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

Monthly Newsletter --- September 2023

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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 Vicar Wessel**

**Baptism, Absolution, and Forgiveness**

 Baptism is central to who we are as Christians. It is, after all, the sacrament of initiation into the Church; it’s what *makes* us Christians. In other words, it is what gives us the forgiveness of sins, for that is what it means to be a Christian here in this life: a forgiven sinner. That is who we are our whole lives long as Christians, on the basis of our Baptism: forgiven sinners. This means that Baptism forgives *all* of our sins, not just the ones committed prior to it. All of the sins that you have committed since your Baptism are covered by it, as are the sins that you will commit in the future and don’t even know about yet. As our Lord says in Mark 16, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” Baptism is not a one-time event that gives you a clean slate to get started, but leaves you to look elsewhere if your slate gets marked up again. Baptism gives salvation, and God’s promise stands firm even in spite of sins you commit after Baptism.

 But if this is the case, why are we

continually being forgiven in the Church? Why does every Sunday start with the pastor forgiving you all of your sins in the stead and by the command of Christ; that is, giving the Absolution? If Baptism is good for life, what is the purpose or meaning of Absolution? While we rightly confess, on the basis of the Scriptures, that Baptism washes away all of our sins; we also confess, on the basis of the same Scriptures, that Christ sends pastors in His stead to forgive sins by the word of Absolution. And that word that they speak in His stead is an effective word; it does what it says. It actually forgives sins.

 This sounds like a contradiction at first: all of your sins are forgiven, but you still need to have them forgiven by absolution after they’ve already been forgiven by Baptism. Luther resolves this tension well in the Large Catechism: “Our Baptism abides forever. Even though someone should fall from Baptism and sin, still we always have access to it. … Repentance, therefore, is nothing other than a return and approach to Baptism. We repeat what we began before, but abandoned” (LC, Baptism:77-79. Translation taken from the CPH Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord). So, Absolution is a return to Baptism, because when we sin, we fall away from Baptism. Is this to say that every single sin we commit places us outside of the grace of God and takes away our salvation, unless we confess and receive Absolution for that sin? It remains true that the forgiveness Baptism gives covers all sins, so a specific confession of every single sin is not necessary, besides being impossible, according to Psalm 19. But it is true that every sin has the potential to take us away from the faith if it is not repented of. So, if we realize a sin that we have committed, but stubbornly refuse to repent of it, *that* is something that places us outside the faith and the promise of God made in Baptism.

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**LCMS Convention Update**

 *By Elder Jonathan Baisch*

*This is a summary of a report I have provided to the churches in our circuit. Please see that summary, which will be made available, for a more detailed account of the convention and resolutions important to our congregation.*

“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.” This was the theme of the 2023 LCMS convention and it was visible throughout each day the convention gathered. I thank our congregation for the privilege of representing us and our circuit, learning from many reports and presentations, and voting on important matters to the Synod and our congregations. This report highlights noteworthy items from the convention. The respectful handling of the Lord’s Supper at the opening Divine Service was wonderful to see! Each day of convention had three worship services at the beginning, after lunch, and to end the session.

The First Day, Sunday, President Harrison provided the third part of his report which focused on Luther responding to demands to recant with “Here I stand” and how we have more “Here I stand” moments coming. He also emphasized how Cyprian and his congregation cared for the sick and dead during a plague because all are creatures of God. The convention included four essays all focused around “Christ Crucified” and I encourage you to read them in the convention proceedings. Catechesis was led by Pastor Peter Bender who has authored the catechetical materials we use at Saints Peter and Paul and learning from him was a fantastic experience.

The LCMS convention ratified altar and pulpit fellowship with 5 international churches, Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Sudan and Sudan, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland, the Lutheran Church in Uganda, the Lutheran Church of Ukraine, and Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka. Many of their Bishops spoke during the convention and it was great seeing the LCMS join to other confessional churches. The most interesting speakers were Bishop Pohjola and lawmaker Räsänen who spoke about their persecution by the government of Finland regarding biblical teachings on homosexuality.

The following resolutions were noteworthy from the convention:

* 3-01 gave thanks for the overturning of Roe vs Wade
* 1-02A was to aid small congregations and multi-congregation pastors and parishes
* 1-04A creates a taskforce to conduct field work and provide resources to address and combat contemporary sexual ethics
* 5-07 recognized we are not in fellowship with the Japan Lutheran Church who ordains women as pastors and allows women to carry out functions of the pastor’s office
* 7-03 calls for Concordia University Texas to repent for removing the university from the LCMS governance by changing CTX bylaws
* 12-01A calls for the LCMS to create academic standards for our Lutheran schools
* 12-02A reaffirmed the authority of God given to parents as government seeks to challenge and usurp this authority
* 5-08A affirmed in-person communion and rejects the practice of online communion
* 7-04B changes the bylaws governing the LCMS university system and the boards of directors
* 7-05A provides a mechanism to remove regents and prevents appointed regents from voting to select other regents
* 11-02A condemns racism in all forms and particularly calls out BLM, CTR, and DEI for their unbiblical ideology.
* 6-03A encourages and emphasizes the importance of attending seminary to become ordained (vs other routes such as SPM, alternate path, etc.)
* 4-06 encourages all to attend church in person as this is where we can receive God’s Word and sacraments as intended.

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**Luther Hostel Scheduled for November 2023**

Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN, is hosting its annual Luther Hostel for all interested in growing in their faith and understanding of God’s Word and our Worship.

The Luther Hostel is mainly for lay people, but there are often a few pastors in attendance as well.

This year’s theme is “The Christian Spiritual Life: Worship, Scripture, Prayer and the Fruits of Faith” Nov. 1-3.  Pastor and Evelyn Baisch would enjoy sharing more information about this event, will be attending again this year and welcome others to join them. Speak with them at church or phone: Pastor - #501/253-8292 or Evelyn - #501/253-8393. More info is available at <https://www.ctsfw.edu/ctsfw-events/event-luther-hostel-2023/>

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**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE**

Blue: Pledged as of 08.20.2023 $184,320 (92.16%)

Orange: Remaining

$15,680 (7.84%)

Total Contributions

as of 06.18.2023:

$175,745 (87.87%)

Previous: $173,869 (86.93%)

New: $1,876 (0.94%)

Remaining: $24,255 (12.13%)

*Amounts used are based on*

*weekly deposits reported.*

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.

**TRUSTEES’ UPDATE**

Among the issues/projects addressed by the Trustees in August were the following:

• **Music Room** has been put back together following the completion of its painting. Paint job looks great!

• **Landscaping** - Willie Green has started the landscaping of the courtyard and the north wall.

• There was a 2×8 **wood top step added** to the **Fellowship Hall** **north exit door** to see if that would help reduce the water coming into the hall once the landscaping is complete. The step will be painted yellow.

• The **doors scheduled for replacement** have been shipped to the contractor and should be installed soon. (Update: The installation of the doors has been completed.) This should also help with the water issue mentioned above.

• **Old trophies** that were stored in the outside lawn shed were moved to basement in Trustees’ room. Anyone who wants to see them should contact a Trustee. Also, anyone who has an idea of what to do with them should contact the Trustees. There was a plan discussed at the Trustees\* meeting on 8/16/23, but feedback is welcome before the plan is invoked.

• **Eternal Flame** in the sanctuary has been replaced.

• A **broken stained glass window** in Pastor Deal’s office is scheduled to be repaired. This will require its removal and being sent to Pittsburgh.

• **Air conditioning** quotes are being finalized and readied for review.

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

**CELEBRATING IN SEPTEMBER!**

**Birthdays:**

Christine Hamilton 9- 4

Michael A. Petro 9- 5

Max Jelinek 9- 7

Linda Tomko 9- 8

Susan Daris 9- 9

Ruth Meszaros 9- 9

Alyxis Riffle 9-10

Dolores Fee 9-14

Austin Hamilton 9-20

Cathy Smith 9-20

Matt Berent 9-22

Karen Psznick 9-24

Gordon Marquette 9-25

**Anniversary:**

Shawn & Staci Taylor 9-28

\*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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**Please add the following information to your church directory:**

Gordon & Rebecca Marquette

4046 Ellwood Rd.

New Castle, PA 16101

 Home phone: 724-924-2538

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**Thank You for Serving in September:**

**Elder:** Jonathan Baisch; **Ushers:** Mark Kleindienst, Jerry Krivosh, & Gordon Marquette; **Altarware:** (prior) Diane Riefstahl; (after) Arlene Sutton (09.10), Kati Laird (09.03, 09.17, and 09/24), and Hank Holcroft (all).

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***When Silent Prayer Becomes a Thought Crime***

**(**From ***Faith & Justice, May 2023,* ADF)** Submitted by Pastor Emeritus Arthur Baisch.

Stop and pray on the street in front of an abortion facility in England or Wales, and you soon could find yourself under arrest. Never mind if your thoughts were lifted to God imperceptibly.

Clause 11 of the new Public Order Bill, adopted by the Parliament of the United Kingdom (UK) in March (2023), implements a 150-meter censorship zone or “buffer zone” around abortion facilities nationwide, banning “influence” of any sort, including prayer. An amendment to exempt silent prayer and consensual conversations failed, ushering in a new era of modern-day thought crimes in the UK. The Parliamentary debate played out like a dystopian film script.

Concerned Members of Parliament (MP’s) repeatedly raised the question: “*In a free society, should we really be arresting individuals on the basis of their thoughts?”*  Hell-bent on the introduction of “buffer zones” the opposition (editorial insert by Pastor Baisch – *“opposition” here is the pro-abortion group*) argued that these zones are essential to protect women seeking an abortion from intimidation.

Regarding thought crimes, one MP summed up the pro-censorship view: “*There is a time and a place for everything”* – including, in her estimation, the banning of silent prayer. While the bill was under debate (in Parliament), two individuals were charged and one was fined for silent prayer in two English cities where censorship zones were already in force. The story of the first arrest went viral, showing the world that the UK really is weaponizing the law to criminalize peaceful people for praying on public streets. ADF UK came to their defense.

Pro-life volunteer Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was arrested in December for the “crime” of praying silently in a Birmingham, England, censorship zone. She was searched by three officers and learned she could face up to two years in prison. Video footage of her arrest was shared on Twitter and has been shared over 6 million times. In February (2023) Isabel was acquitted fully in court – only to be arrested again for the same act on the day before the Parliamentary vote. During the second arrest, the officer commented: *“You’ve said you’re engaging in prayer, which is the offense.”*  Isabel clarified: *“Silent prayer.”*  The officer’s answer spoke volumes: *“You were still engaging in prayer, which is the offense.”*

Next came Catholic priest Father Sean Gough, who was criminally charged for praying silently in the same Birmingham zone as Isabel. He was also charged for having an ***“Unborn Lives Matter”*** bumper sticker on his car, which was parked in the zone. Most recently, Adam Smith Connor was fined for silent prayer in Bournemouth. The city has in place an absurdly specific ordinance, banning a host of activities including sprinkling holy water, kneeling, reading scripture, and praying in the vicinity of the local abortion facility.

Despite the egregious nature of thought-crime prosecution, what happened to Isabel, Father Sean and Adam is now a nation-wide reality in the UK. Following the adoption of the new Public Order Bill, the potential for infringements on fundamental freedoms is immense and is only getting started. Strikingly, the proposed amendment to exempt silent prayer and consensual conversation from the law lost in Parliament with 116 votes in favor and 299 against – a dark day for democracy. Let that sink in: nearly 300 British MP’s think that prayer in certain public places should be an offense under the law.

Censorship zones generate widespread legal chaos, equipping the state to criminalize peaceful activities on the public streets with disastrous consequences for a free society. And yet their proponents claim a clear purpose for their deployment – creating a “buffer” to protect women from harassment. This goal is but a farce.

Harassment is always wrong, which is why it is already a crime under UK law. These zones have nothing to do with preventing harassment. You don’t need football field-sized silencing zones to accomplish that. This is about stifling a certain point of view – in this case, the view that every unborn child has a right to life.

Every person should have the right to peacefully think, pray and act in accordance with their convictions. Following the introduction of these draconian prohibitions, we can expect severe consequences for fundamental freedoms in the UK. Today the state is leveraging its silencing power to support abortion; tomorrow it could extend similar measures to another issue entirely.

Americans should recognize this is a wake-up call to diligently defend their First Amendment freedoms (Pastor B’s editorial: *Do you know your First Amendment freedoms?).* All concerned with the preservation of a free society must stand guard against the thought police.

*[This article was written by Elyssa Koren, an international human rights attorney and legal communications director for ADF International. This article was adapted from one which originally appeared in* ***First Things****, March 28, 2023.]*

*For more information about the Alliance Defending Freedom, which our church supports, and its works, feel free to speak with Pastor Baisch.*

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**LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page**

**(Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!** A **Monthly Audit** will take place following worship, Sunday, September 17th in the library. If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806.

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**Bible Study Classes**

* The **Sunday Morning Bible Study** (8 am) group will continue examining the writings of the minor prophets when it reconvenes September 3rd.
* The **Women’s Bible Study** group will meet the first and third Thursdays of the month (September 7th and 23rd) at 10 am and will begin studying the book of Romans.
* The **Men’s Bible Study** will meet this month at Sts. Peter & Paul’s Saturday, September 16th at 4 pm.

Submissions for the October issue of **“The Rock and the Sword”** newsletter are due to the secretary’s office Monday, September 18th at noon. This includes meeting dates and times for the church calendar.

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**Coffee Fellowship**

**is September 10th!**

Join us following worship, Sunday, September 10th for **Coffee Fellowship.** September’s sponsors are Ruth Meszaros and Joani Rice.

 Sponsorships are still available for October and November of this year. Sponsors are asked to drop off 2-1/2—3 dozen “treats” and a quart of juice in the Fellowship Hall kitchen prior to church on their given Sunday. Coffee preparation, set-up, and clean-up will be done for you.

Please speak with Diane Riefstahl if you should have any questions.

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*Thanks to all for the many kindnesses after the passing of Martin Anderson.*

~Mary Jane Anderson

~Gordon & Rebecca Marquette

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The next ALTAR GUILD MEETING will take place Saturday, September 16th beginning at 1 pm.

All women are invited to attend!

September’s hostess is

Marie Flaugher.

**FOOD PANTRY UP-DATE**

Our Food Pantry roster continues to grow and the need for your support is on-going. If interested in knowing how you could assist with packing boxes or “pick-up” days, please contact Ana Deal.

The second Sunday of each month continues to be designated as “Stock the Food Pantry Sunday” and your financial contributions will be greatly appreciated! Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and placed in the offering plate. Please be sure to indicate your envelope number and designate the donation to the Food Pantry.

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**Just For Giggles!**

*Submitted by Evelyn Baisch*

 One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque.

 It was covered with names and small American flags mounted on either side of it.

 The six-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, “Good morning, Alex.”

 “Good morning, Pastor,” he replied, still focused on the plaque. “Pastor, what is this?”

 The pastor replied, “Well, son, it’s a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service.”

 Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque.

 Finally, little Alex’s voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, “Which service, the 8:00 or the 10:30?”



**llllllllllllllllllllllllllllPlease keep the following**

**in your prayers**

Anna Mae Daris

1865 Hofius Lane

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-962-5079

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Millie Elavsky

1209 Maple Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-342-0345

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Elizabeth Loughan

742 Salem Rd.

Hadley, PA 16130

724-253-2137

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Rudy & Jean Tomko

2629 Romar Dr.

Hermitage, PA 16148

724-979-4360

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Betty Ann Wolf

7777 Arthur St., SC

Masury, OH 44438

330-448-1080

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Ed & Millie Zachar

1320 Old Forge Rd.

Niles, OH 44446

330-652-9316

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**September Church Office Hours**

The secretary’s office will be open as follows in September:

* Closed Labor Day, Sept. 4th.
* Open Tuesday, Sept. 5th, 8:30 am – noon.
* Open Wednesday, Sept. 6th, 8:30 am-1 pm.
* Third Monday of Sept.: 8:30 am – 5 pm. and first and third Thursdays: 8:30 am – 10 am; 11 am – 5 pm.
* Second and fourth Mondays and Thursdays: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

If needing to enter the building, please phone first to make certain someone is there to let you in.

Remember thefollowing in prayer…

*Amy, Steve Antolovich, Ellen BaronCA, Amy Blomenberg, Lois BortnerCA, Sara Brubaker, Dee Bullock, Bev & Joe Chlpka, Susan Davies, Loretta Deal, Tim Dudash, Judith & Eddy Furey, Griffin, Austin Hamilton, Pastor Charles Henrickson, Joan, Keith Jozwiakowski, Darla Krajci, Barbara Kreske, Pastor Ed Kucera, Jess Lavoie, Elizabeth Loughan, Paul LucasCA, Sandy Marshall, Gene Moore, Frank NiemeyerCA, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Nancy RobertsonCA, Landon Sargent, Kriss SvidroCA, Joel & Peggy Wasson, Angela WeserCA, and Ruth Wolf.*

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

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Alex (Sasha) Carr, 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 Third Quarter Local Mission: Luther Classical College.*

*\*CA represents cancer.*

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Our prayer list has been recently updated. If you would like someone’s name added or deleted from our **Prayer List**, please put a note in the secretary’s mail slot. Thank you!

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Collected pop tabs can be left for Marie Flaugher in the library.

**M**edical

**E**quipment

**R**ecycling

**P**rogram

The **Medical Equipment Recycling Program** (also known as **MERP**) is an initiative of the UPMC Horizon Community Health Foundation. MERP accepts donations of gently used medical equipment from area residents who no longer need it or from organizations which have collected the items and reuses them by loaning the equipment to community members who need it.

MERP also accepts donations of certain unused medical supplies, such as adult diapers, bed pads and bandages, which are made available to anyone who needs them.

Anyone in the community can take advantage of the program – they do not have to be UPMC patients to use MERP’s services!

The goal of MERP is to improve general community health by ensuring that residents have the equipment they need to live safe, active and independent lives.

You can participate in MERP’s work in a number of ways including donating items, volunteering to repair equipment or assist clients, or by making a financial donation.

 Your support makes a difference! For more information about MERP and how you can get involved, please speak with Evelyn Baisch.

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Minutes from the **August 20th VOTERS’ ASSEMBLY** will be available in the narthex September 3rd.

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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, 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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**OUR 3rd QUARTER MISSION:**

**LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE**

This year’s third quarter mission is support of Luther Classical College.

Supporting Lutheran Classical College is a very personal thing for many Lutherans, because this mission will provide a quality education for young Lutheran students that is unapologetically Lutheran in both its confession and practice.

Students will learn the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions in the classroom. They will all sing Lutheran hymns together. They will learn the importance of the Christian home and daily devotion, because they will do it together at college. And that means they will go back to Lutheran congregations with the zeal to participate and raise families in the Church.Most importantly, they will learn that the gospel of our Lord Jesus must always be placed at the front and center of their lives.

Donations to Luther Classical College can be put in a pew envelope and placed in the offering plate. Please be certain to note your name and designate your donation for the 3rd Quarter Mission.

Learn more at [***www.lutherclassical.org/patron-program***](https://lutherclassical.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0c5850dc65d0df7fcec4bfa51&id=8ed00b24ef&e=323639b5b3) or contact our Head of Development, Samuel Preus, at *s.preus@lutherclassical.org* or *307-314-5882*

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**SCRIP Program:**

The next date for **SCRIP orders and payments** is Sunday, September 3rd. 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 on tables in the narthex and next to the nursery.

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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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 **Best wishes for a safe and productive school year are extended to our congregation’s students and teachers!**

 

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**Willow Women’s Center** will be hosting its annual fundraising banquets October 4 & 5, 2023. If interested in sponsoring a table, attending one of the banquets, or getting further information, please put a note in the secretary’s mail slot.

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

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Our **Food Pantry** now has its own email address: foodpantry@saintspeterandpaul.net.

Please share it with anyone who has need!

**Bible Memory Verses for August**

**For Adults:**

August 6: *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14*

August 13: *All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

*2 Timothy 3:12*

August 20: *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28*

August 27: *You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18*

**For Children:**

August 6: *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.*

*Ephesians. 5:15*

August 13: *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

*Proverbs 14:34*

August 20: *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

*1 Peter 5:5*

August 27: *A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench.*

*Matthew 12:20*

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Information about the **Barry Nelson Charitable Foundation** and how you can donate is available on the tables in the narthex and by the nursery.

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**Congratulations, Alex (Sasha)!**

Congratulation to Alex (Sasha) Carr who graduated from Basic Training for the US Army at Fort Moore, GA recently. Sasha’s mother, Catherine; fiancée, Mady, and brother, Eric were in attendance.

 Sasha will now move on to his AIT (Advanced Individual Training).

 Thank you, Sasha, for your service to our country!

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**Monday, September 4, 2023**

***Church offices will be closed.***

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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 note that weekly service bulletins and Advent / Lenten devotions are not accepted).* **Please recycle items by dropping them in the basket in the hallway by the offices. Thank you!**

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