

October 2026

BROADCASTER

A magazine of Worship Anew



**SHARING THE GOSPEL
WITH THE AGING**



Matthew F. Leighty

Matthew F. Leighty
Executive Director

Cover photo by Ashley Wiehe

This stained glass windows stands in the middle of the chancel where the pastors record “Worship Anew.” This stained glass was provided by Trinity Lutheran Church in Glencoe, Ill.

Please love your pastor

If you were writing the help-wanted ad for a pastor, one would think it wouldn’t draw many applicants.

Nights, weekends, and especially holidays. On call for every emergency, including the 3 a.m. kind. Regular public speaking to the same audience, every one of whom will have thoughts about it. Two ancient languages required, plus the ability to explain documents written thousands of years ago to people living now. Also expected: conflict resolution, snow removal, and enough technical skill to run the sound board, update the website, and design the weekly bulletin. Some singing, unaccompanied, in front of everyone. Compensation: modest. Prior experience with the dying preferred.

God does not advertise the pastoral office. He calls men into it, and Peter told them how it was to be carried:

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight ... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3). A pastor is not separated from his flock. He is put in the middle of it all. Most of that work never appears on an award show or plays out in a blockbuster movie. It is

the care of souls, which the faithful and the lost so desperately need.

In the early 2000s, I remember a weekend I intended to spend with my parents. I did not get much time with my dad, however, because he wasn’t home. My father was a Lutheran pastor, serving a congregation for the deaf in Iowa. An elderly couple there, both deaf themselves, had a son with a long history of drugs and trouble. He had boarded a bus on the West Coast, headed to them in the Midwest. Somewhere along the way, they lost track of him. They did not know where he was or whether he was alive.

So, my dad made the calls. Police departments. Bus stations. Shelters that might have seen the son. He spoke the couple’s questions into a telephone and signed the answers back to them — concern gripping their faces. It went on the entire time I was there. He was one of the very few people in their world who could help. I do not know whether they ever found their son. I know my father kept calling.

It wasn’t a sermon, elders meeting, or church picnic. It was a man sitting between two frightened parents and the rest of the world, being their voice.



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

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Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight ... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

1 Peter 5:2-3

That is what Peter is describing.

My whole career has kept me in the company of pastors. What they talk about most is their people — the souls in their care.

A pastor today has a growing number of members who no longer come through the church doors. They are scattered across care facilities, second-floor apartments, and farmhouses 20 minutes out of town. He visits them, and he knows exactly who sits alone on Sunday morning while he is in the pulpit.

You may know one of those members. Perhaps the drive to church became too dangerous, or the steps into the narthex too difficult to climb. Nothing about their faith has changed. They were baptized into Christ, and they belong to Him and to your congregation still. But on Sunday morning the hymns are being sung across town, and they're no longer there sitting in "their pew."

That is why Worship Anew exists. Not to replace your pastor. Nor would we ever want to. No television

program can baptize a grandchild, administer Christ's body and blood, or speak absolution by name at a bedside. That is a pastor's office, given by Christ.

What we can do is make sure that every Sunday an ordained Lutheran pastor preaches about Christ's crucifixion and resurrection wherever the sheep are, be it their living room or a hospital bed. The hymns they knew from the time they were children are sung. The Word is boldly read and proclaimed. And this ministry does not stop when the program ends. Hope-Full Living puts Scripture in their hands daily, bringing the encouragement that comes only from the Word. Our Care Ministry keeps it going, too, with comforting items and encouraging resources that come alongside cards, calls, and prayers from people near and far. And this magazine is here as a resource for you for everyday challenges.

Peter does not leave the shepherds without a promise: "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory"

(1 Peter 5:4). Your pastor is himself a sheep, kneeling for the same absolution he pronounces over you. He is an under-shepherd. Christ is the Chief.

So, love your pastor this month. Thank him for something specific. Pray for him and his family. And when he speaks about the members he cannot reach every week, take some of that weight off him. Call them. Sit with them while the program plays. Tell them the pew is still theirs. And if you are the one whose pew sits empty, hear it for yourself: The Shepherd has not lost you, and He never counts a sheep too far out to carry home.

As the dearly loved hymn "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" so comfortingly proclaims:

*"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid
And home rejoicing brought me."
— Henry W. Baker, 1868 (LSB #709)*

In This Issue

4 Sharing Thanks
Taking the time to thank your pastor.

8 The Clarity of the Gospel
Understanding more about the Reformation and the church.

9 Program Summaries
See what is on "Worship Anew" in October.

10 Years of Sharing
"Worship Anew" pastors reflect on their time on the program.

18 Express Your Thanks
How being thankful can support your mental health.

23 Pastor Appreciation
Ways to thank your pastors (and those on "Worship Anew").

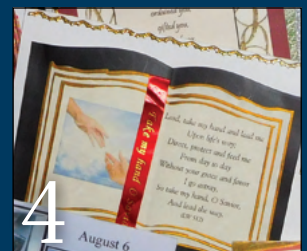




Photo provided by Ruth Haak
Ruth Haak makes and delivers cards to her pastors.

Cookies, Cards, and Christ

ENCOURAGEMENT YOU CAN TASTE AND SEE

By Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

A dear and faithful “Worship Anew” viewer who clearly embodies God’s gift of encouragement is Ruth Haak.

When I walked into the modest Chicago-area home that Ruth has shared with her brother Chuck, a retired Lutheran teacher, since the 1970s, I quickly discovered a life shaped by faith.

Crosses hung on the walls. Paintings and photos reminded visitors of Christ’s promises. Family memories and church traditions were woven into nearly every corner. For Ruth, faith has never been reserved for Sunday morning. It is meant to be lived — and shared — with others.

“It started with Sunday School,” she recalls warmly. “We always went to church as a family.”

Her father served as a church elder. He also had the wonderful job of ringing the old-fashioned church bell — the kind with a big, heavy rope.

“He loved it,” Ruth recalls. “He would always say that sometimes he rang it just a little longer, hoping to wake up anyone who might still be sleeping and remind them that it was Sunday morning and time for church.”

Her father worked two jobs to make Lutheran education possible for all four children, while her mother was deeply involved in church and school activities. Sundays centered on worship, family meals, and gratitude for God’s gifts. Those simple rhythms of faith and family left Ruth with memories she continues to treasure.

Those rhythms shaped Ruth for life and helped cultivate her remarkable gift for encouraging others.



God in his kindness gave each of us different gifts. If your gift is ... encouraging others, devote yourself to giving encouragement.

~ Romans 12:6a, 8c (God's Word Translation)

A Ministry of Encouragement

Over the years, Ruth worked for Hartford Insurance, beginning while she was still in high school. She also became involved in creative church ministries, including clown ministry and designing scenery for Vacation Bible School and Sunday School.

Known as “Sparkles,” she played the playful, goofy character who brought smiles to children and adults alike.

But perhaps her most enduring ministry has come through something much simpler: paper, glue, ribbon, stamps, and handwritten words.

Ruth is known among pastors and church workers for her handmade cards — sent for birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, confirmations, illnesses, and any occasion when someone might need encouragement. She once sent me a birthday card that, to my amazement and delight, released tiny butterflies when I opened it, creating a little burst of joy that I still remember with gratitude.

“I don’t want anybody to have a birthday or occasion and not have anyone remember them,” she said.

That sentence captures Ruth’s ministry: ***She remembers people.***

Remembering someone is one of the simplest and most powerful ways of saying, *You matter. You are not forgotten. Someone cares.*

This God-inspired practice began when Ruth’s pastor made a point of mailing birthday and anniversary cards to everyone in the congregation. Ruth helped make that ministry easier by setting up a computer program for him and training him to use it. When he retired and a new pastor arrived, Ruth did the same for his successor, so he could continue sending the cards.

When that pastor eventually retired, Ruth took the ministry into her own hands, continuing to make and send the cards, this time with her signature. What began as a way of helping her pastors became a personal ministry of encouragement that Ruth continues to make her own.



Photo provided by Ruth Haak

Ruth Haak has made it her mission to show her pastors thanks with food, cards, and gifts.

Encouraging Those Who Encourage Others

Ruth has a particular heart for pastors and church workers.

Pastors carry enormous emotional burdens — celebrating Baptisms and weddings one day while walking with families through hospital rooms, crises, and funerals the next. Ruth understands that reality.

“People don’t take the time to say an encouraging ‘thank you,’” she observes. “You’re on 24-hour call. That has to be a lot for a human being to deal with.”

So, Ruth does something about it. She remembers. She writes. She sends cards. She prays. She bakes. In other words, ***she encourages.***

Her email address even includes the moniker “cookiebakngal” — a fitting glimpse into someone whose

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

encouragement often comes with something homemade and sweet.

For Ruth, baking is another way of saying, “I thought of you. I wanted to do something for you. I hope this brings you a little joy.”

She and her mother once baked cookies to help fund outdoor education for children, and church gatherings frequently benefited from her baking. Serving others became second nature.

That servant-hearted faith was tested through difficult seasons. Ruth helped care for her mother following a leg amputation, preparing meals and arranging care before commuting downtown for work. She and Chuck also helped care for their sister during cancer treatments. Ruth knows that encouragement isn’t merely something we offer when life is going well. Often, encouragement means **showing up when life is hard** — preparing a meal, making a phone call, sending a card, baking cookies, or simply remembering someone’s name.

When Ruth Needed Encouragement

One especially painful chapter came when Ruth’s longtime congregation, Nazareth Lutheran Church, closed several years ago. Like many Christians who can no longer easily attend worship in person, Ruth faced a deep sense of isolation.

Then came an unexpected gift.

Chuck, her brother, discovered “Worship Anew” while researching livestreaming ministry for his own congregation. Soon, Ruth began regularly worshipping through the broadcasts.

“If it wasn’t for that,” she said, “I wouldn’t have weekly ‘church.’”

Now worship services, hymns, and sermons from “Worship Anew” and other Lutheran churches across the country fill her home each week. She speaks warmly about many of the pastors she watches. Their preaching reminds her that Christ continues to speak hope and encouragement to His people wherever they may be.

There is something especially beautiful about that: **The encourager becomes the encouraged.** The woman who has spent years reminding others that they are remembered and loved now receives that same reminder through “Worship Anew.”

Encouragement Matters

During Pastor Appreciation Month this October, Ruth’s story offers an important reminder: **encouragement matters.**

A handwritten note matters. A remembered birthday matters. A homemade card matters. A batch of cookies matters. A simple “thank you” matters.



Photo provided by Ruth Haak

Ruth and the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer share a meal during his visit.

A Prayer for the Encourager

O encouraging heavenly Father, I thank You for the people and opportunities You place in my life to encourage me and, through me, to encourage others. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear those who need encouragement, and a heart that remembers those who have encouraged me. What a Friend I have in You, Lord Jesus ... a Friend who walks beside me through life’s trials, temptations, and troubles, meeting me when I am weary or alone with strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Keep me anchored in Your promises and make me a faithful encourager who reflects Your love to others. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

These may seem like small things, but God often uses small things to accomplish His gracious purposes. A few handwritten words can lift a weary heart. A phone call can interrupt loneliness. A thoughtful gift can remind someone that he or she has not been forgotten.

When asked what she hopes pastors remember about homebound worshipers, Ruth answers simply: “Talk to us in common terms. Talk about everyday life. Help people understand God’s love where they live.”

That is exactly what Ruth has been doing all these years.

She has taken God’s love and put it into everyday things — cards, cookies, conversations, prayers, creativity, hospitality, and simple acts of remembrance.

Through them all, she has quietly proclaimed a profound Gospel truth: **You are seen. You are remembered. You matter. You are forgiven and loved by the crucified and risen Christ.**

And that, after all, is what Christian encouragement is really about.

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer is a regular pastor on “Worship Anew” and serves as the pastor at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Go to page 22 for recipes from Ruth Haak’s kitchen.



Photo provided by Ruth Haak
The Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer (left) and Ruth Haak (right) pose together for a photo during his visit.

How can you support a pastor or a “Ruth” in your life?

Who has been a “Ruth” in your life — someone whose simple words or acts of kindness reminded you that you were seen, remembered, and loved by Christ? How might you thank or encourage that person?

Ruth discovered that encouragement can take very simple forms — cards, cookies, prayers, phone calls, and remembering important occasions. What simple act of encouragement could God use through you this week?

Ruth’s congregation closed, leaving her feeling isolated, yet God used “Worship Anew” to remind her that she was not alone. When have you experienced God bringing encouragement into your life during a difficult or lonely season?

Romans 12 calls encouragement a gift God gives His people. Where do you see opportunities in your family, congregation, workplace, or neighborhood to “devote yourself to giving encouragement”? What might that look like in practice?

Whose church is it, anyway?

By Thomas Moll, Director of Content

When I was young, I noticed two-letter initials on kids' clothing and toys at my preschool, marking ownership. You can't imagine how excited I was, looking underneath toy after toy to find they were all labeled TM. So much was mine! What a disappointing day it was when I learned TM stood for "trademark" and not Tommy Moll.

When we look at the names attached to our churches (the list of pastors on the church website, the name of the congregation president, the name of a saint on the church sign), we could ask ourselves, "Whose church is this?"

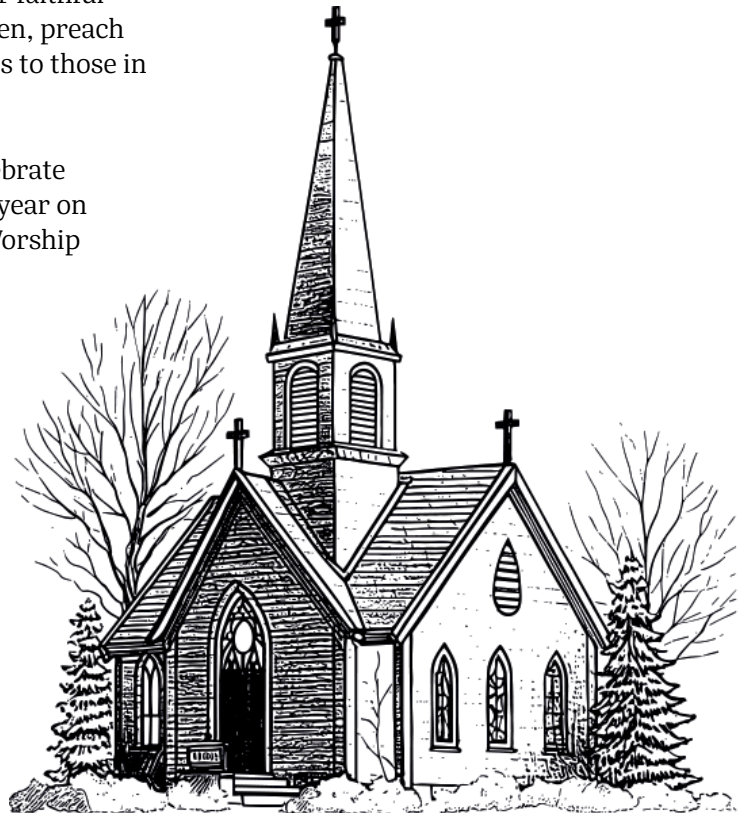
As we make our way through October, we have some great things to celebrate as a church. This is Pastor Appreciation Month — a time to thank God for faithful shepherds who guide His children, preach His Word, and give His good gifts to those in need.

At the end of the month, we celebrate Reformation Day, observed this year on Sunday, October 25. Our first "Worship Anew" program in October, preached by The Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer, poses the question: "Whose Church Is It, Anyway?" The answer comes from the Rev. William Mueller's Reformation Sunday message: "It's Still about Jesus."

This clarity of the Gospel was the heart of the Reformation, and it's still refocusing and revitalizing churches and individuals around the world. When Martin Luther visited

churches to see how their pastors were doing, his disappointment wasn't that they pointed to themselves; it was how little they knew of Scripture and how to point their people to Jesus. So, he got to work and produced a Small Catechism that pastors could put right into people's hands, a German Bible they could actually read, and a full year of model sermons from which to preach.

In the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS), we have pastors steeped in a theology that preaches Christ crucified clearly. We pray God continues to raise up pastors who will answer His call, shepherd His flock, and reach out to the lost with His love. After all, it's His church we're caring for — not our own.





Worship Anew in October

Year 2026 | Series A



Whose Church Is It, Anyway?

October 4, 2026 – Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

The church belongs to Jesus Christ, not us! He alone builds, sustains, and blesses His church through the saving gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Because we are His people by grace, we are freed and empowered to joyfully serve as Christ's presence in the world.

Sermon Text: Matthew 21:33-46

Readings: Psalm 80:7-19; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46

Featured Choirs: Holy Cross Angelis Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.;

Holy Cross Adult Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Cornerstone Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Ind.



The Feast Is Ready!

October 11, 2026 – Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Rev. Shayne Jonker

In Holy Baptism, God clothed you in the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness and gave you a seat at His table at the Great Wedding Feast. That table is set with His Word and His Supper. The feast is ready. Come to the table of the Lord and receive the free forgiveness, life, and salvation Christ has won for you.

Sermon Text: Matthew 22:2

Readings: Psalm 23 (KJV); Isaiah 25:6-9; Matthew 22:1-14

Featured Choirs: St. Paul Adult Choir, Decatur, Ind.;

Valley Lutheran High School Choir, Saginaw, Mich.

Featured Art and Architecture: Immanuel Lutheran Church (Frankentrost), Saginaw, Mich.



Faith, Love, Hope

October 18, 2026 – Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost ~ Rev. Paul Shoemaker

The life of a Christian can be challenging. The apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian Christians with these words, "We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV). May Paul's words be an encouragement to us.

Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Readings: Psalm 96:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22

Featured Choirs: Holy Cross Junior Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.;

St. Michael Adult Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Zion Lutheran Church, Holland, Mich.



It's Still about Jesus

October 25, 2026 – Reformation Sunday ~ Rev. William Mueller

Nine years ago, at the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this phrase was used to accurately capture the essence of the Reformation: "It's still about Jesus." In the nine years since, this has not changed! Celebrating Reformation Sunday is not an invitation to brag about our heritage or ethnicity; it is a time to hear the clear Word of God and to rejoice. It is still about Jesus!

Sermon Text: Romans 3:19-28

Readings: Psalm 46; Romans 3:19-28; John 8:31-36

Featured Choir: St. Paul Preble Adult Choir, Decatur, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Photo by Ashley Wiehe
The Chancel serves as a backdrop for “Worship Anew” productions.

Reflections on serving aging adults

FOUR “WORSHIP ANEW” PASTORS REFLECT ON THEIR DECADES OF PREACHING ON THE PROGRAM

Every October is Pastor Appreciation Month for the church. It’s a time for us to honor the pastors who guide us in our faith. This month, we asked four of our longest-serving “Worship Anew” pastors to write and reflect on their time of sharing the Gospel with aging adults through our program. We are grateful for their service and all that they do to share the Gospel with aging adults!

The Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III is a current pastor on the program. He has served on the program since 1998.

The Rev. Richard Koehneke has retired from the program, having served from 1994 to 2009.

The Rev. Paul Shoemaker is a current pastor on the program. He began serving in 1994 and is the longest-serving pastor for “Worship Anew.”

The Rev. Dr. Dan Brege is a retired pastor for the program, having served from 1992 to 2018.

A personal connection through ‘Worship Anew’

By Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

For me it is a tremendous privilege to be sharing the Gospel with aging adults through “Worship Anew.” This program is God’s instrument to bring his comforting Good News into homes, nursing homes, hospitals, and other places in this country and around the world. Being part of such a ministry is also an awesome responsibility, because God’s Word is being carried to many people for their everlasting welfare. All praise and honor go to the Lord, who has sustained and expanded the outreach of “Worship Anew” (originally “Worship for Shut-Ins”).

“Worship Anew” has meant much to me on a more personal level, as well. In the last years of their earthly lives, my father (who died in October 2019), mother (who died in March 2025), father-in-law (who died in May 2026), and mother-in-law (who died in November 2024) were not able to go to church. They did, however, regularly watch “Worship Anew” and were spiritually edified and strengthened through the Word which they saw and heard.

“Worship Anew” meant much to them and so it meant much to me! They frequently expressed their gratitude for the program, and when I was the preacher, they gave me beautiful words of encouragement. Sometimes I had the opportunity to watch “Worship Anew” with them. Those are treasured memories, as together we listened, sang, and prayed.

Thus, when preparing a message to be preached on the program, I would have one or all of them in mind. I was aware of challenges they faced and how their lives changed as they advanced in years. In addition, I became acquainted with their neighbors who were also aging adults. They, too, and their particular circumstances, were in view as I wrote homilies for “Worship Anew.” In reading through and teaching Scripture (I am a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind.), my thoughts, in part, would be how the individual passages would apply to these people and could bring them comfort, strength, and encouragement.

However, in preaching to others I, at the same time, am preaching to myself. First and foremost, that is because God’s Law and Gospel apply to all people — of all ages and in all situations. We all need to be humbled by the Law, which shows us our sins and the need we have for the Savior. How necessary it is, then, to hear the Gospel, which presents to us our Savior Jesus Christ and how through faith in Him we have forgiveness and everlasting life! Christ leads us as our Good Shepherd and gives to us through His Word and Supper the strength we need to live as His people.

Another reason, though, that I am preaching to myself is that I am getting older. As the saying goes, none of us is getting any younger! Caring for my parents and in-laws gave me a proper perspective on this life and reminded me of what could lie in the future for me. Nevertheless, in witnessing their strong faith in the Lord, their continual joy in Christ, and the blessed end of their earthly sojourn, I was given the wonderful comfort and encouragement that Christ is with each of us every step of the way and will at last take us to our heavenly home.

continued on page 12



The Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III has served Worship Anew since 1998, and he continues to serve to this day. These photos were taken in 1998 (left) and 2017 (right).

Reflecting on the definition of ‘broadcasting’

By Rev. Richard Koehneke

Jesus said, “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. ... Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:5-8, 11).

What does the word “broadcast” mean? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word “broadcast” means to scatter or sow over a broad area or to send out or transmit by means of radio or television or by streaming over the internet.

The ministry of Worship Anew is truly a “broadcasting” ministry in both senses of the word. The Word of God is transmitted; the seed of God’s Word is sown. We don’t know where the seed will land or whether it will bear fruit, but as the saying goes, “You can’t harvest what you don’t plant.”

Often the most fertile soil is that which has been softened by difficulty and watered by tears. When we realize that we are facing challenges that are beyond our capability to manage, we become more open to God and His life-changing, life-saving Word. Many of the viewers and listeners to “Worship Anew” are such people. Some of them are nearing the end of their earthly journey, and they are longing for strength, for peace, for comfort. That is exactly what “Worship Anew” provides.

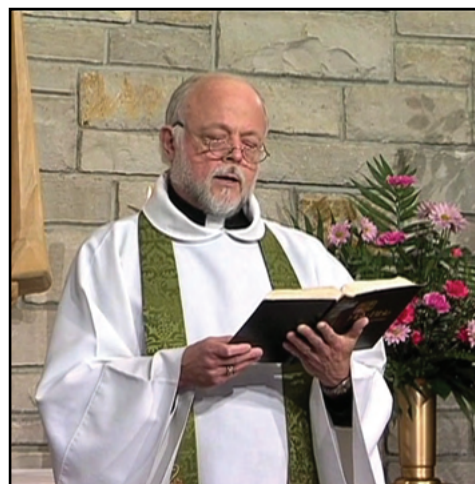
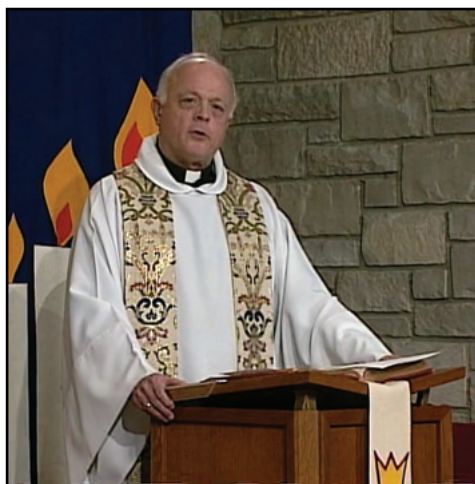
It was my joy and privilege to be one of the five regular preachers on what was then called “Worship for Shut-Ins” for 15 years, from 1994 to 2009. Before I stepped in front of the cameras,

I asked the Lord to speak through me to reach someone with His Word, His love, His truth, and His power.

As I looked at the camera, I imagined that I was speaking to that person. I took confidence in the promise of God: “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

When we are in heaven, we will know the full impact of the “broadcasting” work of “Worship Anew.” We are blessed to see joyful glimpses here on earth now, but someday we will see the abundant fruit of this ministry in all its fullness. Until then, we walk by faith, trusting in God’s promise: “Whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:7b-9).

Keep broadcasting, Worship Anew!



The Rev. Richard Koehneke served Worship Anew from 1994 to 2009. These photos were taken during pastor production sessions in 2006 (left) and 2009 (right).

Much has changed, but the Gospel remains

By Rev. Paul Shoemaker

It was in 1994 that Ken Schilf (retired executive director of the ministry) contacted me about being a regular contributor to “Worship for Shut-Ins.” At the time, Ken was on the staff of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. One of his responsibilities was to give leadership to “Worship for Shut-Ins.” I had the privilege of preaching for the program on certain occasions, but I never even considered being one of a regular group of pastors asked to preach for this ministry. It was a great honor to be considered for this opportunity.

It was with a little fear and trepidation that I accepted Ken’s request. Preaching to a camera lens was going to be very different from preaching to a live audience of congregation members. I knew my congregation well.



I could see their faces as I preached and could tell if I was connecting with them or not. Now I was looking at a piece of glass mounted to a black camera. Not much feedback there.



The Rev. Paul Shoemaker began serving “Worship Anew” in 1994, and he still serves today. These photos above are from sermons in 2006 (top) and 2015 (bottom).

The audience was going to be different, too. At church I was preaching to entire families, from the oldest to the youngest. Now I was being asked to tailor my sermons to those who were shut-ins. That required a different approach. I thought of the times I preached

at the Lutheran Home in Fort Wayne and how I adjusted my preaching and my illustrations to the residents. I thought that would serve as a good model for preparing to preach at “Worship for Shut-Ins.”

There are many advantages to preaching for a specific group of people. Aging adults have common experiences and confront similar situations. These readily provided a source for sermon illustrations. I could talk about grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I could talk about visiting the doctor and how the doctors kept looking younger and younger. I could refer to events that happened many years ago, knowing that they would understand. Certainly, I could reflect on a common spiritual journey, especially end-of-life issues. These and other themes common to aging Christians made writing sermons and preaching them fulfilling.

Many years have passed since 1994. By God’s grace I am still able to share the Good News of Jesus Christ on “Worship Anew.” The name of the program may be different, but I still use the guidelines that informed my preaching when I first began.

Many other things have changed, as well. The studio for “Worship Anew” is located on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. The number of stations on which the program is broadcast has increased. The number of viewers and those listening to the program has also increased significantly.

Every year I receive a schedule from the very dedicated and competent staff of Worship Anew, now under the leadership of Matthew Leighty, informing me of the opportunities extended to me to preach the Gospel. I put those dates in my calendar and look forward to every time I will proclaim Christ and Him crucified.

Sharing the sure and certain hope that is ours in the resurrection of Jesus speaks volumes to those who are in the twilight years of their lives. I am blessed to share that message of salvation and pray for God’s continued blessing to grace “Worship Anew” and its ministry to God’s people everywhere.

continued on page 14

Honoring the elderly in our preaching

By Rev. Dr. Dan Brege

My dad was a pastor. In his catechism class I yet recall memorizing Leviticus 19:32 in the King James Version: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.” Of course, the “hoary head” is a reference to those with gray hair, and the “face of the old man” is describing the presence of those who are elderly.

Truly, whenever a pastor preaches on “Worship Anew,” he is honoring the gray headed, and he is rising up (standing) in honor of those advanced in years.

We can honor and show respect toward the elderly in many ways. Though we pastors are called upon to preach and teach, beyond our speaking we can listen quietly to the wisdom of our gray-haired siblings in Christ. They have accumulated great wisdom during their enduring pilgrimage, testifying to their Spirit-imbued faith in the Lord Jesus. We pastors can learn much from these elderly brothers and sisters, often gleaning from them sage counsel concerning the application of the Christian faith to daily life. This we can use to make our sermons more fruitful and applicable to all listeners — both young and old.

We can and must honor the elderly by our faithful preaching of God’s Holy Word. Many of these faithful older Christians have been hearing God’s Word for 60, 70, and, yes, even 100 years.

More than younger listeners, elderly Christians have a sense of the timeless nature of God’s truths. We honor such faithful folks by *consistently* and *persistently* preaching the whole counsel of God. We must *consistently* preach and teach that precious doctrine found in the early history of Christianity, which is faithfully confessed in our *Book of Concord*.

Sadly, some pastors only want their ears tickled with compliments, or they want to warp God’s Word to fit and flirt with the ways of the world. Such preaching will only serve to confuse both young and old, causing them to wonder whether the Word of Christ really is timeless.

We must also be *persistent* in our preaching, for the Word of God must be preached in season and out of season. By such Law/Gospel repetition, God’s people retain a sharp knowledge of God’s Word, for unless we continually immerse ourselves in the “language” of Christianity — just like immersing ourselves in languages such as Spanish or German — we lose our ability to communicate with said language.

As memory begins to fade, the elderly especially require such persistence and repetition. We don’t want them (or any Christian) to lose the “language” of the faith.

Finally, our consistent and persistent preaching must center in Christ, who is the pulsating heart of Holy

Scripture. Every sermon must therefore magnify Christ. Yes, we preach of His life, His love, His miracles, His teaching, and His example. But most importantly we preach Christ — crucified and risen for our eternal salvation.

We consistently and persistently rise up before the elderly and honor their presence on “Worship Anew” as we comfort them by preaching the good news of sins paid for and death conquered.



The Rev. Dr. Brege served with Worship Anew from 1992 to 2018. These photos were taken during sermon recordings in 2005 (left) and 2017 (right).



When the text says it's your pastor

By Seth Hinz

A text pops up on a Tuesday morning. It's your pastor. He's traveling and can't take calls right now. He needs a favor, "Could you help? I need you to get three \$100 gift cards for family in need. I'll reimburse you the next time I can come visit you."

Of course, you want to help. You know your pastor, and you're generous by nature. The idea of being able to help him and help a family at the same time seems like a no-brainer.

Do not buy the cards. The text is not from your pastor. Your pastor is not even aware that texts are being sent on his behalf.

Since 2013, I've led a network of Lutheran church communicators, and this type of scam comes up every few months.

Scammers keep changing the story and method.

Here are real examples shared by the network: needing gift cards, requests for church directories, piano giveaways, event invite emails that require logins, or claiming your computer has a virus.

But, even when the story and names change, the playbook does not.

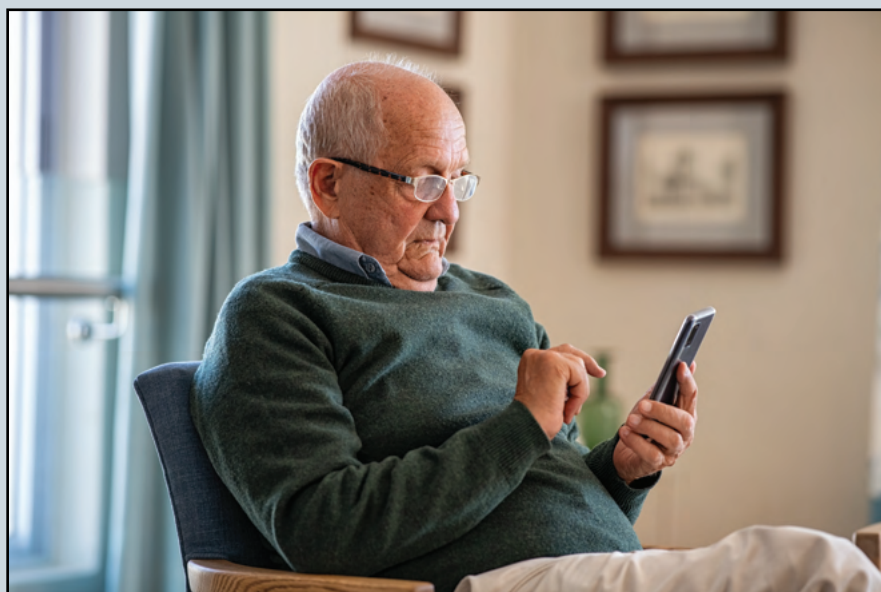
Scammers scrape staff names from church websites, fake their location, and count on your willingness to serve. They exploit your generosity.

Nearly every one of these scams has the same three traits. A clock, so you can't think. A reason you can't check: Your pastor is busy, or it's confidential. And a way to send money that nobody can trace — gift cards, wire transfers, or cash.

Whether the call or text claims to be your pastor, a church leader, or even your own grandchild, before you send a penny, take three steps:

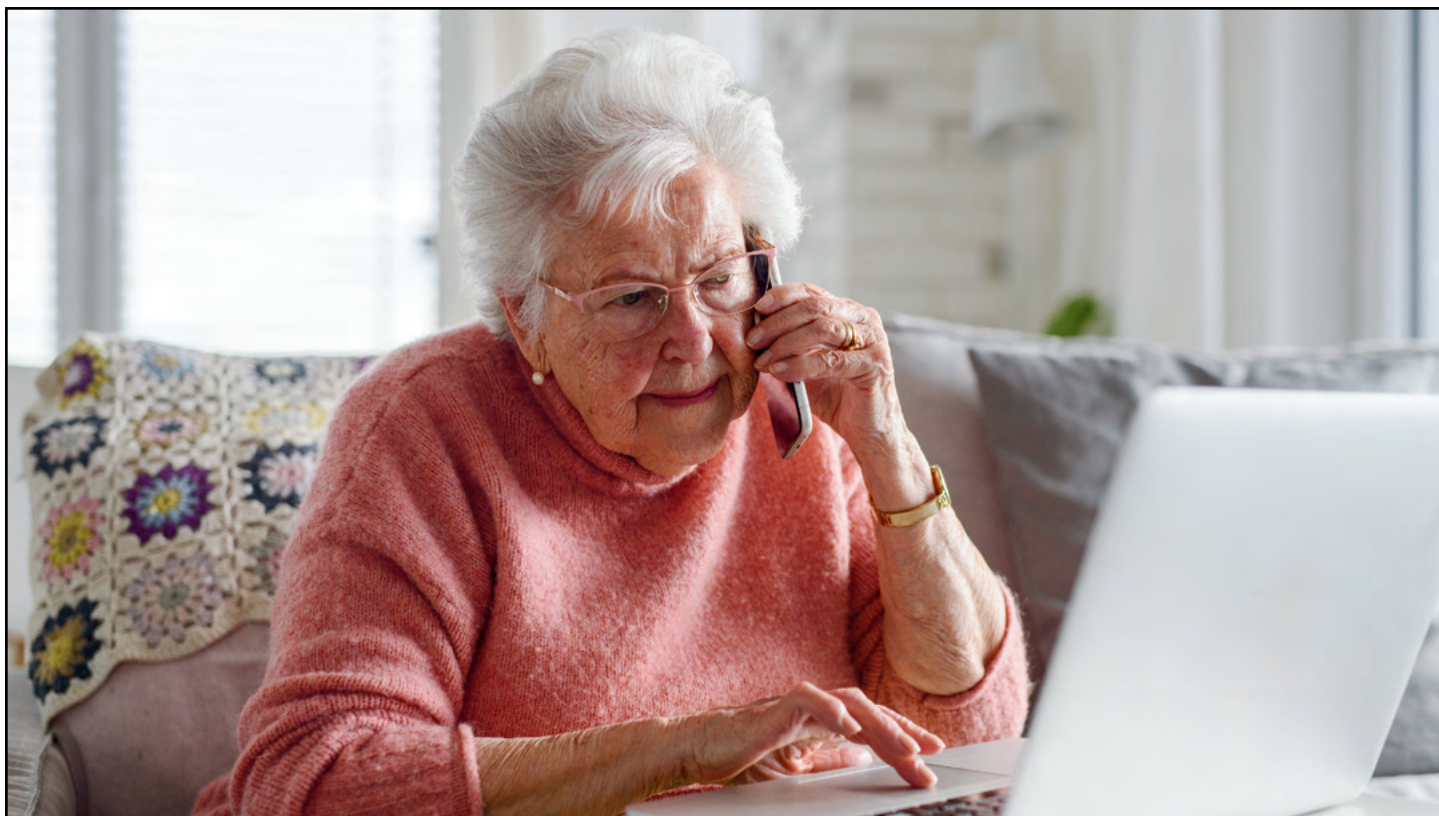
- 1. Hit pause:** Do not reply directly to the text. Do not click links. Do not call the number that messaged you. If a scammer is on the phone, just hang up. Your pastor will never be offended by you taking the time to verify.
- 2. Verify through a trusted channel:** Call the church office directly or a phone number you've saved and used before. One 30-second phone call can put a stop to the scam.
- 3. Report it:** Let the church office or leadership team know right away. If you got a message, it's likely others did, too. Alerting staff helps them warn other members before someone else falls victim to the scam.

If you've already fallen for one of these, act first and do not sit in a place of embarrassment. Call your bank or the number on the back of the gift card and report it right away. Money is sometimes recoverable in the first day or two. Then tell the church office.



Your instinct to help is a strength. These fake requests are sent by professional scam artists who have learned how to mimic the people you trust. Watching for the red flags and taking quick steps to verify will ensure the support you give reaches the people who need it.

Seth Hinz is the chief advancement officer for Lutheran Bible Translators. For years, he's led the Lutheran Communicators group on Facebook, helping ministry professionals to navigate the evolving digital environment.



Protecting yourself from identity theft

By Jim Miller

The widespread reach of technology has led to growing concerns about identity theft. If your personal information falls into the wrong hands, it could lead to identity theft. Identity theft could result in fraudsters using your personal information to open credit card accounts, bank accounts, and telephone service accounts or to make major purchases — all in your name.

If you suspect your personal information has been compromised or is at risk, it is advisable to place a fraud alert on your credit file. For enhanced security, consider implementing a credit freeze. A fraud alert is a notification placed on your credit report that prompts potential creditors to take extra steps to verify your identity before extending credit in your name. A credit freeze completely blocks access to your credit report, preventing anyone from opening new accounts in your name without your explicit authorization. Fraud alerts and credit freezes are completely free to set up

and remove, and neither action will affect your credit score.

A credit freeze provides significantly stronger protection than a fraud alert, but there is a drawback. When you freeze your credit, you will not be able to open new lines of credit or obtain a new loan while the freeze is activated. It does not affect your ability to use existing credit cards or other accounts that are already open. If you need to apply for a new credit card or some type of loan, you can temporarily lift the freeze on your account until your application is approved; then, you can refreeze it at any time.

Fraud alert set-up

To set up a fraud alert, you will need to contact one of the three major credit reporting bureaus — Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion — either by phone, online, or by mail. You only need to contact



one of these agencies, and they will notify the other two. Here is the phone and website contact information for each of the three bureaus.

Equifax: 800-685-1111 or
Equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services
Experian: 888-397-3742 or Experian.com/help
TransUnion: 888-909-8872 or
TransUnion.com/credit-help

Even if you have not been a victim of identity theft, it is advisable to set up an “initial fraud alert.” This alert lasts for one year and can be renewed annually.

Credit freeze set-up

To set up a credit freeze, you will need to contact each of the three credit reporting bureaus mentioned above — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. A credit freeze remains in place until you choose to unfreeze it. Keep in mind that, before applying for a new credit card or loan, you will need to temporarily lift the security freeze by following the procedures provided by each credit bureau.

You can monitor your credit file by regularly reviewing your credit report, even if you choose not to establish a fraud alert or a credit freeze. You can also obtain a free credit report each week from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion by visiting AnnualCreditReport.com.

Savvy Living is written by Jim Miller, a regular contributor to the NBC Today Show and author of “The Savvy Senior” book. Any links in this article are offered as a service, and there is no endorsement of any product. These articles are offered as a helpful and informative service to our friends and may not always reflect this organization’s official position on some topics. Jim invites you to send your senior questions to: Savvy Living, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

How do you choose the pastors who lead “Worship Anew”?

All of our pastors are ordained in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS), and each is invited into the rotation because of his gift for preaching the Gospel clearly and warmly to viewers at home. When a spot opens, our team looks for a pastor — often from the Fort Wayne area (where our studio is located), along with trusted guest pastors — who can preach directly to the camera in a way that comforts and encourages you.

Why does the program have six pastors instead of just one?

Our recording days on Tuesdays fit three pastors at a time, so two alternating groups of three keep production running smoothly across the year. Six also strikes the right balance for you at home — enough variety to enjoy different voices and preaching styles, but few enough that each pastor is on often enough to become a familiar, trusted face. Add many more, and no single pastor would preach frequently enough to build that relationship with you.

From what faith tradition do your pastors preach?

Our pastors all preach from the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) tradition, which means every sermon is centered on Jesus Christ and grounded in God’s Word. Whatever the season, the aim is always the same: to proclaim both God’s Law and His Gospel, so that you hear His truth and, above all, His mercy for you in Christ.

My eyesight isn’t what it used to be. Can I still follow the program just by listening?

Yes, absolutely. If you’d like to listen to a version of our program that’s specifically designed for audio only, call our office line at (888) 286-8002 and press “3” to hear the latest “Worship Anew” program, any time day or night. You can also dial “2” to hear that day’s Hope-Full Living devotion or dial “4” to hear a selection of hymns from our choirs. You can also open the Worship Anew app on a phone or tablet, start a program, and let the audio play right on your device.

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!



Tiny gratitudes for mental well-being

Express your thanks in the world around you

By Heidi Goehmann, LCSW, deaconess

Gratitude can feel both hard and easy, depending on the season.

Circumstances change for the better and for the worse. Bodies also become limited in their ways, waiting and aching (quite literally) for God's restoration and new creation. We are not all-powerful as humans, nor are we powerless or left only to our own devices.

When the apostle Paul said that he felt "content in whatever circumstances" (Philippians 4:11 NIV), even in jail and loneliness and hunger and degradation, I don't know that he got there by simply willing it into being. Paul was a writer. Sometimes,



like Lin-Manuel Miranda suggests about Alexander Hamilton in the hit musical “Hamilton,” I wonder how often Paul “wrote his way out.”

Writing, whether on a page, in the air, or on our hearts, is one way we activate the neural pathways in our brain to integrate gratitude into our lives for well-being, rather than expecting ourselves to jump when gratitude calls.

A study from UCLA identified practicing gratitude for 15 minutes a day for six weeks actively shifted neural pathways to more easily find gratitude in the day to day. Fifteen minutes feels like a long time when your body is aching or your heart is broken or life takes energy, as it will. Instead, I like to start smaller — tiny gratitudes moving outward to touch the edges of the universe and God’s arms wrapped all around it.

Consider the context of Paul’s contentment in Philippians 4:10-14 (not only verse 11):

“I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles” (NIV).

Renewed concern and sharing troubles are the good stuff of relationship. Many of us have people in our lives who show up for us in different ways that help us see gratitude when we are struggling. More powerful than those relationships, and when relationships fail or loneliness seeps in, we are buoyed up by God’s concern. God shares every trouble, encountered trouble in this earth, knows trouble, and has a heart for our troubles large and small.

Sometimes, we need ways to experience connection in order to find our sense of contentment and gratitude, that tiny voice of the Spirit inside of us that promises “We’re going to make it.”

Try this exercise:

Begin with something inside you. Put your hand on your heart. “Thank You, Lord for my heart which beats without my directing it. That must be You, Lord. Or notice the breath in your lungs. Thank You, Lord for Your breath of life. As my breath has moved and continues to move in and out, that must be You, Lord.”

Move to something immediately around you. Reach out and touch something that serves you well, has a glint of light, or strikes your eye. “Thank You, Lord for the stuff of life, the things that need to be dusted or do the work of the day. That must be You, Lord.”

Move to something outside your current walls. “Lord, the activity and change, decay and life around me are evident. I notice this single aspect of the world and community out there. You are the connector and Creator. That must be You, Lord.”

Look to something on the planet Earth or the universe itself. “Lord, the sun, moon, and stars, mountains and valleys, across cultures, to the edges of time and space, all things are held by You. That must be You, Lord.”

Start by noticing these things, then move to write them down each day. If you cannot or would prefer not to physically write, utilize a finger to write the name of the items in the air or imagine writing it in front of you or on your heart.

Whatever season this life finds you in, God is steadfast, and God is faithful. Sometimes, we just need to see it, hear it, and write it, like the apostles and saints before us.

Writer, licensed clinical social worker, and theologian, Heidi Goehmann produces resources that advocate for mental health and genuine relationships. Learn more at heidigoehmann.com.



OF SHEPHERDS AND FLOCKS

By Rev. Dr. J.S. Bruss

There are some things that just always go together. If you have only players and no coach, you don't really have a team. If you have soldiers without a general, you don't have an army. And if you have "members" without a head, you don't have a body.

Early in His ministry the Lord Jesus Christ went through all the cities and towns of Galilee and noticed that the people were "harassed and helpless." He saw sheep, but He saw no shepherds (Matthew 9:35-36).

Now, while it's true that to have a flock you need both sheep and shepherd, Jesus did not mean any old shepherd. In fact, Matthew indicates by the fact that Jesus taught in the synagogues that the people did have shepherds (Matthew 9:35) — of a sort. They had their rabbis and scribes and lawyers — their teachers of the law. You could say that the people had shepherds aplenty, just not the kind they needed.

But it was just that that made them "harassed and helpless." They didn't need to be taught, for their salvation, to try harder, do more, get their house in order. They didn't need to be presented, for their salvation, with encouragement, harangues, and admonitions to achieve the perfection and righteousness and sanctity

of God's Law. Gathered in their synagogues around such preaching and teaching they were more like an anti-flock, a sort of dystopian version of the flock that Jesus came to gather and sustain. What they needed instead was to be a real flock with a real shepherd — the flock of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for the sheep.

There you have it. Right at the center of shepherding and flock-making is the Gospel. That's what our Confessions say: "The church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered" (Augsburg Confession 7.1).

Let's pull that apart a little bit. The "church" is the flock into which the Lord Jesus wishes to gather the sheep. The "saints" are the sheep declared righteous by God for the sake of the holy, innocent life and the bitter sufferings and death of the Good Shepherd for the sin of the sheep who have received Christ's death through faith alone. The "Gospel" is that all-availing death of Jesus.

And that Gospel needs "teachers and administrators."

After Jesus lamented the "harassed and helpless" sheep, He saw all around Himself. He turned to His disciples and



said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37b-38).

The laborers are the teachers/preachers of the Gospel and the administrators of the Sacraments. Like Paul, they are — they must be — “determined to know nothing (in the flock) except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Apart from that pure Gospel and the Sacraments rightly administered there is no harvest, and the sheep are left harassed and helpless — under the power of sin, death, and devil.

But rescued from that dread power by the Gospel on the lips of true shepherds, they are made saints — the flock of Jesus Christ. These things must remain together. There can be no flock of Christ apart from shepherds faithful to the Gospel, and there are no shepherds faithful to the Gospel around whom the Lord does not also draw His flock.

The Rev. Dr. J.S. Bruss is president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne (CTSFW).

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You that You have answered the prayer of Your church and sent forth laborers into Your harvest, even to me. From all my sin You have become my Rescue. My death You have made but a sleep. For my hell You have given me Your heaven. Continue to give me and Your whole church faithful shepherds who will nourish Your flock with Your holy Gospel and Your blessed Sacraments and gather in those who are harassed and helpless in their sin. And then keep us all firm and steadfast in Your Word and faith and bring us to everlasting life. This I pray because You have commanded me to and promised to hear me. Amen. Amen. Let it be so!

Reflection Questions:

Why were people “harassed and helpless” in the time of Jesus? What about today?

How are people gathered into the flock the Lord Jesus wishes to create?

Jesus implored His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest. Why? Is that prayer still important today?

What blessings have come to you by being drawn into the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ?

This month’s study text:

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few

35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Matthew 9:35-38

Recipes from Ruth Haak's kitchen

CHOCOLATE COVERED OATMEAL COOKIES

Ingredients:

½ cup butter
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup regular sugar
2 egg yolks
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup Quaker rolled oats
Very large Hershey bar or chocolate of your choice
2 tbsp butter
½ cup chopped nuts of your choice (optional)

Cream butter and sugars thoroughly. Beat in egg yolks. Add flour and rolled oats and mix well. Spread in a greased and floured 13 x 9 inch pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes, cool.

Melt chocolate with 2 tbs butter. Spread over cooled cookie layer. Sprinkle with nuts. Cut into squares. Best when kept in fridge.

I usually omit the nuts and sprinkle (by hand) some Sea Salt over chocolate which adds a little extra to the taste.

Because you have the egg whites leftover you can use to make a Meringue type cookie.

For a larger

10 ½ x 15 ½ pan

1 ½ cup butter
¾ cup brown sugar
¾ cup regular sugar
3 egg yolks
1 ½ cup flour
1 ½ cup rolled oats

LEMON MELTAWAYS

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Chilling time: 1 hour

Baking time: about 8 minutes

Cooling time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup butter softened
½ cup cornstarch
⅓ cup powdered sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp grated lemon peel (I use more)

FROSTING

¾ cup powdered sugar
¼ cup butter, softened
1 tsp fresh lemon juice
1 tsp grated lemon peel

In large mixer bowl, combine all cookie ingredients. Beat at low speed, scraping bowl often, until well mixed (2 to 3 minutes).

Divide dough in half. Shape each half into 8 x 1 inch roll. Wrap in plastic food wrap. Refrigerate until firm (1 to 2 hours).

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

With sharp knife, cut each roll into ¼ inch slices. Place 2 inches apart on cookie sheets. Bake for 8 to 12 minutes or until set. (Cookies will not brown). Cool completely. They are VERY FRAGILE.

In small mixer bowl, combine all frosting ingredients. Beat at medium speed, scraping bowl often, until fluffy. (1 to 2 minutes). Frost cooled cookies.

Makes 4 dozen — depending on how large your rolls are.

NOTE:

In making these several times, I've made these changes. I now add more lemon peel and a little more juice to both the cookie and frosting. I also add a little yellow food coloring gel to the frosting. I like to make a double recipe as they usually go quickly. I also use a very sharp chef's knife when cutting the COLD cookie dough. Only take one roll of dough out of the fridge at a time. Also, slice them carefully but quickly rolling down the plastic wrap as you cut. I try to slice the dough to as many as will fit the cookie sheet and then quickly lay them on the sheet. I found that moving quickly while the dough is cold, and holding it with the plastic wrap as you cut, makes the dough less fragile. Cut them thick enough so they do not crumble. Be sure the cookies are cold before removing them from the cookie sheet as this also eliminates breakage.

Frosting the cookies is another time when you may see the cookies break. What I have learned is to place the cooled baked cookies in the fridge before I frost them. Frosting can be made ahead of time. Just do not refrigerate it. Room temp frosting on the COLD cookies makes for less breakage. Time-consuming but good. Keep completed cookies in fridge.

Ways to show appreciation to your pastors

By Lucy Moll, Worship Anew Intern

Did you know that October is Pastor Appreciation Month? Here are some ways to show your pastors how grateful you are for them:

Something homemade

Gifts are always better when you make them yourself. Show your appreciation by knitting a scarf or painting a card.

A treat

Who doesn't love a homemade chocolate chip cookie or brownie? Make a batch of your favorite dessert and package it up for your whole church staff.

A prayer

Pastors do a lot of hard work, even outside of the physical church. Pray that they can find peace and use their gifts to God's glory.

A gift card

Have your friends and family chip in to get your pastor a fancy dinner, new shoes, or just a trip to his favorite store.

A note

Find some pretty stationery, or just a piece of paper, and tell your pastor how much he means to you.

Even though October is only one month, you can support your pastors year-round! Ask them if you can help in any way and keep them in your prayers every week.





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It's Pastor Appreciation Month!

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO OUR PASTORS FOR THEIR WORK ON "WORSHIP ANEW."

"I personally am grateful for your ministry. My mom, who lives in the Buffalo area, watches 'Worship Anew' every Sunday. She is especially thankful to have that resource available to her when it is too snowy to get to church in person. She is 89 years old. Her church does not have a live-stream of its service."

"I watch your 'Worship Anew' program every Sunday. I appreciate participating in the services your pastors preach each week (the messages, the prayers, the music). Please extend my thanks to all, especially the pastors, who are very dedicated."

"It means a lot for those of us who no longer can get to a local church because of our health. I have appreciated and love the pastors' sermons as well as the wonderful songs. I will also add how I appreciate the Broadcaster each month. Thank you so much; you will never know how much your services mean to all of us. GOD BLESS YOU ALL."