**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- December 2022

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“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

**From the Pastor:**

**Useful Applications of Scripture (Part 3): Correction or Admonition / Warning**

*The following is the third in the series of “Useful Applications of Scripture”. Parts 1 & 2 can be read online in the October and November issues of our newsletter (*[*www.saintspeterandpaul.net*](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)*).*

In the first two articles on the “Uses for Scripture”, I addressed Doctrine and Reproof or Warning.  The third use that we are venturing into is related closely to the second. Saint Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:11: “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” Another way to translate “instruction” is as “warning.” A preacher must be equipped to warn people against false prophets/teachers and against a false living. Even as one reads Scripture, he must listen to the examples of the Bible which warn against false teaching which lead to a way of living that is not godly and right.

When the Scriptures teach about correction, it is important to understand that what is being addressed is the alignment with the moral law of God. The Law of God is written on men’s hearts; this is what we call *natural law*. Scriptures teach that all are without excuse and all are condemned under the law of God.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. *Romans 1:18-21*

From natural law, we can know some things about God and about His creation; but, without the clear revelation of the Bible, not all is known. So, it is said that where the Law is revealed, there sin is increased (Romans 5:20). We don’t quite know how grievously we have gone against the will of God nor do we understand just how far we have strayed from the moral law of God, the Ten Commandments. Therefore, it is necessary that these things be shown to us so that we may, by God’s grace, repent and amend our sinful lives.

Yes, the Law accuses us of sin, but correction isn’t only being accused/guilty of sin. This use of Scripture also teaches what godly living looks like and all the good works that God has prepared for us to do. God’s word clearly teaches how we ought to live and how God restrains us from hurting and harming our neighbor (Matthew 5-7). Thus, each week you will most assuredly encounter this use of Scripture in sermons and teachings. To make proper use of correction and warning, we must understand who God is as truthful, righteous, and just.

Depending on life’s circumstances (young or old, rich or poor), different books and passages from the Bible will affect you differently. For instance, if a child is in a hospital, sick and dying, it would most likely make little sense to reprove him of drunkenness. Therefore, it is important to ensure that correction is properly applied to those who hear it preached, as even as one reads Scripture, he must think upon how this might apply to him. These things still always remain as warnings because our sinful flesh can always be tempted towards any sin.

People struggle with rules. As children we thought that rules were meant to keep us from having fun. God’s rules, that warn and correct us in this life, flow from the love of God the Father. He does not desire that we should perish with evildoers, nor does he wish us to hurt and harm our neighbor by our living. He desires to conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, he humbles us by writing down the Law and causing it to be preached so that our transgressions may be exposed and grace may be increased (Romans 5:20). Then, where sin once reigned, now there is grace and new life where we are free to serve one another in this life.

In Christ,

Pastor Deal

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***Please keep the following***

***in your prayers:***

Nancy Robertson

P.O. Box 1358

6 Stone Ridge Blvd.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-977-0107

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Viola Sakony John XXIII, rm 248

2250 Shenango Valley Freeway

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-272-1905

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Rudy & Jean Tomko

2629 Romar Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-979-4360

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Betty Ann Wolf

7777 Arthur St., SC

Masury, OH 44438

330-448-1080

lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll lll

Ed & Millie Zachar

1320 Old Forge Rd.

Niles, OH 44446

330-652-9316

**TRUSTEES’ UPDATE**

**By Mike Flaugher, Chairman**

The transition to winter is a busy time for the church’s Trustees. Thanks to volunteer, Gerald Krivosh, our radiators have been purged and readied. Gerald, also, has serviced our snowblower for the winter months and it is ready for use.

Other pre-winter tasks, including the installation of storm windows in the main hallway and the painting of the Clover St. ramp with non-slip paint, have also been completed.

Thanks to approval by the Voters’ Assembly, we were able to schedule a couple of major projects for completion. Pebblestone installed the new flooring in the food pantry area November 25th. (See pics on p. 14.) Additionally, we have also locked in the landscaping work for next spring with Greenie Green’s Landscape and Lawncare which will improve the grading and sloping of the courtyard along with addressing water drainage away from the building on the north and east walls.

Additionally, the lock on the north wall exit door in the Fellowship Hall has been repaired.

Finally, the Trustees have scheduled Saturday, December 17th at 10 am for decorating the church and we could really use your help! Please meet us that morning in the sanctuary as we prepare the building and grounds for the celebration of our Savior’s birth.

As always, please feel free to speak with a Trustee with any concerns or place a note in my library mailbox.

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**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE**

Blue: Pledged as of 11.21.2022 $184,320 (92.16%)

Orange: Remaining

$15,680(7.84%)

**Total Contributions**

**as of 11.21.2022:**

**$154,548 (77.27%)**

**Previous: $150,811 (75.41%)**

**New: $3.737 (1.87%)**

**Remaining: $45,452 (22.73%)**

**It’s not too late to submit a Capital Campaign pledge card!** Pledge cards are available on the table outside Pastor’s office. If circumstances have changed and you need to update your pledge card, please see Jonathan Baisch. Updated pledges help our Trustees plan more effectively and efficiently.

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Submissions for the January issue of **“The Rock and the Sword”** newsletter are due to the secretary’s office Monday, December 19th at noon. This includes meeting dates and times for the church calendar.

**FOOD PANTRY REQUESTS YOUR FINANCIAL HELP**

The Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church Food Pantry leaders invite our congregation members and friends to resume donating money to help us finance our operations. For a while, our church had other, more pressing, projects that needed financial attention from the congregation. So, we asked members to direct their contributions to those projects as opposed to the Food Pantry, while we ‘dipped into our savings’ to maintain our operations. We now ask our members, friends, and supporters to resume Food Pantry contributions.

Beginning in December, the second Sunday of each month will once again be designated as “Food Pantry Sunday”, although your donations are welcomed at any time of the month. Contributions may be placed in pew envelopes. Please be sure to indicate your envelope number and that the donation is designated for the Food Pantry.

Special thanks go out to Mike Flaugher, Jeff Sutton, Anson Holcroft, Barry and Chris Nelson, Pastor Deal, and John Chavara for ‘stepping up’ to help us move forward over the last couple of years as we experienced some unexpected changes and challenges.

Anyone having questions or comments can direct them to Barry Nelson.

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**The Trustees ask your assistance in decorating the church and grounds for the Christmas season Saturday, December 17th beginning at 10 am.**

*Come join in the fun!*

**CELEBRATING IN DECEMBER!**

**Birthdays:**

Rev. Jacob Deal 12 -4

Marie Flaugher 12 -5

Jennifer Voytik 12 -5

Rebekah Baisch 12-13

Rev. Edward Kucera 12-13

Joan Rice 12-16

Bill Wolf 12-16

Debbie Zurawsky 12-17

Viola Sakony 12-19

Titus Deal 12-23

Jean Tomko 12-28

**Anniversaries:**

Ralph & Judie Dorman 12 -9

Anson & Henrietta Holcroft 12-18

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

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**Word of Hope: 1-888-217-8679**

The only 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL Hotline that is distinctly Lutheran, bringing healing found in Christ, to those whose hearts have been broken by abortion.

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**Thank You for Serving in December:**

**Head Elder:** Barry Nelson; **Assisting Elder:** Jonathan Baisch; **Altarware:** Diane Riefstahl & Marie Flaugher (12.25)

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**Please continue to save pop tabs!**

Collected tabs may be given to Marie Flaugher or left on the table in the library.

**OUR FOURTH QUARTER**

Pastor Deal, who serves as Vice President of Willow’s board, emceed the event.

**LOCAL MISSION:**

**WILLOW WOMEN’S CENTER**

December is the final month for donations to be made to our Fourth Quarter Mission, Willow Women’s Center. All donations received, up to a total of $2500, will be matched dollar-for-dollar thanks to a $2500 Life Grant from the LC—MS! To date, slightly more than 56% of our goal has been collected here at Sts. Peter and Paul’s. Please consider helping us reach our goal and protecting the most innocent among us with your financial support.

To find out more about Willow Women’s Center and their work, check out [**www.willowwomenscenter.com**](http://www.willowwomenscenter.com).

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**Wine Tasting Event**

**Deemed a Success!**

Fun was had by all who gathered in our Fellowship Hall Saturday, November 5th for a wine tasting event in support of Willow Women’s Center.

The hall was beautifully decorated and an assortment of wines, meats, cheeses, etc. available thanks to a Thrivent Action team grant and its recipient, Ana Deal.

Guests learned about the work done by the center while sharing fun and laughter.

 The following pictures from the event were submitted by Catherine Carr.

Educational materials were supplied by Willow Women’s Center.

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A nice selection of wines, meats, and cheeses was offered.

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Tables were readied for the arrival of guests!

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Now, doesn’t this look delicious!

***World-wide Persecution of Christians***

*Submitted by Rev. Arthur Baisch, Pastor Emeritus*

Nearly 50 Christians were gunned down in Nigeria, and Western leaders barely noticed. About a decade ago, an editorial in *The Times of London* warned of the world-wide rise in attacks on Christians. *“Across the globe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa,”* it stated, *“Christians are being bullied, arrested, jailed, expelled, and executed. Christianity is by most calculations the most persecuted religion of modern times. Yet Western politicians until now have been reluctant to speak out in support of Christians in peril . . . We cannot be spectators at this carnage.”*

Yet here we are, almost ten years on, and very little has changed. The persecution has intensified, and the silence of Western leaders continues to be deafening.

. . . .

The willful indifference of Western politicians to the plight of Christians is striking. In the European Union (EU), members of the EU Parliament recently rejected a motion to debate Christian persecution and failed to condemn the murder of Deborah Emmanuel (a college student, stoned, beaten to death, and burned in Sokoto State, Nigeria, for her alleged blasphemy of the Prophet Muhammad by thanking Jesus on social media for helping her pass an exam). In our own USA, the Biden administration removed Nigeria from its list of “countries of particular concern” – a decision that becomes more shocking by the day! . . . Yet it is the response of the international bodies specifically designed to deal with human rights violations that is most outrageous. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established to deal with the most serious of crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Despite the ICC’s multi-million dollar budget, it took the court over a decade to conclude its “preliminary investigation” into Nigeria. Having then made the decision to open an investigation in 2020, it then took two years for the ICC prosecutor to visit Nigeria, which he did this April.

The ICC press release includes such phrases as “engagement”, deepening cooperation”, dialogue to promote complementarity,”, and “a new chapter of enhanced collaboration” – but mentions nothing of the on-going slaughter.

Responding to the global rise in Christian persecution is certainly not easy, and no one is claiming there are quick and easy answers. Yet we have not taken the first step – which is to acknowledge it is happening. Western leaders remain spectators to the carnage.

Adapted from an article by Paul Coleman, executive director of ADF International, which originally appeared at ***Spiked*** on June 10, 2022. In ADF’s ***Faith & Justice, Nov 2022, Vol XV, 4***

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**Mission Outreach Project…**

**International Christian Literature Distributors, Inc.** focuses on getting the Bible and study materials to learn the Bible into the hands of Christian leaders in the least-fortunate places of the world. They supply churches and schools of Bible learning throughout the English-speaking world. Copies of old Portals of Prayer are greatly appreciated **Please recycle items by dropping them in the basket in the hallway by the offices. Thank you!**

**SCRIP Program:**

The next date for **SCRIP orders and payments** is Sunday, December 4th. Plan ahead and get some Christmas shopping done! Checks should be made out to Sts. Peter & Paul’s and are to be given to Matt Berent or placed in the offering plate. You should receive your gift cards the following week.

Forms for ordering gift cards are available in both the narthex and on the parking lot entrance sign-in table.

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**A Way to Help Others Stay Warm**

**Concordia Youngstown** will be distributing warm socks, gloves, coats, hats, and scarves during its Food Give-Away on December 17.

Your donations of any of these items will help support our brothers’ and sisters’ work in the Youngstown community.

If you would like to help, please place your donations in the box in the church narthex by Sunday, December 11. Please direct any question concerning this to Matt Berent.

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**Coffee & Christmas Cookie Fellowship is December 11th!**

Join us following worship, Sunday, December 11th for a special **Coffee & Christmas Cookie Fellowship** sponsored by the Altar Guild. Take home boxes will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

All cookie donations are welcome! Please drop off cookies in kitchen prior to worship.

Remember the

following in prayer…

**~The Hurting and Healing:** *Amy, Gerald Arthur, Ellen BaronCA, Lois BortnerCA, John Burdette, Bev & Joe Chlpka, Kathleen Coughenour, Kim, Anna Mae Daris, Susan Davies, Tim Dudash, Joseph Fleet, Eddy Furey, Tim Haenftling, Austin Hamilton, Anson Holcroft, Neil Huston, Darla Krajci, Barbara Kreske, Michelle KellyCA, Donna Kennedy, Gerald Krivosh, Jess Lavoie, Paul LucasCA, Sandy Marshall, Ernie Meszaros, David Nelson, Linda Parkany, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Nancy RobertsonCA, Viola Sakony, Marty Scott, Kara, Fred Tonty, Angela WeserCA, and Ruth Wolf.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Rudy & Jean Tomko, Betty Wolf, and Ed & Millie Zachar.*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Curtis Sinewe and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus; those suffering due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; those suffering from loss and dislocation because weather disasters; those suffering from addiction and their families; Local, State, and National Government Leaders; safety for all Police Officers, Firefighters, & First Responders; the unemployed; our Fourth Quarter Local Mission: Willow Women’s Center \*CA represents cancer.*

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**REMINDER:** If you would like someone’s name to be added to or deleted from our prayer list, please put a written note in the secretary’s mail slot by the office door.

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**Our Christian Creeds**

Our Christian Creeds [The Apostles’ and the Nicene] need to be mobilized in order to function as, or in a similar manner to, our Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. They must be the Christian “Pledge of Allegiance” for the Church catholic [universal]. Rather than having our people “parrot” some words passed down through many generations, our confessions of faith [our creeds] are a Pledge of Allegiance to our God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The Triune God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, is the One God in whom we believe. The Creeds are the truths we confess about Him, and what we believe to be the Truth from His inspired Word, the sacred Scriptures. This is that for which we live; this is that for which we stand; this is that for which we are willing to die. Used in this way, our Creeds, the Apostles’ and the Nicene, have the power to create and maintain loyalty to our Triune God, and our Lord, Savior and King, Jesus Christ, and thereby to promote unity among His followers, the people known as Christians, here on earth. Ironically, when we confess the truths of our Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, we are essentially doing so on bended knee before our Savior and Lord, Who said, *“Whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father in heaven.”*

Source unknown; submitted by Pastor Arthur Baisch

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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!** An **Audit of Deposits** will take place following worship, Sunday, December 18th in the library. take If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806.

**A Letter of Thanks**

*The following letter was received from our Third Quarter Mission: Support of Rev. James May and his Mission Work with Lutherans in Africa (LIA). The original letter is posted on the bulletin board outside Pastor Deal’s office.*

Dear Members of Saints Peter and Paul Ev.Lutheran Church,

We are grateful that you are supporting Lutherans in Africa with your prayers and gifts. Your recent donation of $460.00 on October 14, 2022 is much appreciated for the ongoing work of forming African Lutherans to be teachers of the faith. Thank you!

God’s peace and joy,

Phyllis Rossow, Financial Secretary

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**We Have Been Blessed!**

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, all active members of Sts. Peter & Paul’s will receive a one-year subscription to “The Lutheran Witness” magazine beginning in February 2023!

Published monthly, with a combined June/July issue, “The Lutheran Witness” will keep you updated with synodical news as well as addressing topical issues with feature articles, columns, Q&As, and more.

Truly, we have been blessed!

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Orders and payments for **Christmas poinsettias** are due to Diane Sunday, December 4th.

Poinsettias will adorn our altar beginning Christmas Eve and may be taken home New Year’s Day.

**NOVEMBER BIBLE MEMORY VERSES**

**FOR ADULTS**

**November 6:**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

*Matthew 7:21*

**November 13:**For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day*.*

*John 6:40*

**November 20:** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

*1 Thessalonians 5:8*

**November 27:** I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

*John 14:6*

**FOR CHILDREN**

**November 6:**An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. *2 Timothy 2:5*

**November 13:**With you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

*Psalm 130:4*

**November 20:** Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning.

*Luke 12:35*

**November 27:** Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he.  *Zechariah 9:9*

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**LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page (Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

Remember to like, comment, and share to help us reach as many people as possible.

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**2023 OFFICERS and BOARDS ELECTED**

Congratulations to the following individuals who were elected by acclamation at the November 20th Voters’ Assembly.

* President: Jonathan Baisch
* Vice President: Matt Berent
* Secretary: Diane Riefstahl
* Treasurer: Rebekah Baisch
* Financial Secretary: Dolores Fee

Trustees: Cheryl Fedele, Mike Flaugher, Michael Laird, Jesse Riffle, and Jeff Sutton

Auditors: Bev Chlpka, Marie Flaugher, Elizabeth Haenftling, Kati Laird, Jerome Thomas

Financial Staff: Rev. Art Baisch, Susan Bender, Nancy Robertson, and Linda Tomko

Officers and boards will be officially installed at the January 8, 2023 Divine Service. We will also recognize those servants who have faithfully served this church in the past during the service.

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**Congratulations** to Catherine Carr and family on the birth of her granddaughter, Noel Josephine Carr, Tuesday, November 15th, to her son Michael and his wife, Allie! All glory be given to God!

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**2022 Advent Services**

Please join us this Advent season for services to be held at noon and 7 pm the following Wednesdays:

November 30

December 7, 14, and 21.

The noon service will be a service of Morning Prayer and the 7 pm service will be a Vespers Service.

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**Altar guild news**

~by Marie Flaugher, President

The Altar Guild will sponsor its annual **Ladies Luncheon** Saturday, December 3rd beginning at 11 am. If you have not signed up, but wish to attend, please phone Altar Guild President Marie Flaugher (724-301-8278) and let her know. Bring a friend! The more, the merrier!

The Altar Guild will also be sponsoring a **Coffee & Christmas Cookie Fellowship** following worship December 11th.  Altar Guild members are asked to bring 2 dozen (or more!) of their favorite Christmas cookies.  Boxes will be available to share with others.

The Altar Guild is now using the **bulletin board** in the main hallway next to the library. Sign-up sheets for 2023 AG hostesses for meetings and other information is posted. Please take a look!

The **2023 Altarware Schedule** is being finalized.  If you can help take down and clean altar ware after Sunday services, please let Marie Flaugher know.  She will pair you up with a partner. You do not need to be an Altar Guild member to sign up!

We will begin our **Bible Study/meetings** again in January 2023.  Next meeting is January 21, 2023, beginning at 1 pm with Bible Study, followed by a business meeting at 2:15 pm.  The Hostess for this date is still open.

**Altar Guild Reminders!**

* Dues for the 2023 calendar year are $25 and may be paid to Treasurer Evelyn Baisch. Please make any checks out to Sts. Peter & Paul’s.
* New members are welcome to join us anytime!

**New Lectionary Being Tested**

Pastor Deal will be participating as a field tester for “The Lutheran Missal”, a new historical lectionary reflecting over fifteen centuries of the life of the Church across many countries and languages. For the most part, Epistle and Gospel readings remain the same (although they may be changed a bit to give more complete points of reference). Old Testament readings will now be referred to as Prophecies and may vary from those typically used in the One or Three-Year Lectionary Series. All three of these readings will use the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible, not the English Standard Version (ESV) as we had typically been using.

Our Advent Midweek services will not be affected by this field test at this time.

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**ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM (ADF)**

St. Peter and Paul’s is a member of the Alliance Defending Freedom. Monthly, we hope to provide you articles addressing the types of cases ADF is involved in. The following is taken from the article “How ADF is helping to Defend Parental Rights”. The entire article may be read online at <https://adflegal.org/article/should-schools-notify-parents-if-their-child-claims-be> transgender?sourcecode=10024836\_r800&utm\_source=pardot&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=the\_docket

**How ADF is helping to**

**Defend Parental Rights**

Wendell Perez received a call from the elementary school that would alarm any parent. School officials told him that his 12-year-old daughter had attempted suicide in the school’s bathroom. He was told it was because she wanted to be a boy, with a male name and pronouns.

Wendell couldn’t believe it. At home, his daughter hadn’t shown any signs of gender dysphoria or discomfort in being a girl. The Perez family is Catholic, and they raised their children with a biblical and scientific understanding of biological sex.

But when Wendell and his wife Maria arrived at the school, they found out that school officials had been having confidential meetings with their daughter and discussing her discomfort with her gender. Wendell and Maria found out that teachers and staff at school had begun treating their daughter as a boy at school without their consent or knowledge. Wendell was told by staff that they didn’t share information about his daughter’s “transition” with him or his wife because of “confidentiality issues.”

Wendell’s story raises the question: should parents be notified by the school if their child struggles with gender dysphoria?

All schools have a responsibility to keep parents informed—they cannot hide information about a child’s mental or physical well-being from their parents. That’s why, with the help of ADF Allied Attorney Vernadette Broyles, Wendell is suing his daughter’s Florida school district for obstructing his and his wife’s right to direct their daughter’s upbringing.

**Wendell’s story is tragic but, unfortunately, not singular** While parental rights are pre-political, the Constitution also protects them under the Due Process Clause. A parent is responsible for upbringing and the mental health and medical care their child receives. But various efforts have been made to erode parents’ right to be the first educators of their children, and these efforts undermine the religious beliefs, moral values, and medical advisement of families.

An entire generation of young people is now more confused about sexuality than ever before. In a 2017 [Pew Research Center survey](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/08/transgender-issues-divide-republicans-and-democrats/), 50 percent of people ages 18-36 said that “whether a person is a man or a woman” is not determined by “sex at birth.”

Because gender ideology rests upon the most specious of claims and evidence, it must recruit only the most impressionable into its fold. That’s why activists have focused on transforming schools into testing grounds for gender ideology.

The rapid increase of children who identify as “non-binary” should serve as a warning. While activists try to impose their own beliefs about gender onto children, evidence shows that gender dysphoria is profoundly social. According to the American College of Pediatricians, 80 to 95 percent of children who experience gender dysphoria will ultimately accept their biological sex so long as they are allowed to go through natural puberty rather than being “affirmed” in a transgender identity.

By encouraging social transitioning, many school officials are putting children on a path toward medical transition, including hormone therapy and surgery. These treatments cause irreversible damage, locking a child into physical changes for a lifetime.

Confusing a generation about biological reality is an existential threat to society. No society can thrive if it doesn’t understand the purpose of the body.

## **What to do?**

Parental rights are not always protected in every state or federal court as carefully as are other fundamental rights. Thankfully, some states have fixed this by [passing legislation to protect parental rights](https://adflegal.org/article/its-time-take-stand-parental-rights-legislature). But there are still gaps and inconsistencies in the law on parental rights. It’s important to continue advocating for laws that protect parents and children from all government policies that inappropriately intrude on parental rights to guide and protect their children.

Parents can make a difference by educating themselves and becoming active in their local schools. State and federal efforts to recognize parents as the primary educators of their children should be encouraged.

***First, parents need to know their rights.***

As the primary educators of their children, parents should know what their children are taught and should have the freedom to opt out of controversial curricula. If there’s a silver lining to the COVID lockdowns, it is the great parental awakening to what schools are teaching their children.

***Second, we need accountability for schools in terms of regular parental review.***

Schools need to offer transparency in what they’re teaching in and out of the classroom. Despite repeated claims to the contrary, schools have a responsibility to keep parents informed—they must tell parents if their child identifies as the opposite sex or requests a name or pronoun change.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires schools to provide parents with an opportunity to “inspect and review” their child’s education records if the student is under the age of 18. And the law does not prohibit a school from proactively disclosing information to a parent.

### ***Third, parents should know their options.***

A parent’s right to direct their children’s upbringing doesn’t end at the schoolhouse door.

If government schools do not uphold their basic values, parents should consider the alternatives. Over the past two years, trust in public schools has fallen dramatically, opening the eyes of many parents. Parents are more than ever ready to defend their constitutional freedoms in public schools, and they should have the freedom to choose a school according to their values, including private and religious schools and homeschooling.

So, should a parent be notified by a school if their child struggles with their understanding of gender? Absolutely.

Children are first and foremost born into families. The family is the first and most fundamental society. Our laws should affirm the natural order of parents raising their children and reject the idea that children are products and property of the government.

That is why parents have the responsibility and the corresponding right to teach and raise their children.

Neither schools nor the government nor medical professionals should crush the rights of parents to form their children according to their best lights. Activists are using radical gender ideology to punish not just parents but also churches, religious organizations, and individuals who do not conform to their heterodox views. Now is the time to work together to support the family as the basic unit of society.

**Additional December Services**

In addition to our regularly-scheduled Sunday morning 9 am Divine Services and Midweek Advent Services (noon/7 pm through December 21st), please join us for the following:

**Saturday, December 24th at 8 pm**

***Christmas Eve Service of***

***Readings and Carols***

**Sunday, December 25th at 9 am**

***Christmas Day Divine Service***

**Monday, December 26th at 7 pm**

***Vespers Service celebrating***

***the Festival of St. Stephen ,Martyr***

**Tuesday, December 27th at 7 pm**

***Vespers Service celebrating***

***the Festival of St. John, Apostle & Evangelist***

**Wednesday, December 28th at 7 pm**

***Vespers Service celebrating***

***the Festival of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs***

**Saturday, December 30th at 4 pm**

***New Year’s Eve***

***Vespers Service***

Parental rights are essential for a thriving society because parents are best suited to help a child to grow, learn, and face the world. Parents like Wendell and Maria Perez take their responsibilities as parents seriously and are bravely fighting for all parents’ fundamental rights to direct the upbringing and education of their children.

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**Church Office Hours for December** will be Mondays (8:30-4:30), Wednesdays (8:30-noon; 12:45-4:30), and Fridays/Saturdays as needed through December 23rd.

The week of Christmas, the office will be open Tuesday and Thursday (8:30-4:30).

Office hours are subject to change. Please call ahead if needing someone to let you in to the church to make certain someone is here to let you in.

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**REMINDER:** If you do not have an email account or do not receive emails from the church but wish to be notified of significant information concerning your fellow church members (such as births or deaths), please put a note in the Secretary’s mail slot asking to receive a phone call. Every attempt will be made to phone you within 24 hours of an email being sent out.

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**To listen to Pastor Deal’s sermons, phone 724-347-3620 and press Opt. 6.**

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Pastor Deal, Ana, Isaiah, Titus, and Loretta along with church secretary, Diane Riefstahl, wish you and your family a blessed and peaceful Christmas and the happiest and healthiest of New Years. God’s blessings on you all!

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**Reflections: “Be Still Before the Lord; Wait Patiently for Him” ~**Diane Riefstahl

****During Advent, this banner hangs in our sanctuary. I often find myself reflecting on the meaning behind these words. The banner reminds me to *stop*, be patient, and prepare.

Waiting is never easy. As a child, time seemed to move so very slowly, especially when when looking forward to a special occasion. Waiting for Christmas was the worst! The closer the days got to Christmas, the longer they seemed.

As an adult, preparing for Christmas is quite the opposite. How are there only thirty or so days between Thanksgiving and Christmas day? There’s so much to be done and so little time to get it all in! If only the days wouldn’t go by so quickly!

Although Advent on the calendar is indeed the period of time leading up to Christmas, the readings and sermon from the “Last Day of the Church Year” emphasized to us that it is the *second* coming of Christ that we must focus on. That is what Advent is truly about. Christ’s second coming will come without warning. Our judgment soon will be at hand.

How should we spend our time waiting? Advent is a time of penitence. We should reflect upon how we are living our lives. We should examine ourselves as our Lord and Savior will soon do. It is a very humbling time as we realize how unworthy we actually are; yet, salvation will soon be ours!

So, remember over these next few, chaotic weeks to focus on the true meaning of Advent. Make time to read your Advent devotions. Find time to attend an Advent midweek service. Spend time thanking God for His sacrifice and forgiveness. “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” *Matthew 25:13*

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Food Pantry Floor Replacement

The following photos show the replacement of the Food Pantry floor in progress and once finished. What a difference!

Photos submitted by Mike Flaugher.

[](https://lutherclassical.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0c5850dc65d0df7fcec4bfa51&id=77932dbeb9&e=323639b5b3)**llllllllllllllllllllllllllll**