



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

901 SW Fillmore | Topeka, Kansas 66606-1445 | 785.354.7132 | www.stjohnlcmstopeka.org

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ROCK STAR CHRISTIANITY, *LAETITIA AMORIS*, AND MINISTRY FOR THE LONG HAUL

Gene Ed Veith isn't exactly a household name in the U.S., even if he's well-known to us at St. John's for his faithful teaching of the Gospel. And he's about as close to rock-star status as a Lutheran can get. So a professor at the St. Louis seminary wonders where the Lutheran voice gets buried in the channels of popular culture. Or why it gets buried. Or if it's even there in the first place. That's sort of like asking: Where's the Lutherans' Rick Warren? Or Max Lucado? Or Joel Osteen? Or C.S. Lewis? Or Francis I? Or, in other words, Where's *our* rock star? I have my theories.

Now, Francis has certainly made a splash. And not just because he's made a spin in the pope mobile look cool again. No, even outside the pope mobile he's got a certain swagger. Taking on the Vatican bureaucracy (which practically crushed his predecessor). Speaking off the cuff (which many Catholics wish he'd just stop doing). And saying things popes probably just shouldn't say (which is why many Catholics wish he'd just stop). The Vatican PR machine has managed to turn a diminutive man from Argentina into the Western church's *agent provocateur*—a rock star. Kurt Cobain gets 11.8M hits on Google. Francis I gets 12.6M.

It's not clear, though, what the benefit is—to Francis, never mind to the Roman Church. Because through the din that surrounds him, no one's quite sure what he's saying. Or where what he's saying will lead. Women's ordination—for or against?

How about the communion of the divorced-but-not-annulled? (Decipher, if you can, the instruction of *Amoris Laetitia*). And you certainly remember his "Who am I to judge?" This from the man who's supposed to be the Vicar of Christ on earth.

By the way, there's judgment, and then there's judgment. Hypocritical judgment that elevates another's sin while diminishing one's own—that's what Jesus prohibits (Matt. 7). But that's no carte-blanche rejection of drawing lines and making clear the teaching of the Word of God. And the Jesus of Matt. 7 is the same Jesus who told the woman caught in adultery, "Go, and sin no more." It doesn't take a logician to figure out that the gracious, forgiving Lord Himself calls the woman's adultery "sin."

Of course, Jesus came to *forgive*. But for there to be forgiveness, there must be judgment—judgment about what's sin and what's not sin. Because forgiveness applies to *sin*. And *sinner*s.

Back to the "problem" of the dearth of Lutheran rock stars: Do we really want a rock star like Francis anyway?

I contend that one reason there aren't Lutheran rock stars is because of the clarity and faithfulness to the Word of Lutheran teaching and preaching. The message is always sin and grace, death and life, hell and heaven, the devil and Jesus (with an exclamation behind the second member of each

pair). I.e., for there to be Jesus, there must be sin, because Jesus' job is to forgive sin. So is the pastor's.

Another reason we don't have rock stars is because the forgiveness of sins comes on an intensely personal level—and for the long haul. Lutheran pastors know their flock by name. And regularly pray for each sheep by name. And with their own hand give into the mouths and onto the heads of the flock the gifts of Christ. Lutheran pastors speak the last *Nunc dimittis* over the casket of the faithful departed just feet from where that sheep was baptized and individually bring the counsel of the Word of God to couples considering marriage and to those struggling with sin, death, and the gaping maw of the devil. Joel Osteen may not even know the names of all his staff members.

Because that's just how Jesus set it up: "Whose soever sins you forgive, they have been forgiven them; whose soever sins you bind, they have been bound" (John 20). Forgiveness applied individually. On Pentecost it was 12 apostles for 3,000 baptized (Acts 2). Do the math. That's a 1:250 ratio. And

that's about the closest thing to a rock concert you get in the New Testament. Titus never became the rock star of Crete. Instead, Paul told him to "appoint elders [priests/pastors] in every town" (Tit. 1:5). Boots on the ground. And the Lord sent Nathan to *David*. David was the rock star. Nathan was the humble servant of the Lord speaking only His words.

As are each of us (and I mean you and me, not just me and fellow pastors). Because this is how the Lord "does ministry." Through your pastor, to be sure. But also and equally effectively through the daily devotions you have with your family. Through the casual conversation with a co-worker or friend or in-law about the life and salvation that is in Jesus. Through raising your family in the faith. Individually. And for the long haul. That "He who began a good work in you might bring it to completion in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:5). And for that, you don't have to be a rock star. **+jsb**

Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104

Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102

Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz

Visitation Pastor - Rev. Glenn R. Bitter

Topeka Lutheran School Teachers - Ashley Jensema, Andrea Kosmicki,

2016 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

PLEDGE SUNDAY IS JUNE 26

One of the drawbacks to our recent "Paid in Full" Capital Campaign is that even as we've just had Celebration Sunday, we now come to the time to initiate our *annual stewardship* campaign. The pledge period for this campaign runs July 1 – June 30 of 2017. These are two distinct campaigns, with two very important, but very different purposes. Our *annual stewardship* campaign raises funds for our annual operating budget, while with the "Paid in Full" campaign, our goal is to retire our building debt. Pledge cards for the annual campaign are totaled and form the basis for establishing our next calendar year operating budget.

We pray our education on spiritual renewal and the use of God's earthly gifts is fresh enough in our memory that we don't need to revisit those topics the last three Sundays in June for our 2016 *annual stewardship* campaign. At least that is our plan. You will soon be receiving a letter explaining our annual campaign along with your pledge cards. We will also have bulletin inserts the first three Sundays in June to provide further information.

As “Paid in Full” taught us, biblical stewardship education is an education in living in one’s Christian vocation, not just or even primarily, to raise money. The goal of biblical stewardship isn’t meeting the budgetary needs of the church, but growth in our vocation as Christians and within the Christian vocation, the joy of giving in spontaneous thanksgiving for God’s goodness and mercy.

As in the past, we are sending out the pledge cards early to give members/families time for prayerful consideration of their commitment for 2016. Handing in a completed commitment card during the June 26 service will be completely voluntary. If you’re unable to attend on Stewardship Sunday, you may leave your completed commitment card in a sealed envelope in the collection plate or in the church office at a future date.

Finally, we’d like once again to assure you that there will be no home solicitation to ask people to complete cards. We only ask that you give prayerful consideration to how best to use the gifts we all receive from God. St. John’s is truly blessed with a giving congregation.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dave Graversen or Andy Grittman.

2016 Stewardship Campaign Committee

PAID IN FULL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Sunday, May 22 was celebration Sunday, where we revealed our total pledges to date for our “Paid in Full” Capital Campaign. We are pleased to report that our pledge total has increased from the announcement totals on the 22nd. We now have 137 giving units that have pledged \$759,032. Combined with our already committed funds of \$123,000, which includes a \$90,000 bequest, we have a total of \$882,032 committed to the campaign toward our \$1,000,000 goal. The 137 giving units represent 48% of St. John’s giving units. Pledges will be collected over the next 36 months, beginning with this month. Anyone still wishing to make a pledge may do so by turning in your pledge card with a Sunday offering plate, or turning the pledge into the office. Extra pledge cards can also be picked up at the office. While we will continue to give updates on our collection, there will also be a display showing our results. On behalf of the Capital Campaign Leadership Team, we cannot thank enough all the members who helped in this campaign. With so many helping hands, it played a huge part in the success of this campaign. On a side note, **The Paid in Full Campaign video** received such a positive reaction that we’re making a limited number of copies available to the congregation. You can get your copy on a first-come, first-served basis. Please contact the church office to secure your copy.

MONTHLY BREAKFAST

Biscuits and gravy will be served up by the Elders for the monthly breakfast on Sunday, June 12.

NEW ADULT CATECHESIS CLASS COMING SOON

A new Adult Catechesis class will begin in mid-June. This class is designed to lead toward communicant membership at St. John’s or simply to serve as a great review of basic Lutheran theology. Several regular visitors to St. John’s have already indicated their desire to participate in the class. As we’re in touch with everyone who’s interested, we hope to come up with a mutually agreeable time. All are welcome, including long-time Lutherans. Please contact Pastor Bruss for details regarding meeting time, duration, etc.

2016 FLOWER CALENDAR

Please check the Flower Calendar on the bulletin board outside of the church offices.

Many dates are still available. Some upcoming available dates are:

July 10, 24; August 21; October 16

Plan to be a part of...

THE NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AGAINST CRIME SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 6-8 PM

(Hosted by the Neighborhood Care Team and many additional St. John's volunteers)

Signup sheets to volunteer at the block party will be posted on the Human Care bulletin in July!

ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

June 18, 2016

Forbes Golf Course

Registration begins at 7:00 with coffee and doughnuts

Shotgun start at 8:00 a.m.

Lunch and prizes will be provided

Cost: \$65 per individual; \$250 per team

Registration deadline: Sunday, June 12th

Registration forms are in the breeze way.

This is the main fund raiser for the Lutheran Youth Fellowship to attend the Higher Things Conference and for other activities.

ADULT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP SMORGASBORD

Once again, we'd like to thank all those who contributed to this year's successful Smorgasbord—food preparation, silverware wrapping, serving, carrying trays, cleanup, selling and buying tickets, etc. Many helping hands were involved and your time is greatly appreciated. In spite of the rescheduling to Wednesday, close to 300 people were served! Following are recipients of the net proceeds of \$4,000—\$3,000 from the dinner and \$1,000 from St. John's Thrivent Choice Dollars:

Lutheran Hour Ministries, Topeka Lutheran School, LLL Kansas District, Children's Christian Society, LLL Rosebowl Parade, Hintz Endowment, Concordia University, Seward, Doorstep, Topeka Rescue Mission, and St. John's Welfare Fund.

DOORSTEP NEWS



The Topeka Community Foundation will host its 4th **Topeka Gives Event** to benefit local charities on **Tuesday, June 7 at Fairlawn Plaza Mall from 7 a.m. – 6 p.m.** Doorstep will be participating again this year and will have a booth at the event. The Foundation has \$73,500 available in match money for donations made to the 158 participating non-profits. The match will be made proportionately on donations of \$25 - \$1,000. Doorstep received nearly \$12,712 last year to assist with agency needs and services. Please come out and join Doorstep staff and volunteers and help them raise needed funds. You must be present on June 7th to make your donation for the match money to be applied.

LUTHERAN BRAILLE & LARGE PRINT SUNDAY

June 12 is designated as Lutheran Braille and Large Print Sunday here at St. John's. Please plan to attend and help celebrate 35 years of God's Blessings for Work Center #31. This Center has truly grown in reaching out to those requesting God's Word in large print in the last 35 years. There are many industrious and willing volunteers giving support from the congregation, as well as a very generous gift from the estate of Nelda Flickinger. Nelda was a faithful volunteer at WC#31 for many years. It was her wish that the Center continue to grow and flourish in helping the Blind and Sight impaired touch the promises of Jesus.

TLS NEWS

TLS - Looking Ahead to 2016-2017 School Year:

1. TLS is growing once again with anticipation of at least 10 more students to be enrolled next year vs. current enrollment. There were 15 young children who attended the recent Kindergarten Roundup - a huge success!
2. Middle School grades are now 1:1 with Chromebook technology. Elementary grades are 3:1 with iPads.
3. Curriculum updates are being considered for Math and Language Arts for the school.
4. TLS staff and Board members are finalizing a 3-5 Year Vision and Goals outline, action plans, and evaluation timelines which will allow the school to continue its operation and mission for future years.
5. TLS continues to be blessed with generous estate gifts and donations from those who recognize the benefits of Christian education.
6. Recruitment and marketing efforts continue, increasing awareness of TLS within the community which will hopefully result in increased enrollment.

Camp Invention needs your help collecting recyclable products for our inventors to use when designing their prototypes by June 5. Examples are cardboard, containers, craft supplies, foam trays, plastics, rubber bands, string, wrapping paper, etc. All recyclables need to be washed out. Please refrain from harmful items such as packing peanuts and glass. All items can be dropped off at the school or church for pickup. Thank you!

WOMEN'S LEAGUE NEWS

Ladies who are interested in helping with replacing the hymnal ribbons may join us for the June Quarterly of LWML on Sunday, June 26 at 2:00 p.m. Precut ribbons have been ordered and should be ready to slip in the hymnals, but there are many to do. This is a change from the card making plans, but the ribbons are an important project to be completed. Please come and enjoy an afternoon of fellowship, bring any item for the Lutheran World Relief Health Kits (nail clippers, toothbrushes in original wrappers, sturdy combs, lightweight towels), and serve the Lord with gladness.

It's that time again. The Women's league of the LWML will be again this year having a Bargain and Bake sale August 25 & 26, 2016 in Luther Hall. This year a percentage of our profits will be given to the Paid in Full campaign. So clean out those closets, drawers and cupboards and bring on over to the church. There is some room to store items in the basement. We would ask that you not bring any electronics, which includes TV, computers, DVD or VCR players.

We are still collecting Best Choice labels. This year we had 2000 and this netted us \$90.00. This money will be used to replace the ribbons in the hymnals. We are on our way to reach this goal again this year.

Just a reminder there are many dishes in the kitchen from either pot lucks or smorgasbord, please pick up ASAP, those that aren't claimed will be added to the bargain and bake sale items.

DORCAS CIRCLE LUNCHEON

Dorcas Circle invites the ladies of Sarah Circle and the congregation to join us for lunch at McFarland's at 11:00 a.m. on June 14.

MITES FOR MISSIONS: MISSION GRANT #9

LCMS GLOBAL SEMINARY INITIATIVE – INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

The Global Seminary Initiative is a program that provides Lutheran theological education by bringing the best students worldwide to The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) seminaries to study at the graduate level so that they can return to their home countries and provide advanced theological leadership. Also provided is support for local regional seminaries—both infra-structure and scholarships for students to attend regional seminaries. Another offering of the program is continuing education—seminars, conferences and visits by qualified LCMS pastors and professors to teach in the local region. LWML grant money will provide scholarships for the international students.

Grant Amount: \$100,000:

To provide scholarships for pastors from emerging and partner church bodies to obtain advanced degrees at the two Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) seminaries. It also will fund sending LCMS professors and qualified pastors to teach at regional seminaries around the world. Scholarships for students attending in-country seminaries as well as funding for seminars and educational conferences will be provided.

HELPING HANDS INITIATIVE — LCMS NATIONAL HOUSING SUPPORT CORPORATION



Helping Hands Initiative

BOUNTIFUL!

Sow • Nourish • Reap

\$100,000



Lutheran Women's Missionary League

www.lwml.org • 1-800-252-5965

Grant Amount: \$100,000

- These funds would provide construction materials, tools, home repair allotment, Laborers for Christ fees and financial literacy training for ten home projects for low-income, disabled, and/or elderly residents near LCMS congregations. It provides a way for congregations to reach out to their local communities through housing repair services.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) National Housing Support Corporation (NHSC) is launching the “Helping Hand” home repair initiative in a U.S. city in the spring of 2016. This rehab initiative is focused on supporting critical home repair needs of low-income, disabled and/or elderly residents near LCMS congregations. It will give congregations a tool to care for their neighbors’ bodily needs while opening doors to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to unreached individuals and families in their community.

SAINTS ALIVE AFTER 55

The 2016 Saints Alive After 55 gathering will once again be held at the Spiritual Life Center, 7100 E. 45th St. North in Wichita. The dates are July 17-19. This year’s theme is “Who Will Tell Them” based on Deuteronomy 4:9. The keynote speaker is, Ben Freudenburg, Director of the Concordia Center for the Family and Professor of Family Studies at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Bible study leader is Rev. Dr. John Tape, Director of the Lutheran Student Center, Wichita State University. Small group sessions include, Rev, Rick Twenhafel, M.O.S.T. (Mission Opportunities Short Term)—Mission Work of Their Organization; and Trooper Chad Crittenden, Kansas Highway Patrol—Driving Tips. Rev. Wallace Behrhorst, will present the message at the closing worship service. If you have never attended before, give it a try this year. In addition to the excellent presenters, you will enjoy the peaceful setting and accommodations and fellowship with fellow Lutherans from all over Kansas. Check with your church office for registration forms.

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR MAY 2016

June 5	Daniel in the Lion’s Den	Daniel 6:1-27
June 12	Jesus Heals the Centurion’s Servant	Matthew 8:5-13
June 19	Peter and John Heal a Lame Man	Acts 3:1-10
June 26	Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray	Luke 11:1-13

Bible Words for June:

I call upon You, for You answer me. Psalm 86:7

I urge that . . . prayers . . . be made for all people. 1 Timothy 2:1

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 136:1

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

Does God really listen to my prayers? Will He always answer them? What kinds of things should I pray for? Does “daily bread” mean vegetables too? This summer students will find the answers to these questions in **Pray, Praise, and Give Thanks**, the theme for the summer quarter.

Each Sunday morning at 9:45 in the regular Sunday School opening time, the children in grades 1 - 6 have the privilege of learning hymns and playing instruments under the direction of Bethany Woelmer, a

graduate student in church music at KU. The Sunday morning sessions also serve as a rehearsal time for singing in the church service periodically. Encourage your children to participate.

Thank you, parents for bringing your children to Sunday School and church.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
"BREAD OF LIFE"
JULY 25 - 29
9:00 - 11:30 A.M.

We look forward to this exciting week of learning, singing, playing, and making! Enrollment forms are available outside the Information Center and in this newsletter. Helpers are needed in these areas: Crafts, Games, Snacks, Preschool, Decorations and set-up, Infant/Childcare, Small Group Guides, and Registration. Thank you for bringing your children, age 3 through 6th grade (in the fall).

VBS ENROLLMENT FORM
JULY 25 - 29, 2016
9:00 A.M. TO 11:30 A.M.
"BREAD OF LIFE"

Children's classes are available to children age 3 years through those entering the 6th grade this fall.

Name _____ age ____ grade (in the fall) _____

Name _____ age ____ grade (in the fall) _____

Name _____ age ____ grade (in the fall) _____

Parent/Guardian _____ Phone _____

"I will be **volunteering and** will need child care for these children under age three:"

I would like to volunteer to help with:

Crafts _____ Kitchen _____ Preschool _____ Registration _____

Games _____ Small group guide _____

Decorations and set up _____ Infant/childcare _____

Place completed form in the blue box at the Information Center soon!

Even if you have never done so before, please consider helping with VBS! You'll be tired but glad you did! Contact Andrea Kosmicki or Deaconess Linda



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

[Jesus said] *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

Matthew 28:19–20a So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. The Augsburg Confession, Article 5.