

February 2026

BROADCASTER

A magazine of Worship Anew

A scenic mountain trail at sunset with a wooden railing.

Running the Race



Matthew F. Leighty
Executive Director

Running Together THE RACE OF FAITH

When I read Hebrews 12:1-2, I think about the many people we have served throughout the generations — this community that we represent are faithful followers of Jesus who have been running this race for decades. Some of you have been part of the Worship Anew family since our earliest days. You've weathered life's storms, celebrated its joys, and through it all, kept your eyes fixed on Jesus.

You are living proof that faith is not a sprint but a marathon.

I also think about my daughter Reagan, who recently chose this passage as her confirmation verse. Her love for track and running drew her to this verse. The imagery spoke to her heart. In her eighth-grade graduation speech, she talked about this specific passage and how her classmates are “each other’s witnesses, encouraging each other to make good choices and keep our faith front and center.”

Whether you’re just beginning the race or you’ve been running for decades, we

all need the same thing: witnesses to encourage us, Jesus to sustain us, and endurance to keep going. That’s what makes this passage timeless. It’s as true at a teenager’s confirmation as it is at age 90.

Martin Luther understood this well. He wrote: “This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal, but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.”

We’re all on the way. The race isn’t over. It’s actively going on.

Recently, a woman wrote to us with news that her mother had gone to be with Jesus. “She loved your services,” she shared. “Without this ministry, she would have been without regular worship for four years.” Four years. That’s not a short sprint. That’s



February 2026 | Vol 4 Issue 2

Worship Anew
5 Martin Luther Drive
Fort Wayne, IN 46825
(888) 286-8002

EDITORIAL STAFF

MATTHEW LEIGHTY
Executive Director

ASHLEY WIEHE
Director of Communications

THOMAS MOLL
Director of Content & Innovation

SHEILA BANKS
Communications Specialist

KATELIN MOQUIN
Copy Editor

PEYTON SWEET
Content Specialist

Worship Anew engages and equips aging adults with resources to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ.



sustained endurance in the race of faith. And now, her mother has finished her race and joined that great cloud of witnesses, having kept her eyes fixed on Jesus until the very end.

This is what Worship Anew has been doing, year after year. Creating space for faithfulness to endure even when circumstances threaten to isolate us from the body of Christ.

Another woman called our office recently to tell us about a Vietnam veteran who received one of our dearly loved care packages. He was overwhelmed and overjoyed, especially touched by the customized details like the red, white, and blue prayer wrap. But what struck me most was she said next: She's in her 80s and no longer drives. It is hard for her to gather gifts and to care for others directly. "I'm especially blessed," she said, "that I can use your ministry to help me."

This is a woman who refuses to let age or mobility stop her from running her race. She's still serving, still encouraging, still bearing

witness to Christ's love. Worship Anew makes it possible for her to keep going. She's running with endurance, laying aside the weight of physical limitations, and continuing the work God has given her to do.

Every Sunday, when you tune in to "Worship Anew," you're joining thousands of brothers and sisters in Christ across the country. You're not isolated. You're not forgotten. You're part of a great company of believers who are running this race together. When circumstances make it difficult to gather in a church building (whether because of distance, mobility, health, or simply the challenges that come with aging), our ministry endeavors to ensure you still have that connection, that fellowship, that reminder: You are not alone.

We've been proclaiming the Gospel that keeps you running. We've been pointing you, again and again, to Jesus. He is the founder and perfecter of our faith, the one who is both the reason we run and the finish line we're running toward.

Looking to Jesus means remembering that He ran His race perfectly on our behalf. When we stumble, He has already crossed the finish line for us. When we grow weary, His grace carries us forward. When the weight of sin or life's burdens threatens to slow us down, His forgiveness lifts those burdens and sets us free to run again.

As we continue this journey together, know that Worship Anew remains committed to running alongside you. We're providing worship, devotional resources, practical magazine articles, care packages, and reminders of God's faithfulness. The race is long, but we have endurance through Christ. The way can be difficult, but we're surrounded by witnesses. And most importantly, our eyes are fixed on Jesus, who will bring us safely home.

Keep running, dear friends, with your eyes fixed on Jesus. We're in this race together.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith."

Hebrews 12:1-2a ESV

In This Issue

4 From Dust

The Rev. Joe Hoem shares about Ash Wednesday as a guest pastor on "Worship Anew."

5 Comfort in Hymns

Tune in for our Lenten choir program, available on our streaming services.

9 Program Summaries

See what is on "Worship Anew" in February.

10 Time to Move

The power of movement in your overall health.

12 Running the Race

The encouragement we find in the race and at our finish.

18 Hope in Doubt

Finding God's guidance in our anxiety.





The Rev. Joe Hoem will guest preach on "Worship Anew" for the Ash Wednesday program. It will be available on streaming services.

Redeemed Dust

*By Ashley Wiehe
Director of Communications*

Dust usually isn't a wanted thing. It's something that dirties our homes and soils our shoes. But, what about redeemed dust?

The Rev. Joe Hoem brings the message of "The Great Exchange" to "Worship Anew" on Feb. 18, Ash Wednesday.

Hoem has served as the pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., for the past five years.

His story is much like the story of the redeemed dust. He was born in India but was abandoned near the doorsteps of an orphanage where he was then raised for five years. A Lutheran couple from Sheboygan, Wis., then adopted and raised him.

He had a good life. He went to college, worked in broadcasting, and then at a car dealership. In 2008, God called on his heart to go the seminary to become a pastor.

His first call was to a small parish in Murphysboro, Ill., and his career eventually led him to St. Paul's. As a pastor, he applies his knowledge of business administration and leadership to the work for his congregation.

At St. Paul's, it is customary on Ash Wednesday to put your ashes (your dust) on at the beginning of the worship service, especially when he is sharing with the students at his school. He wanted to share that same tradition on "Worship Anew."

"We tell them, this black cross is a reminder that you are a sinner in need of Christ's forgiveness, and then you can wear that as a reminder all day," he said. "Every time you look in the mirror, every time you see yourself, you should see yourself as a sinner."

But the illustration doesn't end there.

"That cross is a reminder that your sins are washed away — just like how you'll go home and wash this cross off," he said. "Your sins are washed away never to be had again because Christ took those to that cross for you."

For his message on "Worship Anew," he is wearing the "dust" on his forehead because he wants viewers to understand its importance.

"You are dust, and to dust you shall return," he said. "But your dust is in the hands of Jesus, and so your dust is now redeemed and saved, and you now have your new life in Christ, in His righteousness."

The "Worship Anew" Ash Wednesday program will be available on streaming services through Worship Anew's YouTube channel and app through Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Firestick, and Google TV.

To learn more about this and other resources during Lent, visit worshipanew.org/lent.





Tune in for comforting hymns from Worship Anew's Lenten choir program

As we look to the coming of our King, join Worship Anew in a time of song with a choir program, "My Song Is Love Unknown: A Lenten Musical Remembrance."

Worship Anew brings together hymns from choirs who have recorded for our weekly worship program.

This choir program will be available on Worship Anew's digital platforms, including YouTube, streaming, Worship Anew's app, and WorshipAnew.org.

The program will include the following hymns:

- ▶ "My Song Is Love Unknown" (LSB #430) by the Worship Anew Choir
- ▶ "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall" (LSB #562) by the Concordia Lutheran High School A Cappella Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.
- ▶ "God Loved the World So That He Gave" (LSB #571) by the Worship Anew Choir

- ▶ "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (LSB #761) by the Lincoln Lutheran High School Chamber Choir, Lincoln, Neb.
- ▶ "The Lamb" (LSB #547) by Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School, Centralia, Ill.
- ▶ "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (LSB #425) by the Worship Anew Choir
- ▶ "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" (LSB #655) by the LCMS Council of Presidents Choir
- ▶ "Be Present at Our Table, Lord" (LSB #775) by the Worship Anew Choir
- ▶ "Abide with Me" (LSB #878) by the Lincoln Lutheran High School Choir, Lincoln, Neb.

To learn more and see all of the ways to watch, visit worshipanew.org/lent.



Shown are the family members who influenced the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier III in his life. Shown above is the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier I, his grandfather. At left in both photos are his father, the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier II; grandfather, the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier I; grandmother, Hulda Maier; and uncle, the Rev. Dr. Paul Maier (left to right in picture to immediate left).

The influence of those who came before us

By Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier III

Our loving God has placed people in our lives who have had a blessed impact on us. There have been many such people in my life. In this brief article, I will mention only three: my grandfather, father, and uncle.

GRANDFATHER

Grandfather Maier (the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier I) died (January 1951) before I was born, so we were never together here on earth. However, he has had a profound influence on my life because of what I have heard about him, read about him, and because of his published writings.

He has been an encouragement to me, and our path through life has certain similarities. He received his Ph.D. in Semitics from Harvard University. I received the same degree from the same institution in almost the same area of study. He was a professor of Old Testament at one of the seminaries of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (hereafter Missouri Synod); so am I. He wrote a commentary on the Book of Nahum. I have written commentaries on 1 Kings 1-11 and 1 Kings 12-22 and am currently working on a commentary on 2 Kings.

My grandfather was also a great evangelist and

was the founder of and first speaker on the radio program, “The Lutheran Hour,” which began in 1930 and is still proclaiming the Gospel worldwide. He was a powerful preacher of God’s Word, and his radio sermons have been published and preserved in several volumes. I love reading his sermons, which are an inspiration to me, and sometimes in my preaching I use one of his sermon illustrations.

FATHER

The man who had the most influence on me was my father, the Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier II (died October 2019). He was a superb preacher, an exemplary pastor for 17 years, and then a professor of New Testament at Concordia Theological Seminary (where I am a professor of Old Testament) for more than 40 years.

He was a wonderful teacher of theology. I was blessed to learn from him from boyhood to close to the time of his death. This learning took place in various settings, including at the dinner table, during family devotions, in confirmation class, and in the seminary, where I had my father for five courses dealing with New Testament epistles.

Much of what I teach, preach, and write today comes from what my father taught me. He was also a zealous defender of God’s Word against false doctrine.

In the 1950s, the Missouri Synod began to be infiltrated by wrong methods of interpreting Scripture. My father was one of the leaders of a movement opposing this erroneous handling of God’s Word. He staunchly upheld the divine inspiration, truthfulness, and inerrancy of Scripture. In that capacity as a leader, he was elected a vice president of the Missouri Synod at the pivotal New Orleans convention of 1973, and he served in that office for 22 years. His zeal for the Word has been an inspiration to me.

UNCLE

Finally, I definitely want to mention my uncle the Rev. Dr. Paul L. Maier (my father’s younger brother), who died in February 2025.

Paul, a man very gifted by the Lord, was a brilliant historian, lecturer, speaker, and writer. He was unsurpassed in his ability to present large amounts of interesting information (derived from his research and learning) in a clear, understandable way, and with a delightful sense of humor.

Paul, for five decades, was a professor of history at Western Michigan University, where he also, for 39 years, was the chaplain for the Missouri Synod. He wrote many scholarly articles and authored several books, including a biography of his father; books dealing with Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost; historical novels; and mystery/adventure novels set in the present day (and all related somehow to the Christian faith).

His greatest service to the church, in my opinion, was as a Christian apologist, that is, a defender of the faith against attacks from the unbelieving world. He served as a vice president of the Missouri Synod for 12 years.

We thank God for those in our lives who have had a beneficial impact on us. I am truly grateful for my grandfather, father, and uncle, who taught me to fix my eyes on Jesus, to be strengthened by Christ, and to serve Him with joy.

The Rev. Dr. Walter A. Maier III has been a regular pastor on “Worship Anew” since 1998. He currently teaches in the Exegetical Department at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.



Who was St. Valentine?

*By Sheila Banks
Communication Specialist*

While St. Valentine is recognized as the patron saint of love, lovers, engaged couples, and happy marriages, he is also considered the patron saint of beekeepers, epilepsy, fainting, greetings, plague, travelers, and young people.

Various stories and legends abound, some with overlapping information. It is highly agreed, however, that St. Valentine was a third century Roman clergyman, who was martyred on February 14 around 270 A.D., during the time of Emperor Claudius II, and then buried on the Via Flaminia to the north of Rome.

In one story, it is said that Emperor Claudius II was involved in multiple battles and struggled to recruit soldiers. Claudius believed that marriage and family were distractions for the men, so he outlawed marriage. Valentine defied that order and performed marriages in secret. When it was discovered, he was arrested and executed.

Some say he was martyred for boldly proclaiming his faith. In this version, he prayed for healing for a government official's child. When the official and his family converted to Christianity, Claudius was furious and ordered Valentine's execution.

In yet another version, it is said that Valentine refused to deny Christ or sacrifice to pagan gods and was executed. In another story, it is said that he had a friendship with Claudius II, and that Claudius became enraged when Valentine tried to convert him to Christianity, then ordered Valentine's execution.

Regardless of the details surrounding his death, it is generally agreed that Valentine was martyred for practicing his Christian faith.

What can we learn from St. Valentine? Valentine stood strong in his faith regardless of the consequences.

In Matthew 10:32-33 (ESV), Jesus says, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus calls us to boldness and loyalty in our faith.

Valentine was a champion of love.

While we tend to associate romantic love with Valentine, Jesus calls us to agape love — a selfless, unconditional love that is shown to us by our loving Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The passage in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (ESV) tells us, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

May we, like St. Valentine, stand boldly and loyally in our faith, and be known as champions of love.

Happy Valentine's Day. 



Worship Anew in February

Year 2026 | Series A



The Power of God

February 1, 2026 – Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany ~ Rev. Paul Shoemaker

In the early church, Christians were being challenged by people who said the Christian faith was foolish. We know the “word of the cross ... is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV).

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Readings: Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Featured Choir: LWML Indiana District Choir

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Arcadia, Ind.



Salty Christians

February 8, 2026 – Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany ~ Rev. William Mueller

In His “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus pulls us deeper into an understanding of our relationship with Him. Just a little bit of salt brings some great flavor. In complete darkness, even a small light will change everything. Yet in all this, Jesus still has a surprise for us!

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:13-20 Readings: Psalm 112:1-9; Isaiah 58:3-9a; Matthew 5:13-20

Featured Choir: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Zion Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ind.



The Wrong Mountain

February 15, 2026 – The Transfiguration of Our Lord ~ Rev. Scott Zeckzer

There are times in our lives where we have “mountain top experiences.” The problem is that they do not last; they are forgotten. There is one “mountain top experience” that changed everything.

Sermon Text: Matthew 17:1-9 Readings: Psalm 2:6-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

Featured Choirs: Choir of the LCMS Council of Presidents; St. Paul Lutheran School, Munster, Ind.; St. Michael Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Mason City, Iowa



The Great Exchange

February 18, 2026 – Ash Wednesday ~ Guest Pastor – Rev. Joe Hoem

This program will only be available through Worship Anew's streaming services.

Lent isn't about improving ourselves but about seeing what Christ has done for us. In Him, we are made righteous, forgiven, and free to live as God's beloved.

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Readings: Psalm 51:1-13; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Featured Choirs: Lincoln Lutheran High School, Lincoln, Neb.; St. Paul's Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School, Centralia, Ill.; St. John Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Jesus Also Was Tempted

February 22, 2026 – First Sunday in Lent ~ Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

The bad news is that we will be tempted by Satan throughout our earthly lives. The good news is that Jesus also was tempted by the devil in all the ways that we are, yet He never once sinned. He defeated Satan for us and now helps us overcome temptations of the devil.

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:1-11 Readings: Psalm 52:1-7; Genesis 3:1-13; Matthew 4:1-11

Featured Choir: Concordia Lutheran High School A Cappella Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church (Soest), Fort Wayne, Ind.



The Power of Movement

A Secret Weapon for Aging Adults

By Janet Smith

Aging is a beautiful journey, yet with aging comes changes that challenge our physical health. Muscles shrink, bones deteriorate, joints stiffen, and energy dips. Although the body may be growing weary, God's call to love and serve others continues. Incorporating various intensities of movement provides natural medicine for the body and mind by:

- ▶ **Preserving Strength and Balance:** Weight-bearing and resistance training exercises help maintain muscle and bone health, lowering fall risk and supporting daily tasks.
- ▶ **Supporting Heart Health:** Aerobic

activities like walking, swimming, and biking improve cardiovascular function and facilitate circulation helping to prevent chronic disease.

- ▶ **Enhancing Mobility:** Stretching and gentle exercises keep joints supple, reducing stiffness and discomfort, while enhancing blood circulation, flexibility, and mobility.
- ▶ **Boosting Mental Health:** Physical activity stimulates endorphins, the body's feel-good chemicals, improves mood, fights stress, and sharpens your mind.

We may not have control over the natural



aging process, but we can make a difference by choosing movement. The phrase “use it or lose it” describes the training principle of reversibility. Thankfully, a more powerful principle of training, specificity, states that the body responds to the demands placed upon it. Fortunately, the body does not know exact movements but rather recognizes a challenge and responds. This means that we can move in multiple ways of varying intensity and keep our physical health in check.

Experts, including the Center for Disease Control, recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week in combination with two days of resistance training. If this seems overwhelming, be assured that even short bouts of movement — such as chair exercises, light stretching, playing with grandkids, and simple household chores — can make a difference.

Moderate-intensity can be determined using a simple talk-test or a rate of perceived excursion (RPE) scale. The intensity meets the recommendation level by using the “talk test.” The recommended level is when you are able to speak about eight to 10 words between regular breaths. On the RPE scale, a seven out of 10 represents a challenging effort that can be sustained over time. Monitoring your intensity level ensures that you meet your desired physical health benefits. Low-intensity workouts may not provide an adequate challenge while high-intensity workouts may produce fatigue that interrupts ongoing movement.

Resistance training — movement that requires lifting, carrying, and pushing — preserves muscle mass and bone density. Due to modern day equipment and luxury, we are not required to move with resistance like our ancestors, so we need a more formal resistance training program. A well-designed resistance training program incorporates upper and lower body movements in multiple directions and positions. Through a simplified lens, resistance training can be performed in your living room with household items that are challenging to move.

As you look forward to the rest of the year, be encouraged to find new — and continue familiar — ways of moving. You are fearfully and

wonderfully made for God’s purpose to do His work with unique considerations and abilities. Be sure to consult a provider before initiating new programs and seek qualified professionals for exercise programming. Follow these practical tips to start and stay moving:

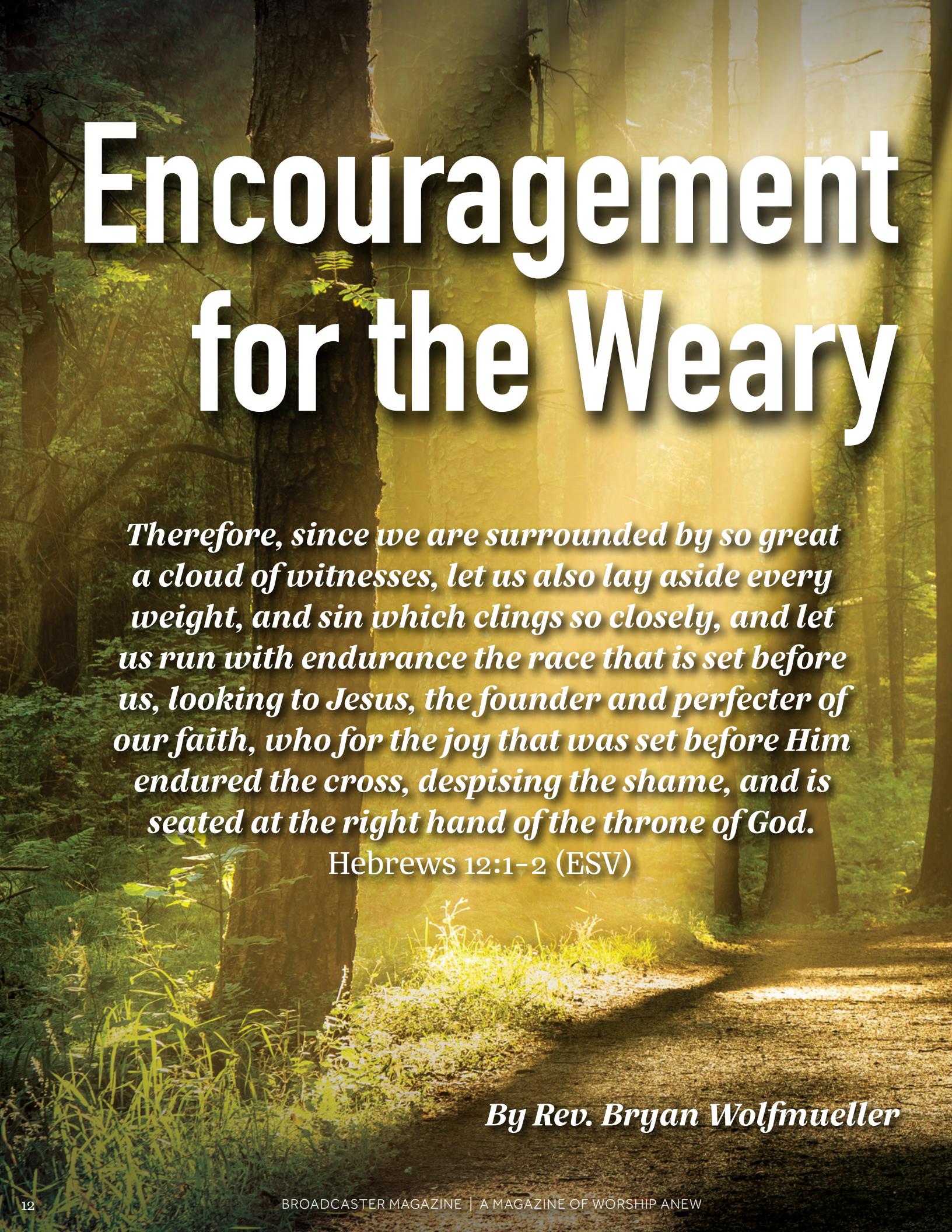
- ▶ **Smart Start:** Begin with 10-minute sessions and gradually increase intensity and duration. It will take time for your body to adjust to the demands of these new activities.
- ▶ **Mix It Up:** Combine aerobic, resistance, and mobility exercises for a balanced routine. Walking, biking, and swimming place different demands on the body and mind than lifting, carrying, pushing, twisting, and bending exercises.
- ▶ **Make It Social:** Join group classes and invite a friend. Look for ways to engage your family as you train up generations of caring for physical health.
- ▶ **Listen to Your Body:** Adapt activities to your comfort level and listen to your body’s response to challenges. If concerns arise, be sure to consult a healthcare provider.
- ▶ **Be Creative:** Make movement fun and seek simple ways to add activity each day. Sing along the way, laugh, be joyful, and even have a dance party.

Movement is not just about exercise; it’s about maintaining independence, resisting disease, and enjoying life to the fullest. Every step, stretch, and lift counts toward a healthier you. Running with endurance the race that is set before us requires care for our changing physical health.

Now, what are you doing sitting here reading this article? Get up and move!

Janet Smith is the assistant professor of health and exercise science at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Ind. She is also the LutheRun Cross Country Coach for the Fort Wayne Lutheran Schools.

Encouragement for the Weary



Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

By Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller



Imagine yourself running a race. It's a marathon, or longer, one of those races that goes on and on. You pass a few people, but mostly everyone has passed you. You are hungry and tired, your tongue is glued to the roof of your mouth, and your lungs feel like they are stuffed with flaming cotton. You try to sing and pray through the pain, and it seems like this race will never end.

This is one of those races that ends in the stadium, but it seems like you are nowhere close to the finish. Every time you climb over a little hill, all you see are more hills, more track, more running. Your feet drag. Your heart pounds. Your mind thinks only of quitting, of lying down on the side of the road.

But then you hear a sound, faint, in the distance — people cheering. And as you come along, you see the stadium, the track, and the end of the race. The sound gets louder, and you think you hear a familiar voice. You do! As you get closer, you see the faces of the people in the stands, and you recognize them, and they see you. Their faces light up when they recognize you, and they cheer even louder.

This is the picture given to us in Hebrews 12: “*Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*”

You turn the corner into the stadium and there, in the front row, are your grandparents, cheering you on. Your parents,

continued on page 14

the friends and family who have died before you. They are yelling, encouraging, *“You can make it.”*

Suddenly your legs are not so heavy. You see next to them others whom you recognize. There is Martin Luther, Martin Chemnitz, the crowd of faithful reformers, and they are cheering for you as well. *“Stay strong!”* they say. *“You are almost to the end.”*

You begin to forget your pain, your hunger, and your thirst.

Further along in the stadium are the Church Fathers, the martyrs, the apostles. There is Peter. *“Christ also suffered,”* he says. *“Run with joy.”* There is Paul. *“Keep the faith,”* he yells to you. There are Thomas and Matthew, and James and John, all pushing you on.

You begin to run faster.

You see Jeremiah and Isaiah, comforting you, and it seems as if your feet have grown wings. There is King David. *“Don’t grow weary!”* There is Joshua. *“Be strong and courageous!”* he shouts. There are Moses and Aaron, Joseph and Judah, Abraham and Sarah, and Noah with his family, and Abel, and Adam and Eve. *“We made it. We finished. You can too!”*

Can you imagine it!

There are the heroes, those who have finished the race, who kept the faith. The great cloud of finishers.

You are running with purpose now, and you make the last turn. You see the finish line. There, standing at the end, is Jesus. His arms are stretched out. He is waiting for you. You see the scars in His hands. His eyes are fixed on you. He smiles. *“A little further,”*



He says, *“just a little while. A few more steps.”*

You are sprinting now. You throw off anything that is slowing you down. Weariness is forgotten. You can’t hear the crowd anymore. Hope is set before you. Hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV)

Jesus is the beginning, and Jesus is the end. He is the source and the goal, the start and the finish. He is at the Father’s right hand, and you will

be there soon. And in the meantime, while we labor here below, Jesus waits. He prays for you. He prepares a place for you. He finishes the work that He began in you, and He will bring it to completion in His time.

We are not seeking to have a martyr’s faith in a faithless world. We are seeking Jesus, striving for Him, grasping to take hold of His eternal life, knowing that He has already taken hold of us. He is our finish line, and soon we will reach Him.

Amen.

From *Martyr’s Faith in a Faithless World* published by Concordia Publishing House, text © 2019 Bryan Wolfmueller. Used with permission. To order this publication, please contact Concordia Publishing House at 800-325-3040 or visit them online at cph.org.

Luther on the Joy and Gladness of the Martyrs as They Go to the Death

By Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller

***With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the King.
(Psalm 45:15 ESV)***

Change the tense from the future to the present. He is sketching how the church and the people of God are led into the palace, to Christ Himself, as if to a dance and royal banquet. Therefore here, too, spiritual eyes are required, such as Saint Agatha had. When they were taken off to torture on account of their confession of Christ, she said they were being led to the dance and sumptuous feasts. So the church is exposed to all misfortunes and torments, and individual Christians are either thrown into prison or overwhelmed by sorrow, temptations, and martyrdom. Yet they suffer all these things with a joyous conscience, because the Holy Spirit is with them, making them despise the wrath and fury of the world and the devil with all his terrors, so that they even enter into danger with joy. How is it that Christians remain steadfast in so many temptations, tortures within and without, and still do not deny Christ? Because they know they are in the service of this King and are being led to Him in splendor. So I, too, could not make even one sermon in public if I were not encouraged by such promises that Christ lives and is our Lord. This brings forth a certain confidence, so that we can think this way: "If it is true that Christ is our Lord and King, then, whether we are killed or despoiled, you may still be joyful and unshaken in your mind." This is the allegorical dance about which the prophet speaks here, in which there is a joy that is neither natural nor carnal, but supernatural and spiritual, overcoming the fears of death and despising the madness of hell and of Satan and his members. The church should be instructed by faith; that is the golden garment. Then it must be adorned with love and patience, "that it may glory in tribulation" (Romans 5:3). Then, if anyone undergoes persecution for the sake of the Word, he may say: "Quite right. I have sought this by my preaching, that I might excite the world and Satan against me. But I will not quit on this account." So this dance will be danced correctly. (AE 12:295–96)

From *Martyr's Faith in a Faithless World* published by Concordia Publishing House, text © 2019 Bryan Wolfmueller. Used with permission. To order this publication, please contact Concordia Publishing House at 800-325-3040 or visit them online at cph.org.

Blessings through Thrivent

By Jon Dize, CFRE
Director of Development & Strategic Initiatives

Many of our readers may remember the time when Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans combined in 2002 to form Thrivent Financial. While those former names have faded from memory, Worship Anew continues to be blessed by members of Thrivent Financial.

Depending on the type of investment or insurance product that you have with Thrivent Financial, you can direct funds to benefit some of your favorite charities and ministries, including Worship Anew. While there was a time when chapters would decide how to distribute charitable support from Thrivent, now **you** can decide what ministries can receive funding.

Thrivent Choice dollars have been an important support vehicle for us. Every month, we are notified of a combined gift coming our way thanks to many friends like you that designate their Thrivent Choice dollars to our ministry. In 2024 and 2025 alone, more than **160 friends** of Worship Anew **donated more than \$35,000** to support the costs associated with our local and military broadcasts, this monthly magazine, and our Care Ministry.

If you are one of those friends, **Thank You!** We do not always receive the names associated with the gifts received, so please know that we thank God every month for your generosity.

If you are a Thrivent member who has not yet directed Thrivent Choice dollars to the ministry, you can go online to Thrivent.com or contact your Thrivent adviser and start the process. Please note that when you go to direct Choice funds to Worship



Anew, we may be listed in their system by our legal name of "Lutheran Ministries Media, Inc.," so be sure to make note of that detail.

You have to direct your Thrivent Choice funds by March of every year, so please consider supporting Worship Anew today, before the deadline of March 31 passes by and the funds expire.

Not only has Thrivent Choice been a blessing to us, but **Thrivent's Action Team grants** have been integral to many of our events over the years, including our annual golf outing, our annual volunteer appreciation lunch, and our Care Ministry. Every Thrivent member receives two Action Team grants to direct every calendar year, so please contact our team at (888) 286-8002 to see how you can utilize an Action Team grant for the ministry in 2026.

As Matthew 6:21 (ESV) notes, "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" How wonderful that so many of your "hearts" are directing this "treasure" to us.

When you choose to invest in our ministry, you are placing your heart into the work of sharing Christ's love and hope with others.

Thank you for making an eternal impact through your generosity.

Why do pastors wear what they wear to preach? Is it commanded in Scriptures?

The pastors on “Worship Anew” wear vestments to show that they share the Words of Christ and speak His forgiveness. One big reason for vestments is to take the focus off the individual (and whatever the choice of clothing may be) and to keep the focus on Christ. This practice echoes back to passages in the Bible such as Exodus 28 where priests were directed to wear specific clothing to distinguish their office. Wearing white also symbolizes the purity we have in Christ and His sacrifice on the cross for us. The stole is worn to signify the pastor’s ordination and the yoke of Christ. The cincture (rope belt) represents the readiness for service.

What are the meanings behind the stained-glass windows on the sides of the chancel area on “Worship Anew”?

In the historic Christian church, the four Gospel writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — are often depicted with symbolic creatures known as the Tetramorph, drawn from the visions in Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4. These ancient symbols remind us that the four Gospels proclaim the one saving work of Jesus Christ from different, complementary perspectives:



Matthew (1) – Winged Man (or Angel): Emphasizes Christ’s true humanity and incarnation — God made flesh for our salvation.

Mark (2) – Winged Lion: Signifies courage and royalty, portraying Christ as the victorious King who conquers sin and death.

Luke (3) – Winged Ox: Represents sacrifice and service, pointing to Christ as the perfect priest who offers Himself for the world.

John (4) – Eagle: Symbolizes spiritual vision and the divine nature of Christ, lifting our eyes to His eternal glory.

These symbols, often seen in stained glass windows and sacred art, call us to rejoice in the unity of the Gospel message: Jesus Christ, true God and true man, crucified and risen for us and for our salvation. You’ll see two of these pieces on “Worship Anew” — the one of John is on the left and the one of Luke is on the right side of the altar. The other two are located above the main entrance into Worship Anew.

Have Social Security Payments been renamed “Federal Benefit Payments”? Is there anything I need to do?

The term “benefit payment” appears in federal documents and has long referred to payments for federal entitlement programs (Social Security, SSI, VA benefits, etc.). Social Security checks have always been considered federal benefit payments since the program began in the 1930s. The phrase is therefore not a recent rebranding or legal change. While there is movement to modernizing payment methods, such as moving from paper checks to electronic deposits, the government is not changing program names at this time.

A note from the Editor ...

In our letters to the editor section, we would like to answer any and all questions that you have about Scripture, aging well, and our ministry. Please send your questions to editor@worshipanew.org. Please know that we will try to answer as many questions as we can. Thank you and enjoy!



Hope in the Midst of Doubt

GOD'S PROMISE IS GREATER THAN MY ANXIETY

By Dr. Todd A. Peperkorn

In times of suffering, doubt rises up like a wave that overwhelms. It can be crippling, paralyzing, and brings with it fear, anxiety, and hopelessness. We can sound like the psalmist in Psalm 10:1, looking for God when He seems to have run away and hidden from us.

In many ways, the suffering of this life is always forcing the “where is God” question upon us. This is never clearer than when that suffering comes from mental illness like depression or anxiety. Many of the symptoms of mental illness come because we get overstimulated by the outside world. Sights, sounds, and even emotional pressure can cause us to turn inward and try to escape all the things that make life so hard.

That is how Satan often uses doubt. Because my instinct is to isolate when I am suffering and in hardship, this cuts me off from the very thing that I need to have peace. The “did God really say” that Satan used in the Garden of Eden still works pretty well on us. Because things are hard, there can be this voice coming at you, trying to lure you away from our Lord’s certain promises. Satan wants you to doubt that God is on your side, and because you are suffering, Satan will try to use that suffering and hardship as proof that God doesn’t love you.

“Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”

Psalm 10:1 ESV



But that isn't true. God does love you. He demonstrated this by sending Jesus to die and rise again so that you might live with Him forever. God's love for you in Christ is the most certain thing in your life, even if things are hard — especially when things are hard.

The key, though, is to remember that faith comes from outside of us. Faith is not a matter of willpower. I can't make myself believe in God's loving care for me. Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9), and because it is a gift, that means God is the one who gives us this gift. He gives this gift to us by His Word and Spirit.

Because faith is a gift, that means it isn't based on how I feel or what I think. It isn't a matter of choice or pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps. Faith means looking to God in Christ because looking to yourself is useless and even harmful.

So, what should you do when you doubt God's love and mercy? What should you do when the answers aren't there, when the more you seek Him out, the farther away He seems? Stop looking inside yourself for the answers. Recognize that whether it is Satan or it is your "depression brain," in both cases, they are lying to you.

Hear what our heavenly Father says to us in His Word:

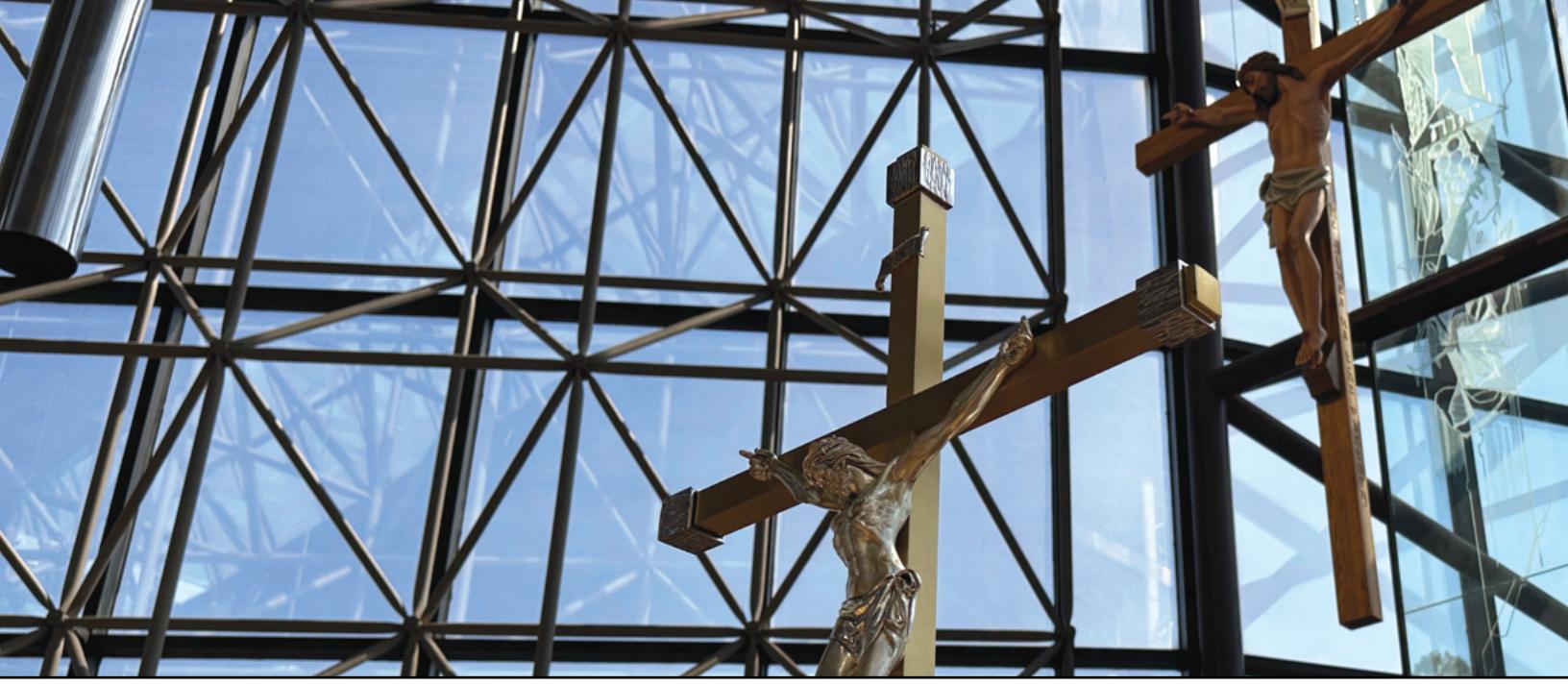
"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26 ESV).

Your heart is not the measure of God's love in Christ. Christ binds Himself to you in the waters of Holy Baptism. That water soaks you, permeates you, envelops you so that you are never alone, never abandoned, never left behind.

There are no easy answers to the hardships that we face in this life. Doubt is always lurking in the corners, trying to lure us away from the sure and certain promises of God. Thank God that He reveals Himself to us in His Word, that His love for us isn't based on us, and that even when we stumble, He will lift us up in His mercy.

That is where our hope lies.

Dr. Todd A. Peperkorn serves as an assistant professor of pastoral ministry and missions at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. He is author of the book, "I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression."



KEEPING YOUR FOCUS

By Rev. Scott Zeckzer

The Winter Olympics are happening this month. Olympic athletes train for years for their events. They focus on their goal by rising early in the morning, following a strict diet, and getting plenty of rest. Some will focus on winning a medal. Others will focus on just finishing their event. For most of the athletes, "winning" will be competing and finishing.

The writer in Hebrews compares our lives with running a race.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV).

The writer is encouraging us. First,

we are surrounded by witnesses — those saints who have run the race already. Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, the apostles, Paul, family, and friends are surrounding us with their examples of how they lived, both their successes and their failures. They are encouraging us to live with the end goal in focus.

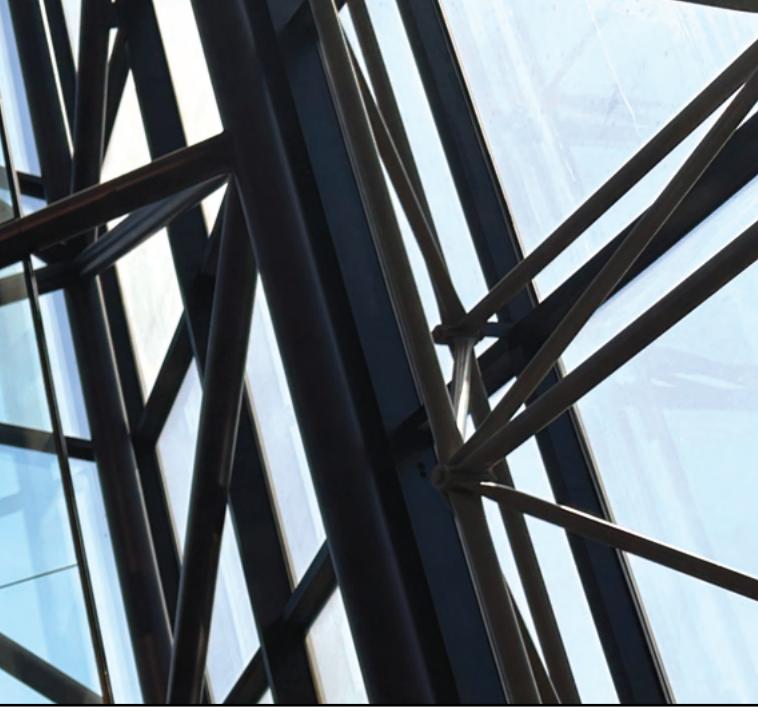
The writer says "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (v. 1b). Just like athletes must maintain their focus when they train and when they run their race, we must maintain our focus on Jesus when running our race in our lives as believers in Christ. The Christian life is a lot like a marathon. There are some days where it is easy to run the race. There are other days when it is hard. There are times when we fall and fail. It is during these struggles that we endure. "Keep On Keeping On."

The good news is that we do not run the race alone. Our Savior, Jesus,

has already run the race. He has finished the race and is encouraging us to finish the race. Jesus' race culminated in the cross for our salvation. The writer said, "who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is now sitting on the throne of God" (v. 2). The JOY for Jesus was not just winning the race for Himself but for YOU to win the race. His goal was for YOU to have forgiveness of all your sins and to have eternal life with Him. The JOY for Jesus is you.

Be encouraged to keep your focus on Jesus as you run your race. The saints are cheering for you. Jesus is cheering for you and is helping you every step of the way. He is not only with you always as you run, but He is waiting for you at the end of your race with arms wide open to give you a hug and welcome you home.

The Rev. Scott Zeckzer is serving as the senior pastor at Emanuel Lutheran Church in New Haven, Ind., and a pastor on "Worship Anew."



This month's study text:

Jesus, Founder and Perfecter of Our Faith

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do Not Grow Weary

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; 16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Reflection Questions:

Who are the “great cloud of witnesses?”
(Read Hebrews 11)

The writer tells us to “run with endurance.”
How does that happen in your life?

What role does Jesus play in your faith?
(Hebrews 12:2)

Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hebrews 12:1-17 ESV

Valentine's Crafts for Grandparents and Grandkids

By Thomas Moll
Director of Content & Innovation

"We love because he first loved us." ~ 1 John 4:19 ESV

Valentine's Day offers a wonderful opportunity for grandparents to create lasting memories with their grandchildren while sharing the greatest love story ever told — God's love for us through Jesus Christ. Below are some simple crafts that combine creativity with meaningful conversation, helping bridge the generations through both hands-on activities and heart-to-heart connection.

Paper Chain Love Links

Create a colorful paper chain where each link features something you love about each other or something you're thankful to God for. Cut construction paper into strips, and on each one, write a blessing, memory, or reason for gratitude. As you connect the links, read them aloud together. This tangible reminder of God's blessings can hang in a bedroom or living room long after Valentine's Day. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18 ESV).

Handprint Hearts

Trace each person's handprint on red or pink paper, then arrange them together to



form a heart shape. This simple craft beautifully illustrates how God brings people together in love. Write "God Loves You" in the center. These crafts make treasured keepsakes for grandparents and grandchildren.

Conversation Starters

While crafting together, these questions can open doors to meaningful dialogue:

Grandkids can ask grandparents:

- ▶ What's your favorite memory of Valentine's Day?
- ▶ How did you show love to others when you were my age?
- ▶ What Bible verse about love means the most to you?

Grandparents can ask grandkids:

- ▶ What makes you feel most loved?
- ▶ How does God show His love for us?
- ▶ Who is someone you'd like to show love to this Valentine's Day?

Love Letters to God

Perhaps the most meaningful craft is writing love letters to God together, thanking Him for His perfect love shown through Jesus. Decorate the letters or cards with hearts, stickers, or drawings. Keep these in a special place to reread throughout the year when you need reminders of God's faithfulness.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 ESV).

As you craft together this Valentine's Day, remember that the construction paper, glue, and conversations are temporary — but the love that Christ has for you will never fade. These moments of connection reflect the eternal love God has for each of His children, young and old alike.



SUDOKU

8		2			5			
	4		7	1		8		
	7		9		8	2	3	5
		4	2				5	
1	2		5	9		4		
5				3	6		2	
2		7				9	8	1
	5		1	7	3			
4				2	9		7	

4	1	6	8	2	9	5	7	3
9	5	8	1	7	3	6	4	2
2	3	7	6	5	4	9	8	1
5	8	9	4	3	6	1	2	7
1	2	3	5	9	7	4	6	8
7	6	4	2	8	1	3	5	9
6	7	1	9	4	8	2	3	5
3	4	5	7	1	2	8	9	6
8	9	2	3	6	5	7	1	4

ANSWER

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FOR GOD'S GLORY



Worship Anew's production team was presented with two awards for their work on the weekly worship program. Access Fort Wayne team members, (left to right) John O'Rourke and Alan Bengs, presented the awards to Paul Melin, retired director of production and accessibility, Jeremy Klopfenstein, director of production, and Thad Goff, video editor and production specialist. The Philo Festival of Media Arts awards recognized the team's work on a choir production with the Concordia University Irvine (California) Choir and "Worship Anew" Reformation Day program that featured guest pastor, the Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler, the speaker of The Lutheran Hour.