timothy 3 highlights the characteristics of a faithful pastor. Even more, Titus 1 highlights the need for the pastor to be faithful for the sake of those under his care.

Those who hear the faithful preaching of the pastor are stewards of the pastor as well. 1 Corinthians 9 talks about the need for the people to support the livelihood of the pastor. Galatians 6 talks about how the hearers share in the good things that the pastor teaches. 1 Timothy 6 talks about the honor that is owed to the pastor, not because of WHO he is, but rather WHAT he is teaching! Hebrews 13 shows the impact of this stewardship on the pastor, that they perform their duties with joy. Joyful pastors and people are always going to be better stewards of the Gospel!

Outside the church this interdependent stewardship is on display as well. Romans 13 highlights the respect necessary for the governing authorities. As citizens, the faithful steward is called to pay taxes (Matthew 22), pray for their leaders (1 Timothy 2) and that they should be ready to serve in the civil realm (Titus 3), because they are in these positions by God's direction (1 Peter 2).

These steward duties are in the home too! 1 Peter 3 and Colossians 3 shape the husband steward. Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 shape the wife steward. Ephesians 6 form parental stewards and child stewards.

The Table of Duties is a wonderful place for the individual steward to learn how much our stewardship is more than just a "me and Jesus thing!" In fact, it ends with these words: "Let each his lesson learn with care, and all the household well share fare." This is interdependent stewardship on clear display. As each learns stewardship in this way, the more faithful we will be as a family, congregations, communities and the church at large.

## What's with all the kneeling in church?

As I was typing the title for this article, I couldn't help but notice its irony. It's kind of like saying "What's with all the praying in church?" However, I felt the need to attempt to address comments I've received recently about some people kneeling in the Divine Service during Confession and Absolution.

I want to be clear that these are my thoughts and observations only. If you disagree with me, I would love to have a discussion.

As Judy and I have traveled across the country these past 10 years, we've had the opportunity to visit many Lutheran churches. Admittedly, we intentionally search for churches that are more liturgical rather than contemporary, so our experiences are limited to that type of service. First and foremost, we are always humbled and appreciative that the liturgy itself is identical to our services here at St. Peter. It's amazing to me that I can literally close my eyes in churches across a dozen states and never miss a beat.

Other similar aspects with St. Peter are hymns played on organs, pastors wearing vestments, Communion served each Sunday and incredibly welcoming people.

While the commonality of these things is obviously unifying, we've also encountered many differences that I maintain should not affect unity if we realize we worship in Christian freedom.

Pastors chanting, incense, raising of hands, making the sign of the cross, and yes even kneeling, are all behaviors we've witnessed. It never entered our minds that any of these things could be considered divisive in those congregations. Yet I'm hearing some folks are uncomfortable when others kneel during Confession and Absolution at St. Peter. I can't plead with you more strongly when I say PLEASE do not let that be the case. I can guarantee that no one who kneels is judging anyone who doesn't, so please let it be the same in the other direction.

At the risk of sounding blunt, I believe we need to check our feelings at the door when we come to church. We are there to receive our Lord's incredible gifts, and our worship should have little or nothing to do with us and our emotions. If we embraced that mentality, we wouldn't care that some kneel in their pews, or that some stand at the communion rail, or that some sing or don't sing. The important thing is WE ARE THERE, each a miserable sinner in need of God's grace. Let's see if we can extend a little of that grace to each other, regardless of how one decides to worship our Savior.

Dave,  
Elder

Higher Things Retreat

January 2026



## St. Peter School...

### **Accelerated Reader Prizes**

We are continuing 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, Pokémon cards, yarn, glow in the dark sticks/necklaces, packs of balloons, Aphmeows, nail polish, hair accessories, 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.

### **Fund Raiser for St. Peter School**

St. Peter Lutheran School children in Grades 5-8, are planning a field Trip to Nashville, TN, to visit Noah's Arc.

To help cover costs, they are doing a bottle and can drive.

You can drop them off here at School, or if you have a large amount, contact us and we can make arrangements to pickup.

Mary, 989-224-3178.