



From Pastor Telsoni . . .

Dear Friends in Christ:

When you read this, another Thanksgiving holiday has passed, along with the flurry and hurry of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and Giving Tuesday. Lo and behold, the Christian Advent season begins on November 29th according to the church calendar. And then what happens in the secular world? The beginning of the annual shopping spree for Christmas and the hustle and bustle that accompanies it, along with holiday parties on many days before Christmas! Go figure.

Ideally, the Advent season is meant to be a quiet and reflective time for Christians in order to meditate upon the meaning of the greatest promise of God, fulfilled in the birth of His only-begotten Son, the Savior of the world. Now the celebration can begin!

However, my experience, and I know yours, is that December seems to be a busy, busy time when, unfortunately, after Christmas Day does come, many folks succumb to fatigue rather than festivity. It does not have to be this way, and many Christians would agree wholeheartedly. Yet we all succumb to the ho-hum and well-worn traditions of Christmas that seem to omit the Babe lying on the straw in a Manger wearing a lamb's swaddling cloths. Perhaps the Holy Spirit can inject some spiritual caution into our day-to-day preparations for Christmas so that we have time for daily devotions, extra worship services, and ennobling activities that witness to others that our lives are blessed because of the birth of our Savior.

In many ways, the days just before Jesus' birth were much like ours – declining spirituality, searching for other ways for hope and happiness, absence from temple worship, and neglect of God's Word. Actually, the years 516 BC to Jesus' birth encompass the age called the "400 Silent Years" because it was a span where no new prophets were raised and God revealed nothing new to the Jewish people. In the meantime, God's people intermarried with pagans, temple leaders created new laws and traditions not sourced in Scripture, and other religions influencing Judaism. The culture was being secularized in many distorted ways. In a sense, this scenario seems like a portrait of the United States in 2023.

Our congregation exists amidst a lamentable culture of strange beliefs, superstitions, self-centered narcissistic lifestyles, worship of pseudo-science, and nods to God that are as shallow as the minds that conjure them up. The present-day "influencers" in our culture are "woke" celebrities and radical activists and, in general, secular beliefs that have nothing to do with the true and triune God. Thus churches are virtually empty and many Christians are discouraged and frustrated.



But the good news here is that, back then, God finally determined the time for His only-begotten Son to be born in the world and serve as our Savior. Finally God's true prophet came in the form of John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Lord, the anointed Redeemer. He came in the fullness of time which we will celebrate during Advent and the beginning of Christmas. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!"

God's people of the Old Testament endured a very long Advent season waiting for the coming of the Messiah. We remember and sort of live through a similar "four-week" Advent season awaiting the celebration of the birth of the Savior of the world. Beyond that, we view ourselves as the post-modern "remnant," the faithful few following the Lord and living according to His promises and receiving His Word of peace and pardon and hope through Jesus Christ.

Being the contemporary "remnant," we will come together and see many empty seats when we worship in our sanctuary. Do not get discouraged or downtrodden. For the Lord is faithful and His Gospel will be preached, and the Holy Spirit may well cause a new awakening and renewal here in our community and nation. May this come to pass, O Holy Spirit Comforter!

In the meantime, this will mean remaining faithful to Jesus and living a devout and loving life, feeding on His Word and Sacrament. To this end, we will be enlightened and encouraged to be thankful and confident in the Lord's ultimate leadership over His beloved community, the Church, no matter how many constitute the remnant in Christ during this time. If you trust in the Lord, then know that He will provide and will bless His people, His faithful remnant, in order to keep His church alive so that generations from now will know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

So we enter another Advent season anticipating the celebration of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem in the fullness of time back then, Who entered this world of darkness and death to save us from sin, death, and the devil. Let us prepare for the singing of the joyous Yuletide carols and extolling a great and gracious God who remembered us lost sinners in order to win us back to His holy side. In addition, we also continue to live in a present Advent season of unknown duration before the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to raise all the dead and lead them to their eternal home in heaven, the second birth, a sort of "new" Christmas that will be joyous and glorious beyond measure. Blessed Advent in Christ!

Pastor John Telsoni



OBSERVING THE SEASON OF ADVENT



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS will be available beginning on Sunday, December 3rd. This year's theme is *"What Child Is This?"* Author of the meditations is Dr. Kari Vo. In Jesus' birth, God came down to earth for us. In *What Child Is This?* we see how Jesus, foretold by the prophets and confirmed by God as His own Beloved Son, is the Father's ancient promise fulfilled. Born to save us from our sins, this lowly Child triumphed over sin and death to become our Savior. Large-print editions will also be available.

MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES

This year's theme is: **"Dominus: The Advent of the Son of God in the Gospel of Mark"** (*"Dominus" means "Lord"*).

December 6th - 12 N (Pastor Telloni) or 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)
"Our Lord's Authority over the Satanic Realm" (Mark 1:21-34)

December 13th - 12 N (Pastor Telloni) or 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)
"Our Lord's Authority over Sin" (Mark 2:1-17)

December 20th - 12 N (Pastor Telloni) or 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)
"Our Lord's Authority over Death" (Mark 5:21-43)



Dennis J Brown Sr

KATHLEEN

From the Staff

Pastor John Telloni

Lewis P. Porter

ZC

Merry
Christmas
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CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SERVICES

Sunday, December 24th - 4th Sunday in Advent

Education Hour - 8:45 a.m.

Divine Service - 10:00 a.m.

PREACHER: PASTOR CARPENTER



Monday, December 25th - Christmas Day

Divine Festival Service - 10:00 am

PREACHER: PASTOR CARPENTER

Special music by the Adult Choir

The Sacrament of the Altar will be celebrated



Monday, January 1 - New Year's Day

The Circumcision and Name of Our Lord

Service - 10:00 am

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus will be celebrated

The Adult Choir will sing a seasonal anthem

Sunday, January 7th - 1st Sunday after the Epiphany

The Baptism of Our Lord

Education Hour - 8:45 am

Divine Festival Service - 10:00 am

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve

Candlelight Communion Service

6:00 p.m.

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

Special vocal music by the Adult Choir

Traditional candle-lighting ceremony with the singing of "Silent Night"

Jesus Himself will meet us and bless us in His Holy Supper



Sunday, December 31st - 1st Sunday after Christmas

Education Hour - 8:45 a.m.

Divine Service - 10:00 a.m.

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

Saturday, January 6th (Epiphany Day)

The Festival of the Epiphany

Divine Festival Service - 10:00 a.m.

PREACHER: PASTOR CARPENTER

The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus will be celebrated

The Adult Choir will sing a seasonal anthem



AN UPDATE FROM THE TREASURER



We have been working on the budget for next year and reviewing our results for this year. Through October we have a year-to-date loss of (\$25,294.31). It is expected that our giving next year will be down significantly due to some changes in our membership. As a result, the projected loss for next year would be even greater

so we are diligently looking at ways to cut expenses. We ask that you pray about our financial situation and welcome any suggestions or help that you can provide.

- Yours in Christ, Keith Kleve - Treasurer

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

One way of measuring the health of a congregation is reporting the average Sunday worship attendance. We have started tracking attendance in a new way by reporting the number of "actual people" who have worshiped here during a specific month. This method we hope will demonstrate that there are more people worshiping than can be determined just by the average number here on a given Sunday. We began this way of reporting at the end of October. So here are the numbers for the last two months:



October	112 people (members and guests) attended at least 1 service during the month.
November	106 people attended at least 1 service last month.

We thank the Lord for those who faithfully receive Word and Sacrament! *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."* (Ps. 122:1)

— Pastor John Telloni

STEWARDSHIP CORNER – 2024 BUDGET

For the last several years St John's Lutheran Church has received tremendously generous offerings from the congregation. The members have provided ample funding for the church to meet its ministry needs and expand its vision with new outreach efforts. However, this year our 2024 budget committee struggled to produce a budget with a positive cash flow; this is partly due to the fact that we have an aging, large facility and had to borrow to replace our roof and have an older heating and air conditioning system requiring a lot of attention to keep it working. Please pray for God's leading on how you can support our 2024 budget to ensure the continued financial health of our congregation and the funding needed to carry out our mission of "Restoring Broken People To Life In Christ" as part of our local ministry. Thank you! May your thankfulness and trust in the Lord be reflected in your stewardship! - Board of Stewardship - Luther Russert, Chairman



STEWARDSHIP
Managing God's Gifts To Us

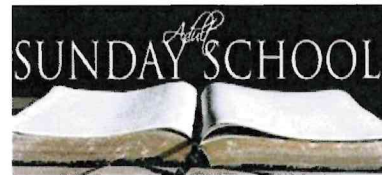
COMMITMENT PLEDGES

for the 2024 calendar year towards next year's budget totaled \$96,840.00. A special thank you to the 21 giving units who returned their commitment forms making a pledge of financial support for the coming year. Together with the members not making a public commitment, I pray that we meet and exceed our proposed 2024 budget. The generosity of our members is truly inspiring!

- Luther Russert - Board of Stewardship

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The conversation centers around the themes of these lessons to help worshipers prepare for the specific message of that Sunday. The session begins at **8:45 am** in the Fellowship



Hall. Pastor Telloni is the discussion leader. (New topic beginning on December 3rd: *"The Gospel According to St. Mark."*)

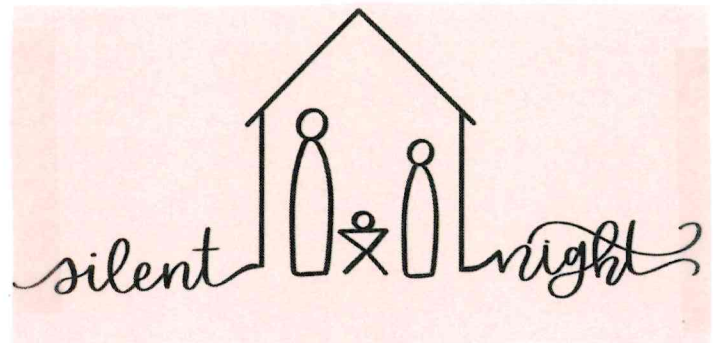
"ON THE WAY"

is recorded each midweek. Pastor Telloni shares brief devotions on various topics regarding faith and life in Christ and important issues facing the church in our present cultural situation. Invite your family and friends to check it out on St. John's website and Facebook Page and on YouTube. *If you tune in on Facebook, you are encouraged to "share" the video with your friends.*



CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

Our Christian sympathy is extended to Mark Sturm and his family who are mourning the loss of Cynthia Gribble of Canton, who passed away on November 10, 2023, at the age of 71. May our gracious God comfort them with the hope of resurrection and eternal life in Jesus Christ Who is the Resurrection and the Life.



MONDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS

Bible Study



meets from 10 am to 11:30 am in Rooms 112-113. TOPIC: "The Church: God's Servant," based on St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. The topic for December 4th is "Employed!", and December 11th, the last class session is "Armed!" Pastor Telloni is discussion leader.

All are invited! (The last session will be held on December 11th.) Note: A new theme will soon be chosen for January.

THE MARTHA SOCIETY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

will be held at Dravenstotts Restaurant, 410 West High Street, Orrville, on Monday, December 11th at 12:15 p.m. Dutch-treat – all ladies are invited! A sign-up sheet is posted on the front bulletin board. If you would like to carpool, please meet at the church no later than 11:30 a.m. Questions? See Debbie Stocker.



THE MOBILE SNACK COMMITTEE



delivered 20 snacks in November. Thank you to our baker, Diane Pachis for the delicious banana bread! Also, thank you to our drivers: Gloria Pavelzik, Gene Stocker, Dennis Lilich, Rose Sedjo & Deb Stocker. We will mobilize again on Wednesday, December 27th. If you would like to donate baked goods or help with deliveries, see Deb Stocker or Rose Sedjo.

CHRISTMAS FOOD SLIPS

are now available on the table in the narthex. Each slip has a food item written on it for the non-perishables needed for the annual Christmas Food Distribution. Deadline for bringing in food is Sunday, December 10th.

This month the recipients of the food will be the CommQuest Services Family Living Center located at 412 Lincolnway West in Massillon, and the temporary residents now sheltered there. The Elders are in charge of this ministry and distribution will be on Sunday, December 17th.



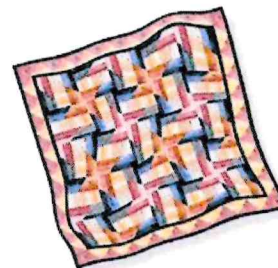
CHURCH FLOWER FUND



Donors of altar flowers should make checks payable to "St. John Lutheran Church." Flower Fund Envelopes are available for your convenience in the Narthex. The fund will also be used to purchase extra holiday flowers on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

ST. JOHN QUILTERS

will meet on Wednesday, December 6th, and then resume in January (1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm). Bring a lunch and enjoy the fellowship! Questions, see Janet Dyer, Arlene Guynn or Jeanette Tennant. Donations of monetary gifts for shipping and supplies are welcomed! The group thanks all who have already made donations!



THE MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's Fellowship

will not meet in December and will resume their meetings in January at the church on the first Thursday of each month at 11:00 a.m. Questions, see Russ Ryder, President.

LAYING ASPHALT

We thank the Ohio Department of Transportation for spreading asphalt on the back entranceway from the back parking lot to Hills & Dales Road this past week. This will alleviate the avoiding of some of potholes. We thank Ron Gemma for working out the arrangements.



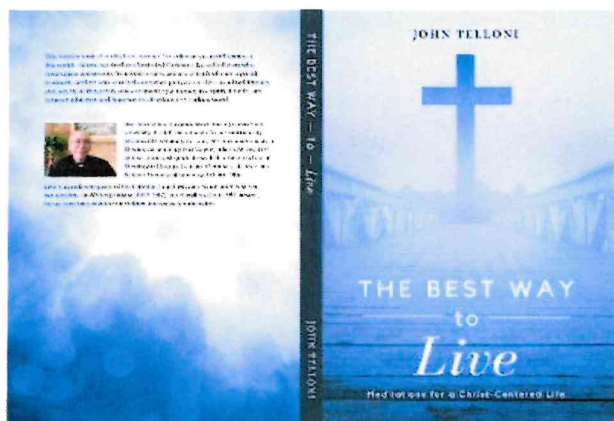
LUTHERAN HAVEN CHRISTMAS SEALS



are on the table in the church narthex. This year was its 75th anniversary! Over the last 75 years, Lutheran Haven has grown tremendously, adding more independent living residences, health care facilities, and amenities. Today, not only do they accommodate retired Lutheran pastors, but also retired, rostered Lutheran church workers, retired Lutherans, as well as many other people in need in their Health Care Facilities. They have undergone many changes over the years, but the core of its mission has remained the same: To provide a quality, Christ-centered haven of care. All gifts go to the Benevolent Care Fund. (The Lutheran Haven is owned and operated by the SELC District LCMS.)

**"THE BEST WAY TO LIVE:
MEDITATIONS FOR A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE"**

**by Pastor John Telloni
St. John, Massillon, Ohio**



"This humble book of meditations is meant for a diverse group of travelers in this world – faithful yet tired and frustrated Christians, lapsed believers who need solace and serenity from inner shame, seekers of truth who are stymied by doubt, carefree folks who feel somewhat guilty about their casual indifference – and yes, by all those folks who are unwittingly trapped in a spiritual traffic jam between jubilation and dejection within a frivolous and perilous world."

— Excerpt from Pastor Telloni's Preface

**FOREWORD by David R. Stokes, Wall Street
Journal Best-Selling Author**

2nd Printing! 1) If you are looking for an appropriate Christmas gift for a loved one or friend; or 2) If you have not purchased this book yet and desire to be strengthened in your own spiritual life –

"The Best Way to Live: Meditations for a Christ-Centered Life" may well fill that need.

**Special Book Prices for Members and Friends:
\$15.00 per book !!! Or 2 for \$20.00 !!! – A Bargain!
Cash or Check only – See Pastor Telloni after the service.**

(\$17.99 if ordered from Amazon, Books-A-Million, Barnes & Noble, etc.)

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LWML CENTRAL ZONE HOLDS FALL RALLY



The Central Zone held our Fall Rally on October 19th with 15 women from 5 churches meeting at St. John Lutheran Church in Massillon. Carolyn Nicholas from Resurrection in Malvern, OH, was installed as Zone Secretary. The Women of St. John volunteered to hold the Spring Rally in 2024. The in-gathering was for their local food pantry.

**CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN ON THE
LUTHERAN HAVEN AQUATIC CENTER!**

After a global pandemic, after construction delays for lack of materials and labor, and after 2.5 years of fund-raising, the Lutheran Haven Aquatic Center has begun! When Lutheran Haven initiated this project, it was just one month prior to the pandemic, so all facets including the fund-raising had to pivot to accommodate the inability to do everything as planned!



But our God is so good, and despite numerous challenges, construction has begun on our wonderful therapy/swimming pool!

Who, but people of faith, would move forward with such an ambitious project in such uncertain times? Through your faithful prayers, your belief in the numerous health benefits of a project of this nature, and your tremendous generosity, our "Water Works Wonders" dream is now becoming a reality!

We are rejoicing in God's goodness and faithfulness for this amazing 75th Anniversary gift of health, wellness, and rehabilitation that this pool will bring to our residents.

We are so grateful and thrilled to finally see this great, big hole in the ground knowing how it will bless so many for decades to come! We hope you visit Lutheran Haven soon and bring your bathing suit!





Hermann Sasse on Truth

In 1936, during the rising heat of the Hitler regime, Hermann Sasse wrote about truth. German culture was awash in a “sea of lies,” and in the church lies also held sway. This timeless piece has much for us to ponder in our day and about ourselves. — *Pastor Matt Harrison*

The following excerpt is from Herman Sasse's 1936 essay “Union and Confession,” translated by Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Office of the President, 1997).

The lie is the death of man, his temporal and his eternal death. The lie kills nations. Through their lies, the most powerful empires of the world were laid waste. History knows of no more unsettling spectacle than the judgment which comes to pass when the men of an advanced culture have rejected the truth, and are now swallowed up in a sea of lies. As was the case with fading pagan antiquity, where this happened, religion and law, poetry and philosophy, life in marriage and family, in the state and society, in short, one sphere of life after another, fell sacrifice to the power and curse of the lie. Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man, even when dying, lies to himself and others, the terrible dissolution of his culture is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the like of which has never been experienced.

If, according to the irrefutable testimony of history, this is the judgment of God on the lie, should God then not also punish the lie in His church? Truly He who is the Judge of all the world will do this! For the power of the lie extends even into the church. Since the days of the apostles there has been lying in the church as in the rest of the world. For people in the church too are and remain poor sinners until their death.

Lies have been told in the church because of cowardice and weakness, vanity and avarice. But beyond all these there is in the church one particularly sweet piece of fruit on the broad canopy of the tree of lies. This is the *pious* lie. It is the hypocrisy by which a man lies to others, and the intellectual self-deception by which he lies to himself that he believes. “In our time too the proclamation of the Word in assumed orthodoxy is unfortunately not an infrequent occurrence of this lie.” ...

The most fearful thing about the pious lie is that it will lie not only to men, but also to God in prayer, in confession, in the Holy Supper, in the sermon, and in theology. The pious lie always

**In place of the objective message of
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subjective religious feelings and
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has the propensity to become the *edifying* lie. It was once expelled from the church when it existed in the form of the legends of the saints and the fraud of relics. Then in full view of pious eyes, it

returned in a new form, such as in the Luther legends, or in pietistic times in the form of almanacs and tracts containing the accounts of miraculous responses to prayer and equally miraculous conversions, which either never happened, or in which the kernel of historical truth was no longer discernible. This "edifying" lie even forces its way into the sphere of the church, which teaches revealed truths of revelation. After sufficient preparation it can obtain the status of "doctrinal maturity." Thus it becomes the *dogmatic* lie.

We ask our Roman Catholic fellow Christians to believe that it is very difficult for us to use the word "lie" here, and we do not do so to offend them. We know that they affirm a dogma such as the Immaculate Conception of Mary out of deep conviction of faith, and they will accept the yet-awaited extension of Marian dogma from the hand of the ecclesiastical teaching office with the same sincerity. But this changes nothing of the fact that in these dogmas false doctrines are established, and that the Roman Church thus finds itself in a guilt-laden error.

This is the biblical, theological expression of the lie: though guilty of falsehood, it belies the truth and proclaims that which is not truth, hiding this guilt before God behind a human *bona fides*. ... Theology knows that the most dangerous lies are those which are proclaimed with what the world calls a "good conscience."

When we speak of the dogmatic lie, we do not, however, have in mind only the celebrated dogmas pronounced by the Catholic Church, through which theories are elevated to the level of ecclesiastical dogma, and have no basis in Holy Scripture, and are not true. We include here also precisely the dogmas with which modern Protestantism has been at pains to correct, to complete, or to replace the doctrine of the evangelical church, such as the false doctrine of Pietism concerning the church, or of rationalism concerning the person of Jesus Christ.

What a fearful thought it is indeed that things are taught in the church which are not true, under the guise of the eternal truth entrusted to her. No atheism, no Bolshevism can do as much damage and destruction as the pious lie, the lie in the church. In this lie the power of one is made evident whom Christ Himself calls a liar and the father of lies (JOHN 8:44). And indeed, this is no longer surprising. How can he who in his very essence is a liar passively look upon the fact that in this world of untruthfulness and error, upon the vacillating core of a world of relativity, there could be the

"household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 TIM. 3:15). But since he cannot storm this bulwark in open battle, which God Himself has founded as

the *columna et firmamentum veritatis*, he slinks in under the mask of piety and occupies a position from which to make his conquest. And he attempts to topple the pillar of truth through the power of the pious lie.

But does anyone think that Christ who is the Truth personified would allow the lie to come into His church with impunity? No, the judgment which He who is Holy and True will render upon all the lies of the world begins, as with every judgment, with the house of God.

Among the lies which destroy the church there is one we have not yet mentioned. Alongside the pious and dogmatic lies, there stands an especially dangerous form of lie which can be called the *institutional* lie. By this we mean a lie which works itself out in the institutions of the church, in her government and her organization. It is so dangerous because it legalizes the other lies in the church and makes them impossible to remove. Such a lie exists, for instance, where the governance of the church grants to those who confess and those who deny the Trinity and the two natures in Christ the same rights in the church; where the preaching of the Gospel according to the understanding of the Reformation enjoys the same right as the proclamation of a dogma-less Enlightenment religion, so long as the latter appeals only to the Bible. ...

[This] makes it completely impossible to differentiate between truth and error, between true and false doctrine. A church so composed can no longer see that the Gospel is plainly and purely preached and heresy opposed. It must protect open heretics when the "orthodox" side denies that they possess an equal legitimacy in the church. The congregations of such a church, the youth who are educated in it, the people to whom it attempts to preach the truth of the Gospel, must come to the conviction that it simply does not matter much what one believes or does not believe. Since what is to be believed or not believed in the sermon is left up to the individual, his inclinations and aversions, his world-view and soon also his faithlessness will become the norm for proclamation in the church. In place of the objective message of that which God has done in Christ, subjective religious feelings and convictions soon form the essential content of the sermon. Thus the church sinks to the level of an institution for the satisfaction of the manifold religious needs of men and ceases to be the church of Christ, the pillar and foundation of the truth.



Today, we have numerous options for receiving the news. "Snippets" does not replace those but simply offers short updates on events we think are newsworthy in the life of the LCMS and the world.

On Sept. 15, a service of installation for LCMS officers and board members was held in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Installed during the service was Harrison, who was re-elected to a fifth term as Synod president. Also installed were First Vice-President Rev. Peter Lange; Synod Secretary Rev. Dr. John W. Sias; the five regional vice-presidents; and newly elected or re-elected members of the Synod's Board of Directors, Board for National Mission, Board for International Mission, and Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Members of the boards for the Concordia University System, the two LCMS seminaries, the Commission on Doctrinal Review, the LCMS Foundation, Concordia Plans, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Publishing House and Concordia Historical Institute were also installed. (Reporter)

The Million Dollar Life Match is expanding in 2023–2026. The LCMS Office of National Mission has made an additional \$1 million available in matching grants. Eligibility for the grants is expanding in two key ways. Previously, only congregations were allowed to apply for grants; now, LCMS districts can also apply. Furthermore, in the first round of the Life Match, grants were used primarily to support beginning-of-life care for women, children and families. Now, grants may also be used to further advocacy projects, like local life marches, or education projects, like teaching LCMS Life Ministry curriculum at Lutheran schools. (Reporter)

In fall 2024, Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb. (CUNE), will launch the Paul Scholars work-study program. Students accepted into the program will have full tuition covered through a combination of institutional aid, Paul Scholar scholarships and job income. The program will allow them to gain experience in their

chosen career field and be a part of a community of Paul Scholars, mentors and community partners. All students who have been admitted to CUNE are eligible to apply. Ideal Paul Scholars candidates are hardworking, driven servant leaders who wish to reflect Christ's light in the workplace, no matter their future vocations.

Enrollment is up this year at Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis. (CUW); Concordia University Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, Mich. (CUAA); and Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb. (CUNE). CUW welcomed 550 new undergraduate students, a 7% increase over last year; CUAA celebrated a record high incoming class this year, with 370 freshmen enrolled; and CUNE had 434 new undergraduate students enrolled, the highest enrollment in 50 years.

The LCMS North Wisconsin District (NWD) has rolled out its Labor of Love Million Dollar Campaign. The campaign will help reduce the educational debt of professional church workers, now and in the future. "We are called to make disciples, to baptize and to teach. Our NWD church workers need us," said District President Rev. Dr. Dwayne Lueck in a letter. The campaign began with a resolution passed at the 2018 NWD convention, which dedicated a modest fund of \$300,000 to be used to help professional church workers. The campaign to reach \$1 million will ensure that NWD will be able to continue to reduce the educational debt of church workers far into the future.

Set Apart to Serve (SAS) has launched! The LCMS church work recruitment initiative officially debuted its resources during a virtual town hall on Sept. 27. These resources, designed specifically for influential adults like pastors, teachers and parents, will help foster conversations with young people about considering a church work vocation. Conversation guides, Bible studies, journey maps and more, as well as a recording of the virtual town hall, are available at resources.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve.

DO YOU HAVE NEWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE SNIPPETS?

Please submit your news items as a letter to the editor at witness.lcms.org/contact.

Tens of thousands of Armenian Christians have fled after Azerbaijan seized control of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian enclave located in western Azerbaijan, in late September. Azerbaijan's final offensive comes at the end of a nine-month blockade of the only road into Nagorno-Karabakh, which caused widespread hunger and severe shortages of fuel and medicine. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan says the Armenians who remain face the threat of ethnic cleansing at the hands of Muslim Azerbaijan and its ally, Turkey. Nagorno-Karabakh, which is self-governed by its Armenian population but under international law is part of Azerbaijan, has long been the site of intense conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan — Armenian Christians and Muslim Azeris (Azerbaijani Turks) both lay claim to the region.

Throughout October, **a synod of Catholic clergy and laypeople from around the world** will gather in the Vatican. Topics slated for discussion include the role of women in the church and the inclusion of LGBTQ Catholics. The delegation of American Catholics includes contingencies of more progressive Catholics alongside more conservative Catholics, amid increasing tensions and ideological rifts between these groups.

In a 9-2 ruling, **a federal appeals court in San Francisco protected a Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) student group** from hostilities directed at it by a California school district. In 2019, a teacher at Pioneer High School called on the school to disband the FCA group, which asked its group leaders to subscribe to a Christian statement of faith and a sexual purity statement. The school refused to recognize

the group during the 2019–2020 school year, and in April 2020 two FCA student leaders, alongside FCA National, filed suit against the school district. The court's ruling, which finds that a Christian club requiring its leadership to affirm Christian beliefs is not "discriminatory," will have implications for schools throughout the Ninth Circuit, affecting millions of students across the western U.S.

Brazil's top court will vote on decriminalizing abortion up to the 12th week of pregnancy. Currently, Brazil allows abortions only in cases of rape, an evident risk to the mother's health or if the baby has no functioning brain. If the vote to decriminalize abortion succeeds, abortion will be legal or decriminalized in Central and South America's three largest countries. (Argentina legalized abortion in 2020. Mexico's highest court decriminalized abortion in early September 2023.)

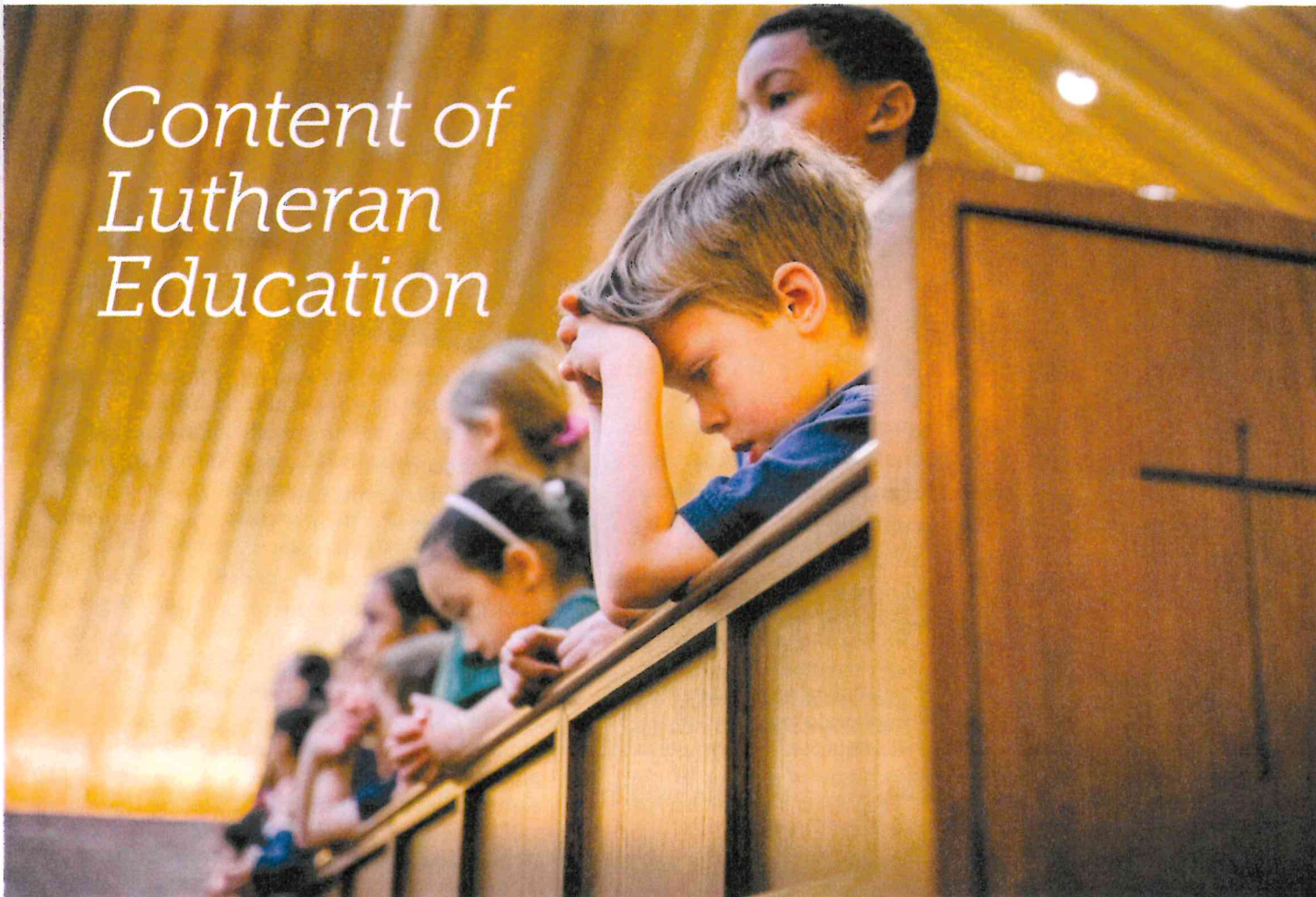
Have you seen a train of sparkly stars making its way across the night sky? No, it's not a UFO. These

are Starlink satellites, a network of satellites developed by Elon Musk's company SpaceX. Currently, there are more than 2,000 of these satellites in orbit. The satellites are intended to help provide high-speed internet around the world, especially in remote places or areas where connectivity is poor. For example, the satellites have made internet available to many Ukrainians after Russian forces cut off other internet access. The satellites are not without their drawbacks, however. The launching of low-altitude satellites is a new frontier, and thus is unregulated. Astronomers say that the proliferation of low-altitude satellites has made light pollution worse, which makes it difficult to observe the night sky and disrupts the natural sleep cycles of humans and animals alike.

The Rev. Dr. Juhana Pohjola, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland, and Dr. Päivi Räsänen, a member of the Finnish Parliament, had their **latest round of hearings in Finland's "Bible trial"** Aug. 31 and Sept. 1. Pohjola and Räsänen were charged with hate crimes in 2021 for their articulation of historic Christian teaching on human sexuality. In 2022, they were acquitted, which then led to this most recent round of hearings at the Helsinki Court of Appeals. The court's decision is expected by the end of November.



Content of Lutheran Education



You always get results, they just aren't always the results you were aiming for. For instance, you try to make a cake, but the batter turns out way too salty. What went wrong? When you look back at the recipe, you discover that you confused teaspoons and tablespoons. Now, the balance is all wrong, and the cake's sweetness has been overpowered. It's a reminder of the importance of using the right proportions.

A similar principle applies to raising children in the faith. We successfully teach our children that money is really, really important or that college football or travel volleyball are really, really important. Why does it seem so difficult to teach them about the importance of knowing the living God? If we find that this is not happening, we should return to the recipe, so to speak, to find out what went awry.

As we look around, we notice that many cars have bumper stickers proclaiming the driver's devotion to a child's travel sports team. Other cars tell us about the owner's love for the Atlanta Braves or Alabama football. Few bumper stickers proclaim the driver's love of pure doctrine. This may be a humorous example, but it illustrates that our children learn about what's important based on where they see us devote our time and attention — not on what we say is important.

Parents — as well as Lutheran schools and homeschools — should teach the knowledge of God with at least the same, if not

If you teach him to treasure the Bible, the catechism and the Divine Service, he will. And what else is a Lutheran than someone who loves God's Word, the confession of our faith and the gifts of Christ? If we want our children to be Lutherans, let them love these things that Lutherans love.

more, earnestness, seriousness and high expectations that children find in their lacrosse coaches and dance teachers. Before we define the content, we must say that without an energetic and serious teacher, the child will not sense that this religion is worth caring much about. He will be delighted or saddened when his baseball team wins or loses but show little concern when God is brought into a conversation. Nothing stirs in him when Christ is preached or discussed. He simply does not care much, like someone dragged to a baseball game with no interest in baseball. If we do not act like God and His teaching matter more than anything, our children will be as indifferent as we taught them to be.

What overcomes indifference? Knowing God from His Word. The knowledge of the Bible creates love of God, not indifference. It guards against the hatred of God taught to our children by all kinds of other sources and all kinds of other schools. Let them go to school in God's school and to learn to know Him directly from His Word. Little ones can begin with Bible stories learned over and over again until they can tell you when you have got a detail wrong, just as they do with the stories you read to them. They will let you know if you have too many or too few people on Noah's ark or what kind of tree Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus. Let them go from there with the particulars in place to a personal knowledge of Scripture, so that they grow in time to know its particulars and its generalities, the specifics of this or that book and the unity it all has in Christ.

What overcomes indifference? Knowing from where you come. Lutheran schools have always been deeply connected to our Western civilization's cultural and artistic heritage. We have taught Bach and Shakespeare and (in more German-speaking times) Goethe. Our deep historical, literary, political and philosophical connections to the past of our church and our nation should be well-known to every child receiving a Lutheran education. Latin was the language in which his forefathers discussed God. The rule of law and a government of the people came about through historical struggles and philosophical puzzles every citizen should know. If we do not preserve that inheritance, as keepers of a flame rather than preservers of dead ashes, it is not likely someone else will sing the cantatas or discuss the philosophy or preserve the liberties our Lutheran forefathers sought in America for us. We

and our children will have to keep the flame alive for ourselves and our posterity.

What overcomes indifference? Knowing the Divine Service. Let everything else be put aside so that the child can be in the Divine Service. Let him learn to listen to the Scripture readings and to the sermon. Let him learn to examine himself, confess his sins and receive God's forgiveness. Let him learn Christ's Words and believe them firmly so that he can partake of the body and the blood of his Lord. The Bible and the catechism will not lead him to mere head knowledge. They will lead him to the Divine Service on Sunday and bring him full in head and heart back to what he learns Monday through Friday.

If you teach him to treasure the Bible, the catechism and the Divine Service, he will. And what else is a Lutheran than someone who loves God's Word, the confession of our faith and the gifts of Christ? If we want our children to be Lutherans, let them love these things that Lutherans love. Teaching and schooling are not matters of mere head knowledge; a child is always learning from the people and situations around him. Our children learn from us. What we treasure, they will consider treasuring and will finally treasure themselves. What we despise, they will consider despising and finally despise themselves.

Teach your children to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and their neighbors as themselves. Teach them the Bible that shows them their living God. Teach them the catechism that shows them how His truth fits together. Teach them that the Divine Service matters more than lacrosse, dance practice, video games or anything else because in it their God is present for their life and their peace and their joy. ☺