



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

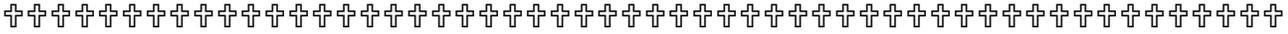


St. John's Lutheran Church
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He remembers His **Testament** forever,
the **Word** He appointed for a thousand generations
Psalm 105:8 (JP)

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Pastor
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'Telling the good News about Jesus-In Burt, Iowa, and the World'



Only One Election Truly Matters

One Monday morning in late October the pastors and staff at Trinity gathered for our weekly staff meeting. During the meeting we for a brief moment engaged in an activity common among most Americans these past few weeks: we complained about the election!

It doesn't matter who you are voting for or what your reasons for voting are, there is always something to complain about! The opponent is surely going to ruin our country and everything it stands for. The opposing voting base is full of heartless monsters who care nothing for those around them. And the list goes on. The whole election process has been filled with uncertainty, fear, and anger.

As you read this Parish Messenger article it is likely that the election is either just about to happen or has happened within the last week or two. Nevertheless, I can almost guarantee that the uncertainty, fear, and anger will not disappear with election day. The election results will surely either be contested or rebelled against. The winning side will gloat with pride and the losing side will overflow with bitter indignation. Brother will continue to hate brother and all will cower in fear at what the future will bring.

As we complained about the election at our Trinity staff meeting, Pastor Lund made the humorous yet profound comment that: "there's only one election we really have to worry about." What Pastor Lund was referring to was not the presidential election or any other election of political candidates. He was referring to the election of God to eternal life.

The thing about political elections is that they come and go every four years, and that some day they will stop occurring altogether. No election is permanent. Some day our nation and its political system will be no more. This will occur either when our country and its democratic system falls apart (which may or may not happen) or when the end of the age arrives (which will without a doubt someday happen).

For us Christians, this fact should not leave us fearful of the future or cause us to put all our energy and hope into the result of each next election. For us Christians, we have another much more important election with which to concern ourselves: again, the election of God. With God's election, though, there is really nothing to worry about because we are not the ones voting; God is the one doing the voting. This is a joy for us because God has already told us the results of His election. God tells us in many places in Holy Scripture that every single person who has faith that Jesus, the Son of God, died for their sins and rose again to give them the gift of resurrection has been elected by God to eternal life. One of the most well-known passages regarding God's election comes from John chapter 3:

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As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that **whoever** believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever** believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. - John 3:14-17

The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord of our Book of Concord gives us further confidence that anyone who desires to know if they are among the elect of God should not search within themselves, but that they should let God in His Word reveal to us His divine election results:

God does not call without means, but through the Word, as He has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in His name [...]

Therefore, if we wish to consider our eternal election to salvation with profit, we must in every way hold sturdily and firmly to this, that, as the preaching of repentance, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it pertains to all men, Luke 24:47. For this reason Christ has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among **all nations**. For God loved the **world** and gave His Son, John 3:16. Christ bore the sins of the **world**, John 1:29, gave His flesh for the life of the **world**, John 6:51; His blood is the propitiation for the sins of the **whole world**, 1 John 1:7; 2:2. Christ says: Come unto Me, **all** ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Matt. 11:28. God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon **all**, Rom. 11:32. The Lord is not willing that **any** should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3:9. The same Lord over all is rich unto **all** that call upon Him, Rom. 10:12. The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto **all** and upon **all** them that believe, Rom. 3:22. This is the will of Him that sent Me, that **every one** that seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life, John 6:40. Likewise it is Christ's command that to all in common to whom repentance is preached this promise of the Gospel also should be offered Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15.

And this call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, we should not regard as jugglery, but know that thereby God reveals His will, that in those whom He thus calls He will work through the Word, that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved. - FC,SD XI: Election, para. 27-29 [emphasis my own]

In other words, if you hear from the Word of God that He has saved you from your sins and you believe it, you have been elected to live with Him forever!

With God's election there is no need for uncertainty, because unlike political elections, God's election remains forever for those who remain in Him. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew that this world will come to an end, but that the elect will live with Him forever:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. - Matthew 24:29-31

As Christians we can live with confidence in all that we do in Christ's name in this life because we know that no matter what happens, we who trust in Christ will be gathered on the Last Day and safely delivered from death to eternal life.

With God casting the vote there is also no need to live in fear and anger toward our neighbor. St. Peter explains that God by His election to eternal life has freed us from fear and anger so that we can live a life of loving our neighbor. Peter also teaches us that love for our neighbor is even a confirmation for us of our election to eternal life:

[Christ's] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, **be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election**, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. - 2 Peter 1:3-11

What a far cry this lifestyle is to that of most voters in our nation's political elections!

None of this is to say that you cannot or should not participate in the election process of our nation. In fact Christians are well suited because of our knowledge of Holy Scripture on how to make informed decisions as to which candidates can love and serve our fellow citizens best. This is to say, though, that we as Christians must treat these elections as temporary events which do not have an eternal impact on our lives. There is, after all, only one election that truly matters, one election that is eternal, and one election result that has been determined by God for us through Jesus Christ our Savior.

God bless you at the end of this Church Year and in the beginning of the next.

Pastor Thomas Cowell
Feast of All Saints, Anno Domini 2020

Happy Holidays from St. John's!

Perhaps you've never thought about it, but the word *holiday* is actually a contraction of the two words *holy day*. Therefore to wish someone "happy holidays" in late November through December is to wish them happiness in celebrating all of the holy days from the First Sunday in Advent through the Day of Epiphany - which is quite a few holy days indeed!

The following is a schedule of services at St. John's to help you keep track of all of the opportunities for worship this holiday season:

- Sunday School and Sunday Adult Bible Study	8:00 AM
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- Sunday Divine Service	9:00 AM
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- Thanksgiving Eve Divine Service (Wednesday, November 25 at St. John's)	6:00 PM
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- Thanksgiving Day Service (Thursday, Nov. 26 at Trinity ; call the Trinity office to sign up)	9:00 AM
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- Advent Midweek Evening Prayer (Wednesday December 2, 9, and 16)	6:00 PM
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- Advent Midweek Online Only Service (December 23 on Trinity, Algona's YouTube page)	6:00 PM
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- Christmas Eve Children's Service (Attendance might have to be limited for this service. We will let you know in the coming weeks!)	4:30 PM
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- Christmas Day Divine Service	9:00 AM
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- Feast of St. John Christmas Lessons and Carols (December 27; No Sunday School or Adult Bible Study this Sunday)	9:00 AM
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- Day of Epiphany Prayer Service (Wednesday, January 6)	6:00 PM
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You can also look out for a new video resource beginning the first Sunday in Advent from the Partnership pastors. Every Thursday the Partnership pastors will be publishing a short video that explains the Scripture readings and themes for the upcoming Sunday. This video will help you prepare to listen and receive the gifts of God on Sunday with a fuller understanding of how each Sunday of the Church Year has been arranged for the good of your faith.

As always, if you are not yet comfortable attending church because of health concerns feel free to call me anytime to schedule a time to receive the Word and Sacrament during the week either at church or at your home.

God bless you this holiday season!

Pastor Thomas Cowell
pastor.cowell@gmail.com
319-464-5548



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Lynda Heidecker
- 2 – Wendell Christensen, Jr.
- 2 – Rolland Peyman
- 7 – Larry Behnkendorf
- 8 – Zachery Steven
- 9 – Mary Gifford
- 9 – Tess Twilliger
- 10 – Barb Schroeder
- 14 – John Smith
- 16 – Megan Crosser
- 17 – Kim Reutzel
- 19 – Brynetta Lavrenz
- 23 – Gabrielle Kelly
- 24 – Donna Haase
- 26 – Bev Skadburg
- 28 – Dick Knoll
- 30 – Eden Koestler
- 30 – Jerry Koestler



SPECIAL SENIORS

- November 2 – Rolland Peymann
- November 14 – John Smith
- November 24 – Donna Haase
- November 26 – Bev Skadburg
- December 10 – Larry Manus
- December 19 – Wendell Christensen,
Sr.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Michael Bierstedt
- 1 – Nicolle Marlow
- 3 – Darrel Schmidt
- 3 – Derek Schutjer
- 4 – Gene Hanna
- 9 – Olivia Marlow
- 9 – Karla Schutter
- 10 – Barb Harms
- 10 – Larry Manus
- 18 – Vivian Lavrenz
- 18 – Maverick Smith
- 19 – Wendell Christensen, Sr.
- 27 – Lisa Haase
- 27 – Chardonnay Lavrenz
- 28 – James Bowman
- 28 – Terry Tieman
- 28 – Wanda Tieman

Funerals

Esther Christensen

April 12, 1935-August 31, 1935

Funeral: September 3, 2020

Interment: Buffalo Township – Titonka,
Iowa

Diane Lavrenz – non-member

May 24, 1949- September 16, 2020

Funeral: Lentz Funeral Home

Officiant: Rev. Thomas Cowell

Funeral: September 21, 2020

Interment: Burt Township

A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD:
A look back at our *Parish Messenger* from November, 1931.

[The following articles were published in the November, 1931 edition of the *Parish Messenger* of St. John's Lutheran Church.]

THANKSGIVING DAY

Services will be conducted Nov. 26th in the morning at the usual hour. A special collection will be taken up for our synodical budget. Let it be a real thankoffering. True it is that the Lord has sent a season of depression and scarcity upon our land, which is felt severely also by many in our community. In this the Lord gives us an additional opportunity to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Let us deal our bread to the hungry and hide not ourselves from our own flesh. Let us grasp this opportunity to do what Scripture says: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," Matt. 5:42; "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." Prov. 19:17.

Thanksgiving Day --- thankoffering. A special word to you whom the Lord has spared. The Lord has blessed you with money to spare; or you are still at work and earning, and your fields have produced bountifully. Suppose you also had been out of work, or had a crop failure, how much would you have lost? Now, the Lord has spared you; should not gratitude prompt you to bring a real big thankoffering on Thanksgiving Day?

You, who suffer hardship and privation --- God's Book has instruction and admonition also for you. Take your Bible and read Matt. 6:25-34 and Rom. 8:31-39. Comforting, cheering --- these passages? Indeed, they are. Now, come to church on Thanksgiving Day and bring your thankoffering of praise and prayer. There will be a special message for you. The theme of our discourse will be: Our Thanksgiving in a Season of Want and Depression.

A FEW QUESTIONS TO PARENTS

Do you teach your little prattler to pray? Are you interested in your children's school work? What about a schooling which provides for daily instruction in religion? Yes, you send them to be instructed, but do you ever inquire about their lessons? Do you insist that they study their Catechism at home? What books are read; what songs are sung in your home? Do you know where your children spend the evenings? Many a mother is sitting and sighing, "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" Perhaps, if the same mother had forbidden the "big boy" to wander about when he was a "little boy," she would not now need to ask this question in sorrow. More than one person when convinced of a crime has accused his father and mother and confessed: "Oh, if my parents had only prayed with me, taught me the Bible, watched over me and warned

me in my youth, this would never have happened. I am today what I am because of the training I received at home.” --- Lutheran Witness ---