Pastor’s Desk

There couldn’t possibly be just one way to God. There are billions of people in the world!

“What about Jesus?”

So went a 2008 interview with Oprah Winfrey, who feels every religion beats a path to the same blissful, happy ending. According to Oprah, heaven is for anyone who lives with love and generosity. Jesus is optional.

But here is the thing. Oprah—no matter how rich, generous and loving she may be—doesn’t get to make the rules for heaven. Neither do you or me or anyone else, for that matter. God has His own rules for reaching His heaven. And there are only two options in life. Option A: Through Jesus. Option B: Be perfect. There is no third option.

For those who choose Option B, heaven is accessible if we show perfect love and generosity toward every person (telemarketers and tailgaters included), in every thought, at every moment of every day. Are you perfect? I didn’t think so. Me neither. In fact, Scripture reiterates this point. Seven hundred years before Jesus, the prophet Isaiah declared, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way” (Is. 53:6). St. Paul too says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Two chapters later, Paul adds, “So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned” (5:12).

I can’t earn heaven by my own innocence. Neither can you or Oprah. But what about Jesus? As a man who is also God, Jesus lived under God’s law without ever sinning. He never thought, said or did anything wrong. Not only did Jesus never do anything wrong (sins of commission), He never failed to do what was right (sins of omission).

I can’t pay for my own sins, let alone someone else’s. What about Jesus? As God who is also man, Jesus’ holy death paid for the sins of all people of all time. His resurrection and empty grave are proof of that. God stamps “INNOCENT” across our very lives for Jesus’ sake through no merit of our own.

Sorry, Oprah, we can’t reach heaven by following the Way of Good Deeds. That just puts us on a collision course with Satan and hell because we’re not good enough. What about Jesus? He says, “I am the WAY and the TRUTH and the LIFE. No one comes to the Father EXCEPT THROUGH ME” (John 14:6).

It is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone who announces, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). In other words, salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. No works. No lists. No do’s. It has all been done for you by Jesus. Why? Because all our good deeds are contaminated (Is. 64:6). Because good works do not offset sins. Because God’s favor cannot be bought. Because God alone deserves all the credit.

You can prefer whatever ice cream you choose, but Jesus is not just one flavor among many. Jesus is not merely a good teacher or a nice guy. Jesus is not a myth or mere miracle worker. Jesus is God. He is the Great I AM. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is the Savior.

Billions of people. Billions of lifestyles. Billions of ways to hell. But only one way to God and eternal life in heaven . . . Option A: Through Jesus! 🌠
Welcome Spring Quarter!

By Kim Bestian
Director of Children’s Ministry

Here comes a new season! Our time *springs* ahead and we *jump* into Lent and Easter. Things are sprouting and growing up all around us. Baby bunnies and chicks begin to hatch into their new world, along with emerging butterflies from their chrysalis tomb. Reminders of new life are all around! Connections are made with our *new life* in Jesus. We remember our identity as sons and daughters of the King since our baptism. It moves us to celebrate and share the Good News of Jesus with others! This is also the fundamental part of children’s ministry.

For the sake of clarity, the following is provided for you to better understand children’s ministry here at Ascension. It is always focused on keeping Jesus at the core, as His love is shared with His children, sparking His light in them to do the same.

**Children’s ministry** is children
- Learning about God (Christian education);
- Following Jesus’ teachings (little disciples); and
- Serving Him (helping others).

*(Children’s ministry is found in the home, church, and Lutheran school.)*

Children’s ministry program is planning and implementing opportunities for
- Children to absorb truths about God;
- Children to help, witness & fellowship; and
- Partnering with parents to support them in building their children to be lifelong disciples of Jesus.

*(Specific program opportunities start, stop, and adjust according to needs.)*

Child ministry is a service given by those who serve the Lord by serving children.

Child ministry program is equipping, and encouraging people to serve children by . . .
- Teaching;
- Directing;
- Leading;
- Assisting;
- Coordinating;
- Caregiving; and
- Providing any other service needed to serve children so that the children can do ministry.
We have incredible ministry leaders in the Sunday School who help children build relationships with Jesus and other boys and girls. Opportunities for prayer, praise and mission are included every Sunday. February brought some fun indoor snowball games with lots of happy fellowship and laughter. Check out the impressive sheep designs in the hallway, too. Our 5th and 6th graders have advanced on to become amazing new acolytes as they serve others in worship. Preparations are underway for Countdown to Passover and a mini Seder Meal for the children during Sunday School on Palm Sunday, April 5. The children are also preparing each Sunday to sing for the Palm Sunday worship service in full Bible time clothes. Watch the newest of little ones become a child of God through the waters of Holy Baptism that day! The Interpretative Liturgical Dancers are preparing to present their praise in the Easter worship service. There will be a special Easter Egg Hunt for children ages 2 through 6th grade during the Easter breakfast. The Kid’s Corner in the Library is full of resources for children to check out. There are lots of wonderful events and programs for children to learn about God, follow His teachings, and serve others through witness and helping opportunities.

If your child or children have not yet experienced the joy of being with other children in the body of Christ through our Sunday School program, or if you know of a family like this, you are encouraged to bring your children or encourage others to bring their children for this amazing growth experience, enriching faith nurture, and relationship building with Jesus.

Children’s ministry is happy to be a part of the upcoming Family Bible Blast! event planned for our congregation the evenings of May 26-28! We are also looking forward to Vacation Bible School during the Family Bible Hour on Sundays, June 14-August 23. This month of March will bring opportunities for congregational members to join in planning and serving with the Bible Blast! experience. Ask God for clarity where you can participate and who He will lead you to invite to come! Happy spring, and remember to save the dates!
MIDWEEK LENTEN MEALS | 6:00 PM

CROSS EXAMINE
ASH WEDNESDAY | FEB. 26 | 6:45 PM

CROSS OUT
MIDWEEK LENT 1 | MAR. 4 | 6:45 PM

CROSS ROAD
MIDWEEK LENT 2 | MAR. 11 | 6:45 PM

CROSS WALK
MIDWEEK LENT 3 | MAR. 18 | 6:45 PM

CROSS WORD
MIDWEEK LENT 4 | MAR. 25 | 6:45 PM

CROSS REFERENCE
MIDWEEK LENT 5 | APR. 1 | 6:45 PM

CROSS PURPOSES
PALM SUNDAY | APR. 5 | 9:45 AM

CROSS HAIRS
MAundy THURSDAY | APR. 9 | 7:00 PM

CROSS FIRE
GOOD FRIDAY | APR. 10 | 7:00 PM

CROSS TRAINING
EASTER | APR. 12 | 6:30 & 9:45 AM
March 2020 Youth Happenings

Serve With Ascension Youth at Ysleta Lutheran Mission!

The congregation is invited to join the youth in serving at the YLM food pantry:
Fri, March 20 - 9:00 to 11:00 am
Sat, March 21 - 7:30 to 10:30am

Is Jesus of Nazareth Really the Son of God?
Together, we will use the Student Guide for Lee Strobel’s The Case for Christ, to go on a riveting quest to discover the truth about history’s most compelling figure.

Don’t miss the opportunity to explore the hard questions many Christians aren’t willing to ask and can’t answer!

Contact Information
Luz M. Soto, DYM
Phone: (915) 219-1686
E-mail: luzsoto07@gmail.com
March Preschool News

Play, Learn and Grow... Together!

March 2 - 6 – We will be celebrating Dr. Seuss this week by dressing up as different characters and crazy outfits throughout the week.
March 9 - 13 – Friday- Rodeo Day
March 16 - 20 – Spring Break

One in Christ Preschool Chapel

2 and 3 yr. old classes: Easter
Week of March 2 – Jesus comes to save sinners – Jesus eats with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
Week of March 9—God’s people praise Him—Jesus rides into Jerusalem (Mark 21:1-11)
Week of March 16 – Spring Break
Week of March 23 – God’s people honor Jesus – A woman anoints Jesus’ head and feet (Matthew 26:6-13)

Pre-K classes: Spring Time
Week of March 2 – We pray in Jesus’ Name – One man says Thank You (Luke 17:11-19)
Week of March 9 – God’s people praise Him – Jesus rides into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-38)
Week of March 16 – Spring Break
Week of March 23 – Jesus says to serve – At the Last Supper –(John 13:1-15, 34-35; Matthew 26:26-28)

On behalf of Ascension Lutheran Preschool’s Staff we want to take the time and thank you for your support and donations with our fundraiser at Peter Piper Pizza. It was a successful event and couldn’t be more grateful with each one of you for your support.

Registration is now open! You may stop by at anytime to tour the school and get information.
Our office hours are: MWF 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. and T&Th from 8:30-12:30 p.m.

Treasurer’s Report

Finance Update

Approved Council Minutes are sent to Ascension members with the Friday e-mail when they are received by the Church Office. Please call 833-1009 to request a copy of the minutes.
MINISTRY & BOARD REPORTS

Board of Evangelism

**THE BOARD OF EVANGELISM** has begun its work fulfilling our ministry responsibilities outlined in the constitution of Ascension Lutheran Church. The Evangelism Board’s goal is: *Lead and enable the congregation to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus.* The Board’s objective is: *Bring the Gospel to the unchurched and enlist all of God’s people in the work of spreading the Gospel.*

The Board will begin by focusing on the following directives first:

- Foster a climate of outreach that encourages all congregation members to witness Christ (informally and spontaneously) to one another and to those who have not yet come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Emphasize outreach through education programs.
- Encourage all members to invite family, friends and neighbors to worship the Lord with us.
- Encourage prayer in our home and church for genuine compassion and care for all people inside and outside our congregation; encouraging all members of the congregation to participate in prayer everyday for all God’s family to accomplish our mission of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- Maintain a Sunday morning greeter ministry.

In order to implement these directives, **BLESS** will be introduced to the church family. This is a 6 week church-wide focus on 5 missional practices we can engage to naturally introduce persons who need God to Jesus Christ in each of our FRANC circles of influence (Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, Neighbors, and Co-workers). Stay tuned for details.

The Board will implement a **31 Days of Prayer for the Body of Christ** prayer guide. The prayer guides will be given out on Sunday, March 1, the first Sunday in Lent, and will be used each day during March, 2020. A copy of the prayer guide is also included in this newsletter.

The Board will be reviewing the **Greeter Ministry.** B.J. Schwab is reviewing the recruiting and scheduling process with Lynn Burch field. We are reviewing the welcome materials that greeters give to our visitors. We also hope to strengthen the Greeter Ministry by providing greeter training in the future.

The Board will focus on other directives as we continue to meet and plan in the future.

Sharing our Lord Jesus with you,
Glenn Weber, for the Board of Evangelism

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**Stewardship Minute—Overcoming Our Self-Centeredness**

Who among us likes sacrifice? Do we not seek to please ourselves, to spare ourselves, to shield ourselves and those we love from pain or disappointment or failure? Unlike us, "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him." Peter loved his Lord; He didn't want Him to suffer. Our answer to the temptation to self-centeredness should echo Jesus' answer to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan . . . You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:21-23).

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I sin greatly and that, indeed, I am sinful. My sin lies so deep within me that often I don't even know it or realize how it estranges me from You. Search me and show me my sin, that I might repent and be restored to fellowship with You through the blood of Jesus Who has atoned for my sin. In His name. Amen.

Blessing on your stewardship journey!
Oppunities for Prayer & Personal Study

31 Days of Prayer for the Body of Christ
Please see page 10 for the 31 Days of Prayer for the Body of Christ guide for the month of March. This is provided by the Board of Evangelism. You can learn more about the Board of Evangelism ministry on page 7.

Lutheran Hour Daily Devotions
This resource available to you can be found at www.lhm.org.

Portals of Prayer
Each daily devotion includes a Bible reading, meditation and prayer to apply to your daily life, published available in a pocket-size or large-print. Pick one up at the Welcome Center.

PrayerTime
PrayerTime takes place on the first Sunday of each month. Please join us as we silently pray for the many prayers received in the church. You may come to the altar or pray in the pew as well.
Next PrayerTime dates are: March 1 & April 5 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Bible Study Groups

—Men’s Bible Studies—
Men’s Saturday Breakfast and Bible Study: This group meets every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. at the church.

Tuesday Night: This group will resume meeting after Easter. They normally meet every Tuesday at the church at 6:30 p.m.

—Women’s Bible Studies—
Woman-to-Woman: This group meets Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. at the church.

Tuesday Evening: This women’s Bible study meets Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Please call or text Anita Werner at (915) 494-2335 with any questions.

Thursday Morning: The Thursday a.m. Bible study group is doing a study on the books of Jude and Ruth. They meet at 9:45 a.m. at the Schlak home.

—Sunday Morning Bible Study—
Family Bible Hour: Pastor Bestian continues the study on the Book of Acts in the Fellowship Hall. All members & friends of Ascension are encouraged to attend!

Please call the office at (915) 833-1009 if you need additional information for a Bible study.
### At-a-Glance

**Church Calendar of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sun, March 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>First Sunday in Lent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Musical Service with Pastor Horn</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Church-Wide Info Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
<td>PrayerTime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tue, March 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Pastors' Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed, March 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Lenten Meal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>Midweek Lent 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thu, March 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Board of Elders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sat, March 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Board of Christian Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Board of Children's Ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sun, March 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Second Sunday in Lent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Daylight Savings Time Begins)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed, March 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 pm</td>
<td>Board of Preschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Lenten Meal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>Midweek Lent 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sun, March 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Third Sunday in Lent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Board of Christian Service</td>
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<td><strong>March 16—20</strong></td>
<td><em>(Preschool Spring Break)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tue, March 17</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Church Council Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed, March 18</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Lenten Meal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>Midweek Lent 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thu, March 19</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00 pm</td>
<td>April newsletter &amp; calendar updates due in office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>Ladies’ Night Out (Pelican’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sat, March 21</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Serve at YLM with Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Board of Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sun, March 22</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fourth Sunday in Lent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Schedule of One Service Begins)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Family Bible Hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 am</td>
<td>Worship</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed, March 25</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 pm</td>
<td>Preschool Staff Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Lenten Meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>Midweek Lent Service 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sat, March 28</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>LWML Rio Grande Zone Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>@Trinity, Alamogordo</td>
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### March Weekly Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sun:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 &amp;</td>
<td>(Communion 1st &amp; 3rd Sundays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td><em>(Schedule of one service at 9:45 am begins March 22)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 am</td>
<td>Family Bible Hour</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(changes March 22 to 8:30 am)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td>Confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(changes March 22 to 11:00 am)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td>Liturgical Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(changes March 22 to 11:00 am)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tue:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Woman-to-Woman Bible Study</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Women's Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>Boy Scouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Preschool Chapel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 am</td>
<td>Weight Watchers Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Sit &amp; Sew</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15 am</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thu:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Women's Bible Study</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:45 am</td>
<td>Choir Rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sat:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Men's Bible Study &amp; Breakfast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 am</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*If you’re not sure, please call the church office at (915) 833-1009 to verify if a specific event is being held that week.*
LHF Publishes 92\textsuperscript{nd} Small Catechism Translation

The Small Catechism has been translated into Swedish since the time of the Reformation," explained Rev. Juhana Pohjola, coordinator of LHF’s Finnish projects. "However, there is a need for an updated explanation which deals with questions like sanctity of life, marriage and homosexuality and other issues that Christians are facing in secular societies at the moment."

This is particularly true in Finland, where even though the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is the official state church, it is a very liberal church body. Pastors who are faithful to Biblical teachings on gay marriage and women’s ordination often face persecution, including being defrocked.

And as mentioned in LHF’s last newsletter, even Finnish lay people must be prepared for a backlash that may come when speaking Biblically. Paivi Rasanen, a Lutheran medical doctor and member of the Finnish Parliament, is still being investigated by police for “incitement to hatred” for her work on a 2004 publication supported by LHF, concerning Christian marriage and homosexuality.

Now, police have also asked Rev. Pohjola to come for an interrogation in February. "I’m suspected (as the editor of the pamphlet) of spreading hate material," he said.

In such difficult circumstances, faith in Christ, firmly founded in the Word, provides comfort and strength. "We should always be students of the catechism, which can guide us in the cultural storms," said Rev. Pohjola, "but most of all, it teaches us about Jesus’ personal, saving work on the cross and sacramental gifts of Christ in the liturgical life of the Church."

Source: Lutheran Heritage Foundation newsletter, January/February 2020
2020 Daily Bible Reading Plan

Is it time to read your Bible through from cover to cover? Why not do it? Set aside just ten minutes each morning before going to work. Make it a promise to yourself. We offer this Bible reading schedule to follow for 2020.

Tips on Reading the Bible Daily
1. Start reading the Bible today—there is no better time, and there’s no reason to wait.
2. Set aside a specific time each day. Set your schedule and then stick to it. Mornings are great, but be free to use any time that works consistently for you.
3. Read the Bible for the sake of learning, not simply to accomplish your next reading. Highlight verses, take notes and bookmark. Say a short prayer to God before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding, then be refreshed by the words you read!

March
- 1 Numbers 28-29; Mark 9:1-29
- 2 Numbers 30-31; Mark 9:30-50
- 3 Numbers 32-33; Mark 10:1-31
- 4 Numbers 34-36; Mark 10:32-52
- 5 Deuteronomy 1-2; Mark 11:1-19
- 6 Deuteronomy 3-4; Mark 11:20-33
- 7 Deuteronomy 5-7; Mark 12:1-27
- 8 Deuteronomy 8-10; Mark 12:28-44
- 9 Deuteronomy 11-13; Mark 13:1-13
- 10 Deuteronomy 14-16; Mark 13:14-37
- 11 Deuteronomy 17-19; Mark 14:1-25
- 12 Deuteronomy 20-22; Mark 14:26-50
- 13 Deuteronomy 23-25; Mark 14:51-72
- 14 Deuteronomy 26-27; Mark 15:1-26
- 15 Deuteronomy 28; Mark 15:27-47
- 16 Deuteronomy 29-30; Mark 16

- 17 Deuteronomy 31-32; Luke 1:1-23
- 18 Deuteronomy 33-34; Luke 1:24-56
- 19 Joshua 1-3; Luke 1:57-80
- 20 Joshua 4-6; Luke 2:1-24
- 21 Joshua 7-8; Luke 2:25-52
- 22 Joshua 9-10; Luke 3
- 23 Joshua 11-13; Luke 4:1-32
- 25 Joshua 16-18; Luke 5:1-16
- 29 Judges 1-2; Luke 7:1-30
- 30 Judges 3-5; Luke 7:31-50
- 31 Judges 6-7; Luke 8:1-21

Thank You From LCEF

We want to take this opportunity to thank the members of Association Lutheran Church for the investment you have made with Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Your investment dollars allow us to offer services to other congregations, schools, organizations, and rostered church workers, thus helping expand the ministries of the LCMS.

...and for what you’ve done.

Your friends at LCEF.
Kevin Gruen
Rev. Kent Schwegelberg
Terrie Altura

May the Lord repay you for what you have done.
Our Staff

Pastor:
Rev. Brian R. Bestian

Director of Children’s Ministry:
Kim Bestian

Director of Youth Ministry:
Luz Soto

Preschool Director:
Marhel Cueva

Music Director/Organist: Ruth Ann Ostergren

Office Administrator:
Lynn Burchfield

Tender Care Nursery Attendant:
Haleigh Gonzales

Custodian:
Lorena Rodriguez

Our Sunday Schedule
Worship: 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Coffee Fellowship: 9:00 a.m.
Family Bible Hour: 9:15 a.m.

Articles for the April newsletter are due Thursday, March 19