



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022

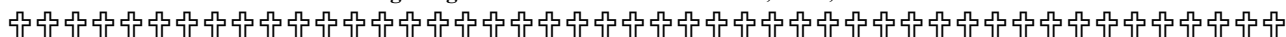


St. John's Lutheran Church
Burt, Iowa 50522
Phone: 515-924-3344
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He remembers His **Testament** forever;
the **Word** he appointed for a thousand generations
Psalm 105:8(JP)

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

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



I Need Your Help!

I can hardly list the number of ways that God has blessed me during this time of pastoral vacancy in our Partnership. He has given me a chance to reevaluate my priorities in my pastoral ministry. He has taught me a great deal of humility and reliance on Him. He has strengthened my skills of efficiency and productivity in the work I do for Him. He's opened my eyes to the enormous love and support that surrounds me in our congregation. And much, much more!

One of the great blessings that God has given me during this vacancy that I believe will begin to significantly reshape my ministry into the future, is that He has forced me to ask for help. As one who prides myself in hard work and self-reliance (sometimes sinfully so), I felt a bit defeated the first few times I had to ask for help during this vacancy with important tasks I didn't have time to complete. I felt like I was failing as a pastor because I wasn't able to do everything on my own.

By God's grace, however, I came to realize that I was simply thinking about my pastoral work all wrong. Because I previously had the time to do it, I simply tried to do all the work of the congregation myself. This method was neither beneficial to myself or to you as a congregation. Thankfully, God corrected my misunderstanding by taking this extra time from me!

What I now understand more clearly is that our congregation is not a one-employee business, which is how I often treated it. Rather, our congregation is a family. In a family each member has certain roles and duties which they carry out for the mutual benefit of one another. A father is the spiritual head of the family and makes sure his family hears the Word, prays, and worships regularly. A mother takes the lead in caring for the daily needs of the children if a family is blessed with them. One parent or the other might be the primary cook for the family, while the other might be the one who takes care of the bills and balances the check book. The children might have chores such as doing the dishes or mowing the lawn. Of course while some duties are always specific to the individual member of the household, either by divine instruction or by family circumstance, many of the duties and responsibilities of a family are interchangeable among each member.

This is also the case in a Christian congregation. There are certain roles and duties that are exclusive to the pastor. These we know well: preaching the Word and administering the sacraments, and all of the associated duties that fall under those two categories. However,

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there are a great many duties within the life of a congregation that any faithful member can take upon themselves to do. Think, for example, of our other paid positions such as our secretary, musicians, and custodian. Think also of all the duties of our various church council members.

This distribution of duties in our congregation is very much like the early Church in Acts chapter 6. When the Apostles realized that some of the widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food and human care, they chose seven of the disciples to oversee the mercy work of the Church so that they could put their full strength to preaching the Word of God. This is not unlike a father of a household who realizes that in the midst of his other duties he does not have time to do the laundry – a good and necessary task of the household – so he asks one of his children to fold the clothes.

What I am learning to do during this vacancy is to look at my workload and seek to give to you every possible duty that has not been specifically given to a pastor to do – even those important duties that fall outside the scope of any paid staff or church council position. Before, I would have thought doing this would make me lazy or less useful, or that it would be burdensome to you. I now see the distribution of works of mercy and service among congregation members as an opportunity for our church family to work together for the mutual benefit of our faith, as well as an opportunity to free up my schedule to preach, teach, and administer the Sacraments all the more.

My hope is that this new mindset of truly operating as a church family will enable us as a congregation to grow in faith and to bear the fruits of faith more than ever before, and to do so even *during* our Partnership's pastoral vacancy. To kick off this revised understanding of the pastoral ministry, I have created the "I Need Your Help!" wish list on the back table of the church. This list is a collection of one-time or ongoing tasks that I need help with and that will be of benefit to our congregation. Some of these tasks will fall under the leadership of a church council group, and others you can complete on your own. It is my hope that this list will help you to discover unique interests and skills that you might have and to put you to work to the glory of God. It is also my hope that you will share in my optimism and excitement over the enormous potential that our congregation has to grow in our faith together and to be a shining light into our community so that our church family might continue to increase to the glory of God.

Joy in Christ,
Pastor Thomas Cowell
The Season of Pentecost, Anno Domini 2022



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 – Rev. Thomas Cowell
- 3 – Elyssa Marlow
- 4 – Dorothy Jahnke
- 4 – David Kerkove
- 4 – Sheryl Weaklend
- 5 – Christian Haase
- 9 – Renee Feuring-Blomstrom
- 9 – Floyd Lavrenz
- 9 – Ron Parsons
- 10 – Lola Bierstedt
- 11 – Ann Heyes
- 11 – Lyle Karels
- 13 – Roger Lavrenz
- 15 – Graham Heyer
- 17 – Jeff Madsen
- 28 – Gerald Thompson
- 29 – Cheryl Batt
- 30 – Duane Heyes

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Alexander Fitzgerald
- 5 – Michael Marlow
- 5 – John Schutter
- 7 – Mike Melick
- 9 – Angela McFarland
- 10 – Lee Huber
- 12 – Kaitlyn Bierstedt
- 18 – Bob Simmons
- 21 – Alexandria Bierstedt
- 23 – Karen Karels
- 23 – Staci Thompson
- 28 – Marilyn Evans
- 30 – Don Madsen



SpecialSenior

Sheryl Weakland – September 4
Don Madsen – October 30