



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

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

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GOOD WITHOUT GOD AND OTHER NONSENSE

Good without God is a new book by the Humanist chaplain at Harvard University, Greg M. Epstein. The book tries to bridge the gap between people of faith and unbelievers and comes in response to the deluge of publications by the New Atheists ("household names" like Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris). Epstein "offers a world view for nonbelievers that dispenses with the hostility and intolerance of religion" that marks the New Atheism. But the delusion of peace is not the same as peace: "Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." (Matt. 12:30)

Of course, Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris are hardly "household names," surely not among Christians. But their thinking echoes through our culture. Dawkins is famous for a quip that the coming-into-being of the entire universe via the Big Bang was a "cosmic bootstrap maneuver." By which he means that the universe, pulled itself up by its own bootstraps and caused its own existence. From nothing, including the laws of physics.

That's why philosophy matters. There's a fallacy known as the "infinite regression." Because there's such a thing as cause and effect, some *thing* must be caused by another *thing*. When we hear of the Bing Bang or the "cosmic bootstrap maneuver" we must ask, "What caused the Big Bang?" Once we've found that cause, we must find that cause's cause. And so on. That's an infinite regression. And it's philosophical impossibility.

Which is why believing in God is not irrational.

But back to *Good without God*. For every Christian, the claim that "one can be good without God" is rather a head-scratcher. Of course, with our Confessions we do maintain that people can choose good and evil *regarding things that are below them* (*Augsburg Confession*, Art. XVIII). For example, it's in my power either to pay for the Snickers in the check-out line or pilfer it. (I always choose to pay.) But moral goodness in things "below us" may never be confused with *ultimate* goodness—in things *above* us. For that I need God.

More specifically, for that I need Jesus. "'For there is none righteous, no, not even one....' But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Rom. 3:10, 21–22)

Our culture is drifting from the Church. I suspect this goes back to the "great marriage" of American culture and the Church in the 50s and 60s. The marriage contract read, "Hate Commies. Go to church." Being American was good; being a Communist was bad. Going to church was thus the ultimate anti-Communist, pro-American thing you could do. It gave American goodness a ritual. In other words, Americans went to church to *express* their goodness, not to be *made* "good" by the Gospel.

But now, as *Good without God* demonstrates, the cultural norm of “goodness” no longer lives under the specter of atheistic Communism; much less does it use Communism as a foil. Today, “being good” means being a moral person, which means: (a) being grateful for what you have; (b) committing to spend time with your family; (c) forgiving those who’ve wronged you; (d) working to protect the environment; and (e) following the Golden Rule. That’s the moral compass of those who are good without God, according to *Good without God*. And you can do that without going to church.

Because, as Epstein puts it, “Actions ultimately make the difference between living a good life and not living a good life.”

That goodness is obviously an *achieved* goodness. Which obviously means it’s not a *granted*

goodness. But Christians of all times confess that we (and everyone else, too) are conceived and born in sin. That we (and everyone else, too) have added to that inherited sin by actual sin. That because of that we (and everyone else, too) fall short of the glory of God. In short, that we are *not good*. Instead, we rely upon a goodness that’s a grant—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus.

That’s why Christians keep coming to church. Not because they *are* good, but because they aren’t. Not to *achieve* goodness, but to *receive* it—straight from the wounds of Jesus through the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. **+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

Day School Teachers - Ashley Jensema, Andrea Kosmicki,

PAID IN FULL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Plan to attend the Paid in Full pledge event on Sunday, May 1, with lunch and program directly following the single 10:00 a.m. service. Featured speaker will be Dr. Gene Edward Veith, Jr. Dr. Veith is a well-known voice on Christianity and culture, has authored over 20 books, and served many years at Concordia University Wisconsin before moving to Patrick Henry College in Virginia. He also earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Kansas!

Mark your calendar for Celebration Sunday on May 22, when the pledge total will be announced. Watch for the mailing of Newsletter #4 in early May where you can read more information about Celebration Sunday.

Last, campaign leadership is pleased to announce that \$313,380 was pledged at the Advance Pledge Event held on April 8. We are thankful for the generosity and the love for St. John's shown by these families with their gifts, and to the Lord for His continued grace and mercy toward us all.

MONTHLY BREAKFAST

There will be no monthly breakfast this month because of the **Paid in Full** Pledge Event held on May 1. Thanks to all who plan to attend the Pledge event, which will be a great wrap-up to our Campaign.

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.

LCMS MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES

May is a good month to remember and honor those men and women who have faithfully served our country as military members and chaplains. Sunday, May 22 is Armed Forces Sunday, and Memorial Day Sunday is May 29. More information on LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces can be obtained by visiting the following website: www.lcms.org/armedforcesunday. You can also see a listing of current and former members of the armed forces who are St. John's members posted on the bulletin board.

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:

June 26; July 10, 24; August 21

THANK YOU'S

A huge THANK YOU for the LWML Spring Quarterly attendees who helped tie FOURTEEN quilts that will be donated to the Lutheran World Relief, Doorstep, Haskell Institute, and Topeka Rescue Mission. Sarah Circle members provided wonderful refreshments and much was accomplished in the two hour project! Thanks again and make plans to attend the June 26th Quarterly for a fun card making afternoon.

A big thank you to St. John's members for their generous support of the recent Smorgasbord for Missions dinner through volunteer time, donation of pie, cake, coffee, and purchase of tickets. Many hours of hard work were needed days before and the day of the mission fundraiser. The mission gift recipients will be provided in a later newsletter. All the time and talents donated are greatly appreciated!

DOORSTEP NEWS

During the month of May Doorstep continues to focus on the services they offer throughout the year. Families and individuals will still come to them for food and clothing. With the help of grant funding each month Doorstep is able to help with prescriptions, dental vouchers, gas vouchers and bus tickets to help people who are struggling and in need. They will continue to try and assist our neighbors in need with rent assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless or place them in a new home if they are already homeless. Within two months Doorstep has already spent over \$10,000 on utility assistance and the calls continue to come in on a daily basis. If you can help with this service by making a donation to Doorstep they would be grateful. Please be sure to note St. John's for credit.



Topeka Gives 2016 is Tuesday, June 2 at Fairlawn Plaza Mall, from 7a.m.–6p.m. Doorstep will be there again this year with a table. Please stop by and see them and make a donation for Doorstep! Donate \$25 - \$1,000 to Doorstep on this day at Fairlawn Plaza and the Topeka Community Foundation will match it proportionately. There are

130 local non-profits participating. This year there is \$56,500 available for the match. Last year Doorstep made \$8,809 from our donors to help with agency needs! Save the date and come out on June 2nd!

TLS NEWS

Join us for this one week EPIC experience. Camp Invention is open to students entering 1st–6th grade. Cost is \$220. Use promo code SPRING to receive \$15 off thru May 10th. There is also a sibling discount available (\$25 per student for 2 and \$50 per student for 3+). Register at campinvention.org

Students will be:

- constructing and personalizing their own DIY solar-powered cricket
- discovering the science of demolition, electronic sound, giant squid, and coding
- brainstorming new product ideas and building their own prototypes using components from everyday devices
- exploring the lives of giant insects and their environments, and more

Counselor in training positions are available for students entering 7th-8th grade and Leadership Intern positions for high school students. Leadership Interns will receive training and community service hours. Please contact Lynette for details and promo codes if interested in these positions.

We also still need volunteers to know talents for the Enrichment program starting in the fall. There is a picture or two on Facebook if you want to include those to show people what they are doing

SAVE THE DATE JUNE 18, 2016

St. John's Annual Golf Tournament this summer will be held at Forbes Field. This is a fundraiser for the youth group and their activities and their trip to Higher Things Conference in July. Plan to participate as a golfer, a sponsor, or as a volunteer. More details will be forthcoming.

FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK

We are reaching out to Lutheran artists in the Topeka area to invite you to be a part of our First Friday Art Walk event that is held in conjunction with Topeka's First Friday Art Walk. The event will be May 6, 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker Rd. This is a no-cost opportunity to share your art with the Topeka community. Questions and to register: Please contact Susan Thowe at srthowe@gmail.com or 785-969-4342. Sponsored by The Lutheran Fine Arts Council of Topeka.

SPRING SALAD SUPPER REMINDER

A very special Spring Salad Supper is planned for Wednesday, May 4, at St. John's. The dining room opens at 5:30 p.m. and meal will begin at 6:00 p.m. Ladies of all ages are welcome, as this year's theme is "Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord!" and the talented Bethany Woelmer will present the musical program. Please bring a generous sized salad to share. Table service and drinks will be provided. No advance registration is needed. Any questions about the Spring Salad Supper may be directed to Ruth Scott, 272-4971.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE NEWS

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. Our plan for this money is to replace the ribbons in the hymnals (many are in bad shape). We are on our way to reach this goal again this year.

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.

WOMEN’S LEAGUE CARING & MISSION

Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief will be prepared April through May. Items needed are:

1. Light weight bath-sized towels (approximately 52” x 27” or 20” x 40”) dark colors
2. Bath-sized soap bars, any brand in original wrapper
Total packages to equal 8 or 9 oz.
Example: two 4-oz packages equaling 8 oz. **OR** three 3-oz packages equaling 9 oz.
3. Sturdy combs
4. Metal nail clippers
5. Adult-sized toothbrush in original wrapper

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR MAY 2016

May 1:	<i>Jesus Teaches Us to Pray</i>	<i>Luke 11:1-13; John 16:23-33</i>
May 8:	<i>Jesus Raises Lazarus</i>	<i>John 11:1-45</i>
May 15:	<i>Jesus Seeks the Lost</i>	<i>Luke 15</i>
May 22:	<i>Jesus Heals Ten Lepers</i>	<i>Luke 17:11-19</i>
May 29:	<i>Jesus Blesses the Children</i>	<i>Mark 10: 13-16</i>

Bible Words for May:

Early Childhood

- May 1: Jesus said, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16. 24
- May 8: Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25
- May 15: *The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.* Luke 19:10
- May 22: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.* Jeremiah 17:14

May 29: Jesus said, *“Let the children come to Me . . . for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”*
Mark 10:14

Elementary Grades

May 1: *I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”* Psalm 122:1

May 8: *John said, “I baptized you with water for repentance, but He who is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* Matthew 3:11

May 15: *And the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* Luke 3:22

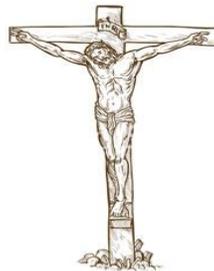
May 22: *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* John 14:6

May 29: *Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Romans 10:9

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.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED



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.