



# MAY/JUNE 2021

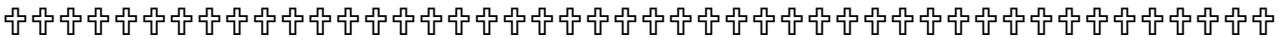


St. John's Lutheran Church  
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He remembers His **Testament** forever,  
the **Word** he appointed for a thousand generations  
Psalm 105:8 (JP)

Rev. Thomas Cowell  
Pastor  
Phone: 515-924-3388

‘Telling the good News about Jesus-In Burt, Iowa, and the World’



## The Online Christian

When a Christian considers his consumption of digital media, he can divide his consumption into two groups: secular media and sacred media. When we think about the secular (non-religious) media we consume online, we can ask ourselves good, godly questions such as: is what I am consuming good for me? Am I consuming too much? Is this digital media helping me love my neighbor, or hurting? Is there a better alternative?

These are all great questions, and they deserve to be addressed perhaps in another Parish Messenger. However, in this article I would like to say a word about sacred digital media. We all have a favorite website for our news, or an app on our smartphone for the weather, but did you know there are dozens of excellent websites and phone apps where you can read the Bible, listen to sacred music, and hear commentary on current events from LCMS Christians? This is not to say that it is inherently bad for us to spend our time online consuming secular news, streaming movies, or scrolling through Facebook posts – all in moderation, and in a godly way. This is to say, though, that your Christian life can be blessed by also discovering and beginning to utilize websites and apps that are created for the purpose of feeding your faith, increasing your knowledge of the Word of God, and helping you to love your neighbor as God loves us.

The following list is a few of the sacred digital media tools that I personally use on a regular basis for you to try out for yourself. I begin with smartphone apps and websites, and then I have a short list of my frequently used books for you less technologically inclined readers!

### SMARTPHONE APPS

#### PrayNow

PrayNow is a smartphone app version of the resource called *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, which you can also purchase in physical book form. The convenient aspect of this app is that when you open the app the Scripture readings and prayers for the day are automatically displayed for you. This makes the app a great tool for a quick morning, lunch, or bedtime devotion of Scripture and prayer. PrayNow does cost \$9.00 to download from [cph.org](http://cph.org), but it is well-worth the price!

#### ESV Bible

The “ESV Bible” app is my favorite digital Bible resource. I am able to simply adjust the font and size of the text, and add or remove verse numbers and cross references. The search function

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is also simple to use. I also enjoy reading the Bible on my computer at [esv.org](http://esv.org). The Scripture text on this website is beautifully displayed and free from advertisements like many other Bible apps and websites. When I need to read a different translation of the Bible other than the ESV, I use the Bible Gateway app or [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

### **Luther's Small Catechism**

This app is, unsurprisingly, an app version of Luther's Small Catechism. The Catechism on your phone is a great resource for prayer or for answering basic questions about your Christian faith, that is, if you don't have the Catechism fully memorized! Just type in "Luther's Small Catechism" in your favorite app store and choose the app with the Luther's Rose logo.

### **Lutheran Public Radio**

LPR (Lutheran Public Radio) is an app which features a 24/7 stream of sacred music from choirs and musicians across the world. The app also includes a link to Issues, Etc., an LCMS talk radio program which ranges from Bible studies to commentary of current events to movie reviews – all from an LCMS Christian perspective. I mostly use this app to play sacred music in the car or while on a long run.

### **Trinity, Algona**

Our partnership congregation, Trinity Algona has an app containing all of their digital content. The app allows you to watch Ask the Pastors, Sunday Preview, and their service livestreams right in the app without having to go to a separate website. It's also any easy way to read Trinity's announcements and Pastor's Pen articles. Search "Trinity Lutheran Church, Algona" at your favorite app store to find the app and download it.

### **The Chosen**

The Chosen is an app through which you can watch for free the TV series about the life of Jesus and His disciples. I have watched a few episodes and have really enjoyed getting a sense of the experience of seeing Jesus perform miracles or the tension Jesus caused among the Pharisees. Keep in mind that The Chosen is a dramatic paraphrase of the Bible, not a more literal narration such as other movies about the Bible. This means that, although I have found the episodes I have watched to be a faithful representation of Jesus and the disciples, the events they portray are not necessarily historically factual. Nevertheless, The Chosen is still a wholesome alternative to whatever godless zombie apocalypse show you're watching on Netflix right now!

## **PODCASTS**

### **A Word Fitly Spoken**

A Word Fitly Spoken is a podcast and blog hosted by some of my extremely intelligent colleagues from seminary. They teach on topics spanning from biblical interpretation, to the preaching of salvation, to the pursuit of Christian virtue in our present day. You can listen to the podcast from your phone's podcast app or at [wordfitlyspoken.org](http://wordfitlyspoken.org).

### **The Gottesdienst Crowd**

The Gottesdienst Crowd is a podcast on theology, worship, and Christian life. The associated website, [gottesdiesnt.org](http://gottesdiesnt.org), is an excellent resource of blog articles as well. This one might be a little "heavy" in terms of the depth of theology, but I'm sure you'll still be able to benefit from listening and reading!

## WEBSITES

### **lcms.org**

This may seem an obvious source to go to for information and current events related to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. However, you'll also find within the tabs of the website great resources for learning and participating in every aspect of the Christian life. I encourage you to simply go to the site and explore and see what you find!

### **bookofconcord.org**

This website contains all of our Lutheran Confessions, known as the Book of Concord. While owning a physical Book of Concord is much preferable for reading cover to cover, this website lets you easily search the answer to your theological questions within the Book of Concord by using the search bar.

### **cph.org/blog**

We all know CPH (Concordia Publishing House) to be our Synod's publisher of books, but CPH also publishes a free online blog. Search the various blog topics and find one that applies to you.

### **wolfmueller.co**

This website is full of written, audio, and video content created and compiled by LCMS Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller. Take some time opening tabs and I'm sure you will find something to learn! One of my favorite sections is "Martin Luther's Sermons" under the "Audio" tab, as well as the "Table Talk Radio" section under the same Audio tab.

### **newadvent.org/fathers**

This website is an online resource for thousands of pages worth of content from the theologians of the early Church known as the Church Fathers. Use the search bar to search for a topic you are interested in learning about, and enjoy hearing the wise words of our fathers in the faith! One of the theologians I seem to visit most on this site is John Chrysostom and his short, relatively simple, and faithful homilies.

### **stjohnsburt.org/pastors-corner**

This is a plug for the content I post on our church website under the "Pastor's Corner" tab. Much of the content is resources first published in our announcements page and handouts in church. Check back every month or so as I periodically add more content.

## GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED BOOKS

### **The Bible**

It should go without saying that you should own a paper copy of the Bible! The English Standard Version happens to be my favorite translation because it's the most commonly used in worship among LCMS congregations. I also encourage you make an investment in a quality bound, larger print, single column Bible for your daily devotions. It will help you to respect the Word you are reading and will be easier on your eyes. The Lutheran Study Bible or an equivalent study Bible is also a good resource to have.

### **Any Children's Bible**

Even if you don't have any young children at home, it's a great idea to have a children's Bible handy when the grandkids or nieces and nephews visit. Children's Bibles are also great devotional tools for

adults. Ask yourself, what does the simple language help you see? What does the simple language miss in the story? How would you have said it differently?

### **The Lutheran Service Book**

Our church hymnal is my number one devotional tool. Any time you'd like to borrow a hymnal, feel free to ask for one from church. Or, we can help you purchase your own copy.

### **Church Library**

Other than the Bible, hymnal, Catechism, and Book of Concord, I wouldn't advise you to have many other Christian books at home. Instead, borrow them from our church library! If you'd ever like to read a Christian book that we don't have, let the church office or Deb Steven our church librarian know and we'd be happy to purchase it for our library.

### **Books on Christian Art**

Lastly, a nice coffee table style book on Christian art can be a nice addition to your home. Contemplating on beautiful Christian art and architecture can be a nice supplement to your daily devotions. We have a book at home called *Ars Sacra: Christian Art and Architecture of the Western World from the Very Beginning Up Until Today*. It is a bit pricey at a little over \$100, but it's the only book on Christian art you'll ever need!

## **TIPS ON CONSUMING CHRISTIAN MEDIA**

I've just given you quite a list of sacred media in the form of apps, websites, and books – and I could have made the list much, much larger! But now what? How do you integrate some of these media into your daily life?

Here are a few short tips on how you might begin to consume this sacred media alongside your various secular media:

### **1. Don't Add: Replace**

We're all busy enough already. So that all of this new media doesn't get in the way of your various vocations in life, think about replacing one of your daily secular media consumption habits with one of these sacred media choices.

### **2. Less is More**

Rather than continually sampling new Christian media all the time, find a few good, faithful resources that are helpful to you and that you can form a habit out of consuming on a regular basis.

### **3. Prioritize**

Don't sacrifice reading the Bible for getting to the latest podcast or blog post. Remember that even not all sacred media is of equal importance in your life.

### **4. Ask For Help**

Don't let your discomfort with technology or fear of choosing the wrong option keep you from finding new ways to educate and grow your faith. Ask for help! I'm happy to help you download apps on your phone or show you the best resources within each website on this list.

## **5. Share**

The list above is only my personal list. These are far from all of the great Christian media options available. If you are benefitting from an app or website that is not on this list I would love to hear about it, and so would your family and friends. That way we can enjoy the resource right alongside you.

God be with you as you explore these resources which will be for the good of your faith in Him and your love for your neighbor!

Pastor Thomas Cowell  
The Season of Easter  
Anno Domini 2021



## **MAY BIRTHDAYS**

- 1 - Boyd Shipler
- 4 - Christian Bierstedt
- 5 - Emily Loken
- 6 - Michail Aaron
- 6 - Delane Pederson
- 7 - Phillip McFarland
- 7 - Mary Melick
- 8 - Rosann Shipler
- 9 - Steve Madsen
- 13 - Kim Koestler
- 17 - Dawn Heetland
- 19 - Jesse Fitzgerald
- 27 - Terry Briggs
- 28 - Barbara Thilges
- 29 - Roger Evans
- 31 - Jacob Fox

## **JUNE BIRTHDAYS**

- 2 - James Struecker
- 8 - Taylor Lynn Parsons
- 9 - Joan Koestler
- 14 - Caelum Blocker
- 16 - Dean Larson
- 16 - Gordon Oleson
- 17 - Alasha Heneen
- 17 - Mary Lou Marlow
- 17 - Gail (Sue) Person
- 22 - Jacob Haase
- 25 - Shirlee Alt

## **SPECIAL SENIORS**

Joan Koestler - June 9





## Vacation Bible School 2021: Family of God

**Wednesday: June 9, 16, 23, and 30**  
**5:30-7:30 p.m.**

The St. John's Board of Education would like to invite you – all of you – to our Family of God VBS! This year's VBS is designed for children of all ages along with their parents, and grandparents, and siblings, and friends.

As the theme implies, we are going to explore during this VBS what it means to be a family of God. We will discover what it means to be a part of *God's family*, as well as what it means to be a part of a *godly family*. We can do this best if our individual families and church family are learning and playing and singing all together at VBS.



### **This year's VBS will feature:**

- (free) supper each night at 5:30
- Bible lesson time
- Fun family crafts and games
- Outdoor prayer and singing (weather permitting)

Don't worry if you aren't able to attend with your child – we'd still love for your child to join us!

Don't worry if you have to miss one or two Wednesdays – we'd love for you to join us any Wednesday you are able!

Don't worry if the child you'd like to invite or bring along is not a member of our church, or of any church for that matter – we'd love for them to join us!

To register for VBS call the church office at 515-924-3344 or email at [churchoffice@stjohnsburt.org](mailto:churchoffice@stjohnsburt.org) and we will print or email a registration form for you to fill out and send back.

\* If you are interested in volunteering at VBS in any way, or if you would like to donate desserts for any of the meals, please contact a Board of Ed. member or Pastor Cowell.

