

September 2024

BROADCASTER

A magazine of Worship Anew



PURPOSE

*How we can use our unique
gifts to serve the Lord*

SEEKING GUIDANCE?

Seek **FIRST** the Kingdom of Heaven



Matthew F. Leighty

Matthew F. Leighty
Executive Director

Are you a Matthew 6:33 kind of person? Are you always in God's Word, praying day and night, regularly attending worship at your church, and sharing about Christ at every opportunity you can? I sure hope that is the case, but we all have room to grow ever deeper in this area. That is why I love to keep the words of Matthew chapter 6 close to my heart. Verse 33 brings me so much comfort, especially when I remember the beautiful song by Karen Lafferty, "Seek Ye First."

This uplifting passage has been a source of encouragement for me, and my young family. We even recorded and shared this hymn with our church community during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a reminder that as we call on the Lord, He provides for our every need.

The number one core value for the ministry team at Worship Anew is having Christ at the center. We believe that with God, in all and through all, He will prosper our efforts to share His love so that others may have an abundant life through Him. It is not about what we do but about what Christ has done and continues to do through us every day.

We recognize that God provides for our essential physical needs. But how much more important are our eternal needs?

I strive to be a good steward of what God gives me so, I work hard to make wise choices when making a significant purchase or an important decision. However, if I devoted as much time to being with God as I do to researching purchases for my family, I might have the entire Bible memorized by now.

Cover Photo Provided by Faith in Practice

Faith in Practice sends medical mission trip groups to Guatemala.

This group helped to provide wheelchairs to the needy.



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



But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 ESV

I feel that as we age, our focus turns toward heaven. With age comes wisdom, and as we enter the later stages of our earthly life, we draw ever closer to what God instructs in Matthew 6:33 — to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The focus is not on what the world offers or finds important — money, power, material possessions, or even social status — but what God says is important through the great command He gave us, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37 ESV). Reaching up and then out should be our way of life.

Allelu, Alleluia! When I seek God

first, a song of praise seems to always be on my mind or on my lips. I encourage you to open the beloved Lutheran Service Book to page 712 (or read at the right) where you can find Karen Lafferty’s hymn “Seek Ye First.” Reflect on how this verse is a guide for our lives.

At Worship Anew, Christ remains at the center of all that we do. We do not labor in isolation, but as vessels for His grace, remembering the eternal wellbeing of every life we touch.

As time unfolds, our gaze turns heavenward, aligning with the wisdom of age and the anticipation of eternity. Together, we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness — a path illuminated by His mercy and grace.

Seek Ye First LSB 712

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added
unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia!*

*Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
Seek, and ye shall find.
Knock, and the door shall be opened
unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia!*

*Man does not live by bread alone,
But by ev’ry word
That proceeds from the mouth of the
Lord.
Allelu, Alleluia!*

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Exciting changes coming to Hope-Full Living

Worship Anew's quarterly devotional, Hope-Full Living, has exciting changes in store for later this year.

The ministry has identified opportunities to improve the quality of the devotional and shipping process while keeping costs low for our valued customers.

Beginning with the October/November/December 2024 issue, the devotional will be redesigned and repackaged.

Although the format, text size, and content will not change, the publication itself will be slightly wider with the inside pages being composed of a lighter weight paper. Additionally, all individual subscribers will receive their Hope-Full Living devotional in an envelope each quarter, which will eliminate any shipping issues subscribers may have experienced in the past.

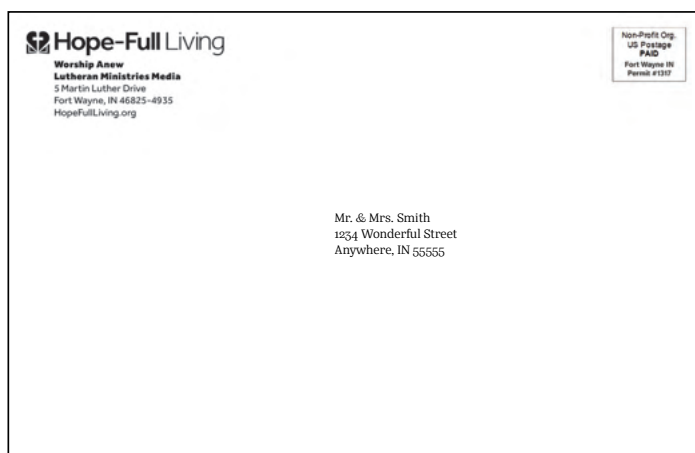
Bulk subscribers will continue to receive their devotionals in a box as they have in the past.

This new issue will arrive in September.

If you are interested in receiving Hope-Full Living, please visit HopeFullLiving.org or contact us at (888) 286-8002 or info@worshipanew.org.



The new Hope-Full Living redesign will feature a slightly wider design and lighter paper inside. Shown above is the Quarter 4 cover. All individual subscribers will receive their issues in an envelope (as shown below).





NEWS FROM OUR MINISTRY TEAM



Donna Evans
Ministry Support Specialist

Donna Evans has joined the ministry team as the Ministry Relations Specialist. In her role, she will be the first one to greet visitors at Worship Anew as well as being the welcoming voice on the phone when anyone calls the office.

She previously worked in office management, customer service, reception, and data entry, as well as other projects as needed.



Cathy Tapp
Hospitality Coordinator

Cathy Tapp has moved into the new role of Hospitality Coordinator. She works with donors, pastors, churches, and other supporters of the ministry as a friendly face and a listening ear for their needs.



Our ministry team poses for a photo at our Indiana booth.

FUN AT LWML

Our ministry team had a great time at the LWML Conventions this summer! We loved interacting with those in attendance and sharing about Worship Anew! If your LWML group is looking for a speaker and would like to learn more about Worship Anew or hear one of our topics on compassion, ministering to aging adults, vocation, or worship, please contact us at info@worshipanew.org or (888) 286-8002.



STAINED GLASS WINDOW DEDICATION 2 PM SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

Worship Anew, 5 Martin Luther Drive,
Fort Wayne, Ind. 46825

All are welcome as we dedicate the windows from Trinity Lutheran Church.
Program will begin at 2 PM.



Welcoming a new pastor to Worship Anew

*By Ashley Wiehe
Director of Communications*

Worship Anew has started to record its 2025 programs and is excited to announce a new pastor for this season.

The Rev. Scott Zeckzer, senior pastor at Emanuel Lutheran Church in New Haven, Ind., will be joining the program with his first program on April 27, 2025. Rev. Zeckzer will be replacing the Rev. Thomas Eggold, who will be stepping back from the program to focus on his home congregation. Rev. Eggold's last program will be on Easter, April 20, 2025.

"Worship Anew is blessed by our team of pastors who share with our viewers week in and week out, and we are very appreciative for the work of Pastor Eggold for the past six years and thank him for his ministry on Worship Anew and his continued ministry in the Church," said Matthew Leighty, executive director at Worship Anew. "Pastor Zeckzer is a wonderful addition to our lineup of pastors, and we believe that our viewers will enjoy his preaching style and his



The Rev. Scott Zecker (left) smiles for a photo with outgoing pastor, Rev. Thomas Eggold, in the Worship Anew studio.



warm personality as he shares the Gospel.”

Pastors, Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer, Rev. Shayne Jonker, Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III, Rev. William Mueller, and Rev. Paul Shoemaker will once again return to our weekly program and will continue to be joined by the Worship Anew Choir and other visiting choirs as well as host Eric Kaschinske.

Rev. Eggold has served with the program since 2018. He is the senior pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., and will continue to serve in that role after his time at Worship Anew is completed.

“(Worship Anew) gives you a bigger appreciation for the Church, not just your congregation, but for the Christian church and how we’re all connected,” Rev. Eggold said.

Rev. Zecker joins the program in the footsteps of Rev. Shoemaker, who previously served as the senior pastor at his church in New Haven. He has grown in ministry with Rev. Shoemaker for years and now will continue to do the same through Worship Anew.

“I’m looking forward to sharing with the audience the Good News of God’s salvation, finding Christ Jesus, and just being part of a great history and tradition with Worship Anew,” Rev. Zecker said.

Rev. Zecker is a graduate of Concordia University–Ann Arbor and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. He has more than 25 years in ministry and has served at Emanuel since 1996. He and his wife Deb have four children; Bethany, Caleb, Nathan, and Micah.

The start of the 2025 production season will be on Dec. 1, 2024 with the First Sunday in Advent.

Worship Anew is available to watch on local broadcasts throughout the United States as well as on the American Forces Network worldwide. Worship Anew is also available online through WorshipAnew.org and YouTube. The program is also streaming on AppleTV, Google, and ROKU. Learn more at WorshipAnew.org.

“I’m looking forward to sharing with the audience the Good News of God’s salvation, finding Christ Jesus, and just being part of a great history and tradition with Worship Anew.”

~ Rev. Scott Zecker



Ephphatha

Be Opened

The Central Siberian Yupik language has 40 terms for snow. Forty! If you grew up in South Texas, you probably only needed one word for snow, and you may only have needed to use that word once every five years.

Different words mean different things to different people. In English, we don't have one word that describes finding joy in the suffering of others, so we've adopted the word *schadenfreude*. There are many examples of words we've adopted from Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, etc. Once you know the meaning of the word, it makes sense to use the original source language.

On the Sept. 8 program, Rev. Shayne Jonker focuses on the powerful Aramaic word *ephphatha*. The word can be simply translated as "be opened."

Even though most of the book of Mark was written in Greek, there are a few instances (Mark 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; and 15:34) where Aramaic is used because of the power it would have had on those who understood the language.

For us, we can look at the word *ephphatha* and recognize its power because of what happens when Jesus spoke it. When Jesus spoke this word, a deaf man could hear.

"And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly" (Mark 7:32-35 ESV).

For us, God's Word has the power to cut through the distractions, the disillusionment, the pain, the guilt, and the trauma that has built up in our lives.

Our prayer is that your ears may "be opened" to hear God's Word so that it may strengthen you daily in your walk of faith.

Ephphatha.



Worship Anew in September

Year 2024 | Series B



Inside Out

September 1, 2024 – Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Thomas Eggold

God always works from the inside out, and no matter what depraved things you have seen, and no matter what despicable things you have done, and no matter how dirty your heart has been, your sins have been placed on Jesus. Today, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Sermon Text: Mark 7:15

Readings: Psalm 119:129-136; Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; Mark 7:14-23



Be Opened!

September 8, 2024 – Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Jesus wants to do for you what He did for that deaf and mute man in the Decapolis that day. He wants to stick His Word into your ears, to cut through deafness, to open your ears, your minds, and your hearts. Thus He speaks His Ephphatha to you. Be opened.

Sermon Text: Mark 7:37

Readings: Psalm 146; Isaiah 35:4-7a; Mark 7:31-37



Healing for Our Children

September 15, 2024 – Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Paul Shoemaker

A seriously ill child demands the parents' full attention. Parents will do anything possible to help their child regain physical health. Our heavenly Father did everything possible to restore our spiritual health, even sacrificing His Son to win for us spiritual health and wholeness. As we use the tools that God has given us, we are able to restore and maintain spiritual health.

Sermon Text: Mark 9:14-29

Readings: Psalm 116:1-9; Isaiah 50:4-10; Mark 9:14-29



A Difficult Victory

September 22, 2024 – Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. William Mueller

The text is all about "Spiritual Warfare." But that often isn't a topic we feel comfortable discussing. Why is that? Might the difficulty lie in the fact that we might too readily be reminded of our sin? Our victory is through Jesus Christ. What makes it difficult?

Sermon Text: James 3:13-4:10

Readings: Psalm 54; James 3:13-4:10; Mark 9:30-37



In Service of Go(o)d!

September 29, 2024 – St. Michael and All Angels

Rev. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Popular today among both young and old are action hero figures. These heroes, in different ways, act in service of good. God gives Christ followers the greatest action heroes — angels — who act in and on behalf of the greatest good: in service of good and in service of God!

Sermon Text: Revelation 12:9

Readings: Psalm 91; Revelation 12:7-12; Matthew 18:1-11

Staying active when mobility is limited

By Christian Puls OTR/L and Abigail Puls OTR/L

As we age, we can become more physically limited due to various illnesses, ailments, and medical conditions. Despite these conditions, it is important to participate in physical activity to prevent decline and muscle wasting, otherwise known as atrophy.

To remain active, even despite obstacles, seated exercises can be a great option.

At right, are three upper body and three lower body exercises focused on increasing or maintaining your baseline strength to keep active. All these exercises can be performed with or without weights. If you do not have weights, feel free to use various household or pantry items, such as cans of soup or bottles of water.

Prior to exercising, it is important to note: If the exercise causes you increased pain or discomfort, stop just before that point in the motion, reduce the weight, or do not perform the activity without speaking with a healthcare professional.

While these sitting exercises are a good starting point, if you feel you are showing a decline and require increased assistance or a different program, please reach out to your primary healthcare provider.



These exercises can be done with a chair or a wheelchair as shown above.

To remain active, even despite obstacles, seated exercises can be a great option.

UPPER BODY EXERCISES

Bicep Curls

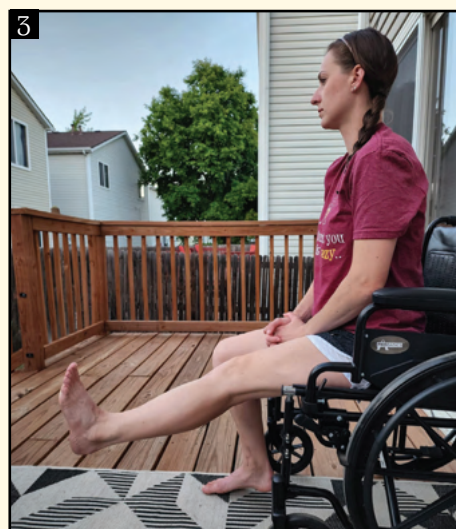
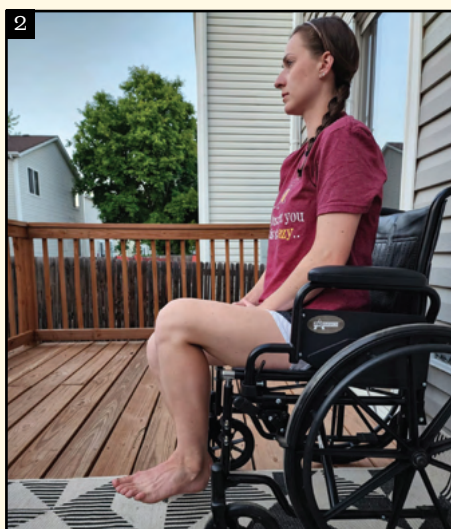
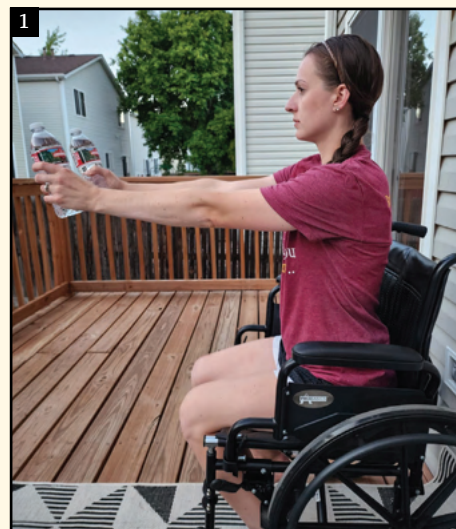
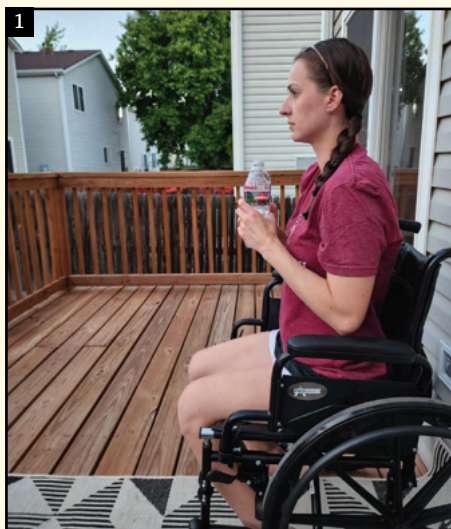
Begin with your arms at your side — as straight as possible — and slowly bend your elbows. Once fully straightened, slowly extend your arm to the starting position. Perform 2–3 sets of 10 repetitions, as tolerated.

Overhead Press

Begin with your hands over your chest. Slowly raise your arms over your head as high as possible and slowly return them to their starting position. Perform 2–3 sets of 10 repetitions, as tolerated.

Chest Press

Begin with your hands over your chest. Slowly straighten your arms out in front of you until they are as straight as possible before slowly returning them to the starting position. *(Demonstrated in the #1 photos)*



LOWER BODY EXERCISES

Marches

Begin by sitting upright in a chair. Lift one knee at a time and hold for 1 second before slowly returning your knee to the starting position. Perform 2–3 sets of 10 repetitions, as tolerated. *(Demonstrated on the #2 photo)*

Straight Leg Kicks

Begin by sitting upright in a chair. Lift one leg at a time straight out in front of you and attempt to get your knee as straight as possible. Slowly return your leg to the starting position. Perform 2–3 sets of 10 repetitions, as tolerated. *(Demonstrated in the #3 photo)*

Heels and Toes

Begin by sitting upright in a chair. Lift your toes up off of the ground while keeping your heels on the ground. Hold for 1 second before coming up onto your toes and lifting your heels off of the ground. Hold for 1 second before returning to starting position. *(Demonstrated in the #4 photos)*





Photos provided by Faith in Practice and Crystal Rempfer
Men, women, and children of all ages are helped through the medical mission teams to Guatemala to provide wheelchairs for those in need.



Uniquely qualified

Using God-given talents to help those in Guatemala

*By Thomas Moll
Director of Content & Innovation*

A 13-year-old girl sits in a stroller unable to walk. A man is in tears because he's afraid he'll never be able to move on his own again. A woman's only way to leave her home is being carried in a plastic chair.

These are all true stories of people who have lost independence and mobility in Guatemala. For many, these

heartbreaking stories are overwhelming to hear because they feel there is nothing they can do, but for Crystal Rempfer and the team at Faith in Practice, it was a call to action.

Rempfer is an occupational therapist just north of Houston, Texas. She is also a provider of hope through Faith in Practice, a ministry that works to

continued on page 14

“improve the health and wellness of underserved Guatemalans through health-related medical missions, community-based health initiatives, robust partnerships, and education while fostering spirituality and compassion in our patients and volunteers,” according to their website.

Rempfer first worked with Faith in Practice before COVID hit and has continued to do these trips every other year. Her most recent trip was in 2023.

Each mission team is led by different medical professionals from ENTs to urologists, gynecologists, oral surgeons, audiologists, nurses, and orthopedic surgeons. Rempfer’s team was led by an ENT who was looking to add someone with experience in fitting people to wheelchairs. In many medical systems, physical therapists are the ones to custom fit wheelchairs, but in Rempfer’s group, this was a job for occupational therapists like herself. Once she got the email, she knew this would be an opportunity to serve unlike any other she’d ever done.

“I’ve always loved mission trips. I loved the ones I went on as a youth, and the ones I went on as a chaperone. And, you know, the older you get, you wonder, ‘What’s my place in doing that now?’” Rempfer said. “Every trip I went on, there was something to do, but this one really spoke to me because it tapped into something I had a skill set in — something that I knew not just anybody could do.”

Rempfer came into her first trip with passion and experience, but this didn’t mean that everything was easy. There are always challenges going from one culture to another and trying to translate more than just language.

“We had translators, but it’s hard for a translator to convey my passion or exactly what I’m trying to say,” she said. “I really had to learn what was realistic and what was normal for this population.”

In the U.S., Rempfer has colleagues and the latest medical techniques at her disposal. In Guatemala, she had to adapt to not only what was available but to their culture and way of doing things.

“The recommendations that I have for my patients here (in the U.S.) has to be very different than what’s there,” she said. “We talk about pressure relief and the things that really are important, but you have to find a different way to explain them. ... You have to put things on a pretty basic level to make it understandable.”

During the trip, patients would be brought into the clinic where the mission team would assess needs. Rempfer’s work would not only include assessing the best way to fit someone to a wheelchair but

also working with friends or family members to make sure that whatever changes were made, they had the chance to be sustainable once the mission team left.

Another challenge was the fact that most people coming in for help didn’t come with previous medical records or a solid diagnosis.

“Very few know their diagnosis. They just know that they’re getting weaker. ... To see the tears of these men who come in realizing they can’t move the way that they want to, and they’re going to fall, they’re just afraid of



Photos provided by Crystal Rempfer
Crystal Rempfer, left, smiles with one of the women who was helped through the wheelchair program in Guatemala.

“Every trip I went on, there was something to do, but this one really spoke to me because it tapped into something I had a skill set in, something that I knew not just anybody could do.”

~ Crystal Rempfer

Discovering our own *Purpose*

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.
~ Romans 12:4-8 (ESV)



Photos provided by Crystal Rempfer
At left, a 13-year-old girl, who once had to use a stroller to get around, smiles in her new wheelchair. Below, Crystal Rempfer used her training to show people in Guatemala how to move patients into their wheelchairs.



what they're going to do to their family," Rempfer said. "This man came in there thinking that he was giving up every bit of independence that he had, and that his wife was going to have to push him around because he wouldn't be able to do anything for himself. When he realized that he could still move around and control this chair, he just started crying."

Mission trips offer the opportunity to serve in special ways. Faith in Practice offered Rempfer a way to use her life experiences, skills as an occupational therapist, and her faith in Jesus Christ to deeply impact the lives of those in need. But mission trips help more than those being served; they also touch the hearts of those serving.

"God is teaching me to have a more grateful heart," she said. "I'm realizing just the extent of blessings in my life. It shows me the things that I take for granted. And yet, I think what Guatemala shows me, too, is how I feel like I lean into these phrases or things you've heard before like 'He's enough.'"

Rempfer has taken the lessons she learned in Guatemala to improve her work with patients in the Houston area. These are not work sponsored trips, so she makes the sacrifice of taking vacation from work to serve in this unique way. Rempfer plans to return in 2025 to fulfill this purpose God has set out for her.

"What they say to me is, 'I pray for you.' 'I thank God for you,'" she said. "I just am blessed to be able to be here and give you this chair."

Crystal Rempfer had done many different types of mission trips, but when she went on a trip that used her skills, experiences, and training, she saw how God had uniquely equipped her to serve in Guatemala. You may not be trained in something like occupational therapy, but as part of the body of Christ, you are gifted to love God and love others.

The Holy Spirit gives each believer spiritual gifts. This passage from Romans reminds us that these gifts are meant to be used. Spiritual gifts are given to build up the Church.

God also has given us experiences that He uses to mold us and shape us. God works all of this for our good, but also for the good of others. We also all have natural abilities that may not seem spiritual on their own but can be used to connect with others, help others, or fill a vital need for our church community.

Take time to reflect on your gifts and how you can serve others. What gifts do you use? Are you a great listener? Are you a healer? Do you have the gift of speech or as a writer? What life experiences have helped you? How natural did it feel?

Serving others isn't always easy, and this part of our Christian walk of faith is sometimes burdensome. But, consider the amazing ways God has made you and how much easier it could be to show His love to others when focusing on what you have to give instead of what you lack.



a lasting impact. The words might be instructional, but they can also be comforting.

The death of a loved one is often stressful, and the process of distributing estate assets is a breeding ground of greed and hostility — even among a loving family. Caring and meaningful words from a deceased parent set the tone for Christian behavior and paint the bigger picture of a life in Christ. These words are the final example of Christian living and might just form the foundation of faith for those left behind.

The LCMS Foundation explains it this way: “A Christian preamble within your will or in a family blessing letter is a way for you to leave a final message of your Christian faith to your family.”

Below is an example of a Christian preamble that I have used in my law practice:

First, realizing the uncertainty of this life I place full confidence and trust in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who promised: “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:25–26 KJV).

Second, knowing that the wages of sin is death, I believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, suffered and died for the forgiveness of my sins, which I neither deserve nor merit, but receive as a free gift of God, who is rich in grace and mercy.

Third, I urge my heirs not to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but to take hold of the life which is life indeed through faith in Jesus Christ.

I urge you to prepare an estate plan if you have not already. As you prepare your plan, consider the mandate in Deuteronomy 6. We are to not only love our Lord with everything we have but to also impress this upon future generations.

A Christian preamble allows a person to make a simple, lasting, personal statement of faith. It is the final opportunity to proclaim your love of the Lord to family and friends, while also serving as a source of comfort, love, encouragement, and trust in Jesus, according to The Lutheran Foundation of Canada.

If those reasons have not yet persuaded you to insert a Christian preamble, consider this: Many wills are submitted to the public record shortly after death. These words of faith might just be read by a judge or clerk in the courthouse who desperately need to know they are loved by Jesus. What a way to witness to others!

Why does the church celebrate St. Michael and All Angels Day?

Every Sept. 29, the Church celebrates St. Michael and All Angels Day. This year, we’re observing this special day on our Worship Anew program as it falls on a Sunday. But why do we celebrate angels at all? They serve an important role in our lives of faith. In the Bible, these non-human creatures have served as God’s messengers, carrying important messages from God. They also are our protectors. In Psalm 91:11 we’re reminded that angels guard us in all our ways. Angels also continually worship and praise our God and lead us to do the same. As we celebrate St. Michael and All Angels, we encourage you to take the posture of angels, turning to God to praise Him for all He’s done.

If Angels are non-human, why is Michael called a saint?

The word “saint” means “holy one.” We typically think of saints as those who have died in the faith. Through Jesus, His sacrifice for us on the cross and through the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit, we are made holy. Without this gift, we would have no way to pay for our sins. We can call angels holy ones (saints) not because they needed to be saved, but because they were created holy. This gets a bit confusing with fallen angels, or demons, because they did sin, they rebelled against God. Sometime in history, this fall of angels took place, and they have sealed their fate. For all other angels, they are the “good guys.” They do not waiver in their work for God and in their worship of Him.

St. Michael is referred to in Daniel 10:13 as the “chief prince.” In Revelation, we learn about what happened with fallen angels. It was St. Michael, along with the angel army, who fought for us then and continues to fight for us.

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!

A Healthy Purpose in Life

By the Rev. Michael Wakeland

“The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.”

Psalm 138:8 (ESV)

“Why am I still here?”

This was the question that Martha asked me as I sat by her bedside. As a chaplain at Lutheran Life Villages in Fort Wayne, Ind., I had been asked to visit with her as she had been crying a great deal and seemed to be quite depressed.

This is a question that I often hear. As people struggle to deal with the loss of a spouse or loved one, they ask themselves: “Is there a purpose for me being here?” How people answer this question often has a major impact on their mental and physical health. It also may impact how they view their spiritual lives and their relationship with God as they are tempted to blame God for their current situation.

“What is my purpose in life?”

Many people ask this question throughout their lives — perhaps first as a young person thinking about the type of work or profession they want to pursue. The answer to this question may change whether or not marriage and children enter the picture. It may change again when retirement takes place and as we move through our later years. For many, it can be discouraging when you are not able to do the activities that had formed such a vital part of your day to day, and you may ask what your purpose is in life.

We can look to God’s Word for an answer to this question. Psalm 138:8 (ESV) tells us: “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.”

Often, when we think about our purpose in life, we do so in terms of what we can accomplish. Instead, I think that focusing on what God can do in us and through us is a much better way to see our purpose in life.

I remember sitting by the bedside of a man that had served the Lord throughout his life in many and varied



ways. In his final years of life, he found himself in a nursing home, but this did not stop his service to the Lord. He showed me a notebook that he kept by his bedside that he used to guide his prayers. Each page of the notebook had the names of people that he was praying for in alphabetical order. He turned to the “W” page and pointed to my name and shared with me that he prayed for me each week as he progressed through the notebook.

This dear servant of our Lord Jesus was living out the words that the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:16–17 (ESV): “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my

prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.”

Knowing that God has a purpose for us — no matter what our situation in life currently is — helps us to live in His joy and peace.

May you continue to serve our Lord with gladness, trusting in His steadfast love and purpose for your life.

The Rev. Michael Wakeland is the director of pastoral care at Lutheran Life Villages in Fort Wayne, Ind.



Psalms of Praise

Adapted from a Bible Study from the Rev. Dennis Goff

Psalms have been a regular part of Christian worship since the Church began. It continued the practice of God's people using psalms in worship from the time of David, going from tent, to temple, to synagogue, then their house church. We are encouraged in Colossians 3:16 (ESV) to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Open your Bible and begin by reading 1 Chronicles 21, which many theologians believe was the inspiration for David's Psalm 30. While reading, look at what David does and says. Think about what David may be thinking and feeling as he makes decisions and then talks to God.

Psalm 30 (ESV)

David's initial expression of praise

1 I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

- 2 O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
3 O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down
to the pit.

There are many things David could have been despaired over. In 1 Chronicles 21, what kind of depths do we find David in?

How has God restored David? Use examples from 1 Chronicles 21 or from other instances you can remember from David's life.

(Psalm 30) David's response from his experience

- 4 Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
5 For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

The Rev. Dennis Goff is the senior pastor at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind.



6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
 “I shall never be moved.”
 7 By your favor, O Lord,
 you made my mountain stand strong;
 you hid your face;
 I was dismayed.

A feature that shows up in many psalms, especially psalms of praise, is a call for the congregation, or for all the people, to respond along with the psalmist. “Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.”

Think of a time when you felt alone in your feelings. If your feelings are great, it's not as great if you are alone. If you are in despair, this tends to isolate you even more because you may not want to share with others. What's the benefit of praising with others? What's the benefit of sharing in struggles with others?

In verse 6, David speaks of not being moved when he was in his prosperity. When we feel like we're the ones with power, then we're the ones in control. We can have a misplaced confidence, and we may also say, “I shall never be moved.” If we're relying on God, this is great! But if the mountain that stands strong is just our own ideas of self-preservation, we get into trouble.

Think about a way you can build in a practice of humbling yourself before God daily and submitting to what He has for you. What would it look like to pray or journal each day about making solid plans, but also praying that God's will be done in your life?

(Psalm 30) David's appeal for mercy

8 To you, O Lord, I cry,
 and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
 9 “What profit is there in my death,
 if I go down to the pit?
 Will the dust praise you?
 Will it tell of your faithfulness?
 10 Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me!
 O Lord, be my helper!”

It seems like David is almost bargaining with God in verse 9 when he says, “What profit is there in my death ... will the dust praise you?” It's so ingrained in our human nature to use whatever we have in order to be in power over someone else whenever we feel weak or threatened. David here may be trying to get God to relent and not destroy him because then God wouldn't have David's praise anymore.

Have you every bargained with God? Have you ever promised you would do something for God if He did something for you? What is wrong with this kind of thinking?

(Psalm 30) David's expression of praise

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
 you have loosed my sackcloth
 and clothed me with gladness,
 12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
 O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

How does God turn David's mourning into dancing? How does he also give us hope after we mourn? What do we all have to look forward to on the other side of our suffering?

Many psalms of praise dive deep into the psalmist's despair and then will end with something like the line in verse 12, “I will give thanks to you forever!”

What does it feel like to say praises to God, even when you're feeling down? Can this be a reminder of God's unwavering faithfulness, even while we struggle to stay solidly committed to him?

Read these other Psalms of Praise as time allows, as you are feeling down, or in times of joy: Psalm 95, Psalm 96, Psalm 97, Psalm 98, Psalm 99, and Psalm 100

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you have called me to praise you in good times and bad. Help me to make praise a part of my daily life of faith. As I cry out to you in my need, I pray that I may also recognize you as the giver of every good gift. Thank you for the greatest gift, the gift of salvation through Your Son, my Savior, Jesus Christ. It's in His name I pray. Amen.




Photo provided by Camp
Arcadia in Arcadia, Michigan

Lasting memories with grandchildren

*By Tommy Franke
Proud Grandmother*

My husband Mark and I have been blessed with three grandchildren. The only problem is we wish there were more of them! We are doubly blessed that two of them live within a 10-minute drive from our home.

Some of my fondest childhood memories took place during my prolonged visits to my own grandparents' small farm. Because of that, I have been determined to make visiting us important to our grandkids.

Since they were born, I've combed garage sales to make sure that our house is full of age-appropriate games, puzzles, books,

bikes, and sporting equipment. Sure, Papa complains about giving up space in his garage, but he loves seeing them enjoy themselves as much as I do.

I found a kids' cookbook, and our 13-year-old granddaughter has spent the last 10 years experimenting with recipes from it. The first thing she asks when she visits is, "Can I bake something?" She knows my answer is always, "My kitchen is your kitchen." She has become quite skilled, and I think this avocation may turn into something more for her in the future.

Her 8-year-old brother sometimes likes to putter in the kitchen too, but most of the time, he can be found elsewhere. Together, we love cuddling our sheepadoodle, fighting Nerf gun battles, playing wiffle ball and pickleball, and our favorite — hitting golf balls at the driving range.

We recently tried a new activity — fishing at the pond in my neighborhood. Alas, neither of us could stomach putting the worm on the hook or touching the squirming fish to throw them back. So, fishing has been permanently removed from our To Do list.

These two have been staying overnight at our house since they were born. Once they were able to request them, the visits occurred even more often. They now spend one night each week during the school year. Those weekly visits remind me of when our own children were growing up. I really enjoy hearing about their days at school. They get an afterschool snack and then some outside play time with our neighbor kids. After a home-cooked meal, it's time for homework and memory work, then baths, bedtime snacks, and cuddling up with a book before prayers and lights out.

Fortunately, both kids get up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. (This is definitely not reminiscent of when their mother was growing up). They enjoy pancakes and sometimes even get hot chocolate. As Papa loads them into his truck for the trip to school, I call out our family motto that they have memorized: Be kind. Work hard. Learn a lot. Have fun.

Some wonder why we would want to do this every week. It gives their busy parents a break, but it does so much more for us. We know



how quickly these years fly by, and we want to treasure each moment we can with them.

We have been purchasing grandparents' passes to both the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo and Science Central since our eldest grandchild was born and have enjoyed many visits with our grandkids there. We have also taken them to area fairs and festivals and have also taken some family road trips with them.

On one such trip to our oldest grandson's home in New Hampshire, my husband spent a week there completing a treehouse that had been started by my grandson's other Opa. All of us, including the grandkids, pitched in, carrying lumber and helping any way we could. What a wonderful memory that was and how special that our grandson was able to enjoy, for many years, the treehouse built for him by his two grandpas.

We have been able to be there for all the special and even not so special events in the lives of our two local grandkids. We are thankful that we have been able to attend everything — Christmas services, piano recitals, soccer games, school carnivals, Pinewood Derbies, and so on.

On the other hand, our oldest grandson has always lived far away, which has been very hard for us. We are thankful that his parents agree with us that it is very important that we get together as often as possible. We have been together for most holidays, birthdays, graduations, confirmation, Grandparents Days, and basketball and soccer tourneys.

Which leads me to our favorite activity that we get to do with all three grandkids: Each summer, we enjoy a week at family camp at beautiful Camp Arcadia on Lake Michigan.

Camp Arcadia started as a Walther League camp more than 100 years ago. At family camp, we all stay together in the historic inn, cabins, or cottages. The days begin with a Bible study and then are filled with an almost endless list of activities: hiking, archery, shuffleboard, all kinds of ball games, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, campfires, treats in the Trading Post, indoor games such as pool and ping pong in the Wigwam, music, arts and crafts, etc. Each day ends with Vespers.

On the last day, we gather on the beach for a worship service with a background of the sun setting behind the cross on beautiful Lake Michigan. All three generations agree this week at Arcadia is our favorite week of the year.

For 15 years, my three grandchildren have been always in my prayers so it's appropriate that I end this article with a prayer:

Thank you, God, for blessing us with these three and giving us so many memories of wonderful times spent together. Please always bless them and keep them in your loving hands. Amen.

Write down your favorite activities with your grandchildren

1. Where do you enjoy visiting together?

2. What do you enjoy watching your grandchildren do or perform?

3. What was your favorite toy growing up that you could share with your grandchild?

4. What was your favorite activity growing up that you could share with your grandchild?

5. What is a place that you would love to take your grandchild?



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Happy Grandparents' Day!



September 8, 2024

*Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,
and the glory of children is their fathers.
Proverbs 17:6 (ESV)*