

# ST. PETER COMMUNICATOR

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July 2025

## From the desk of Pastor Peterson

Recently as I was in prayer and meditation, the Lord reminded me of my calling to be a pastor and to share with all Christians what God has called us all to do. I have spoken about vocation in my sermons on Sundays quite frequently over the past month. We have talked about our roles as pastor, parents, teachers, business owners, and children. The emphasis is that we are to bloom where we are planted. To share God's Word with others. One of the problems in our society is that people tend to look inward and do navel gazing about what we can do to make our lives better. That is not a bad thing because self-improvement is always a good thing to do. We learn a lot from our mistakes, and we should never let our failures define who we are. The danger though in navel gazing is that we tend to only see the trees in front of us and not the whole forest. We can become focused on ourselves instead of others. When this happens, we lose our calling that God put on our lives.

The advent of social media and such venues as Facebook, Twitter (now known as X), TikTok and other platforms cause a lot of people to focus on themselves to get approval from others and their own peers. Living out our faith is a central tenet of the Christian life, emphasizing the practical application of beliefs in everyday actions and decisions. This concept is deeply rooted in Scripture, where faith is not merely an intellectual assent but a transformative force that shapes behavior and character. The Bible provides numerous examples and teachings that illustrate how believers are called to embody their faith in tangible ways.

The Epistle of James is particularly instructive on the subject of living out one's faith. James 2:17 states, "So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead." This passage underscores the necessity of works as evidence of genuine faith. The relationship between faith and works is not one of earning salvation but demonstrating the authenticity of one's belief.

In the Gospels, Jesus emphasizes the importance of living out faith through love and service. In Matthew 5:16, He instructs, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Here, the metaphor of light suggests that faith should be visible and impactful, leading others to recognize and honor God.

What Jesus is calling us to do is to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors, family, friends, and co-workers. Making a difference in the lives of those we know and those we don't know has a powerful effect on them and us. One of the most important ways to make a difference in the lives of those we come in contact with is to invite them to church. In church (Gods' house), they will find broken people, sinners, people who are hurting, people who are not perfect, but worshipping a perfect God who makes us perfect through Jesus.

Recently at the Wisconsin South District Convention, one of the reports on church attendance was that about 40 percent of churches in the South Wisconsin District have an attendance of less than 50 people on Sunday mornings. That should be unacceptable for us as Christians, because we should be more than that. I would like to see a 100 percent increase in church attendance. Imagine for a moment that our pews were overflowing with people who want to know God and make a difference in the lives of their neighbors. Imagine all the missionaries we could fund. If we have a building project, we could do it, without relying on gifts and memorials (though those are wonderful and we thank you for those). Imagine all the bible studies we could do that impact the lives of our neighbors. Churches would not have to worry about whether they are able to stay open.

These are achievable goals and can be done with the work of the Holy Spirit. Since we are over halfway done through the year 2025, and 2026 is fast approaching, let us not be worried about what the world tells us, instead let us rejoice and be glad for what God has done for us, and calls us TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

In His Grip



Pastor Peterson

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**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
LCMS Stewardship Ministry  
Newsletter Article – July 2025**

***Faithfulness: The Stewardship Standard***

*“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).*

What is the standard to which a steward is held? Ask the average person, and they might talk about percentages, tithes, and commitments. Too often, the default mode of measuring stewards is by how much and how frequently they give. This is not helpful. Measuring activity without any connection to baptismal identity is a recipe for disaster. It can either breed a sense of superiority and self-righteousness or create a culture of scarcity and despair. Neither outcome is godly or helpful.

This is not to say that stewardship should be regarded as “no big deal.” St. Paul, within his discussion of the ministry to which he has been called, sets the standard of accountability for the steward: faithfulness. This removes any sense of superiority or self-righteousness and dispels scarcity and despair. When a steward manages what the Lord has entrusted to them — resources and all aspects of life — for God's purposes, the focus is not on how much or how frequently they give.

This standard reflects the stewardship portrayed in the Gospels where Jesus entrusts varying amounts, each according to ability. The commended stewards were recognized for their faithfulness in their vocation, not the amounts they managed. Conversely, the condemned

stewards were not castigated for their lack of performance but for their lack of faithfulness.

What does this mean for the steward in the pew? The Lord has entrusted you with various things. Luther captures them in his explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. The familiar couplets of food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, animals and all possessions are the Lord's, and He has entrusted them to you for His purpose. This trust brings an active realization of thanksgiving.

This active thanksgiving is our stewardship. It can be distilled into two questions that the steward regularly needs to answer:

1. How has God blessed me?
2. How is He calling me to respond?

The first question is quite simple to answer: if the Lord has entrusted something to you, it is a blessing. This blessing is for God's glory and the benefit of your neighbor. The second question is more challenging to measure; it is not about percentages and charts. Instead, it is about a life of thanksgiving that flows from the mercies of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This thanksgiving starts at and flows from the cross and the empty tomb. Our stewardship of the Gospel drives our stewardship of everything else.

The standard, then, is faithfulness. Faithfulness flows from eyes focused on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. It does not come from our efforts but through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, through Word and Sacrament. It begins at the altar in the Divine Service but extends into the world — from hearth and home to workplace and classroom, from commerce to leisure. The mercy of God, freely given in Jesus, leads us to demonstrate a faithfulness that reveals to others the same mercy we have received in Jesus.

This faithfulness cannot be measured empirically. It is simply allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us for the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbor. Weekly. Daily. Faithfully.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry:  
[lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)



July

- 1 Gary Matter  
Kris Krueger
- 3 Beverly Hackbarth
- 7 Steve Hemauer
- 9 Danielle Schneider
- 10 Preston Schwalenberg
- 12 Clara Lintner
- 14 Ruth Broehm
- 15 Taylor Weyenberg
- 19 Karen Price
- 23 Dravyn Voigt
- 30 Emily Hein



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

July

- 7<sup>th</sup> Neil & Tina Sowinski
- 9<sup>th</sup> Dennis & MaryKay Hein
- 17<sup>th</sup> Wally & Marjy Jentsch
- 27<sup>th</sup> Dale & Kelley Mueller
- 28<sup>th</sup> Ed & Debbie Manders

## THE LUTHERAN WITNESS



### The Church in the Digital World

This is the fifth installment in a six-part series, "Reclaiming Humanity in the Digital Age."

*By Joshua Pauling*

[Part 1](#) of this series established why it's necessary to live intentionally in the digital age, [Part 2](#) offered core principles for parenting, [Part 3](#) explored coming of age in the digital world, and [Part 4](#) highlighted how adults should lead the way in forming habits of living that anchor us in our embodied nature as creatures made in God's image.

Now in Part 5, we turn to the church. What is the role of the church in the digital age, and what theological principles should guide our actions and practices as the church? If there is any institution that has the message, means and methods that can reawaken people to who they are designed to be, it is the church, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

### 'The Word became flesh'

The opening note of John's Gospel, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), has massive implications for how we think about the role of technology in the church. Jesus did not come to us as a text message, YouTube video, TikTok reel or social media post. He came to us in human flesh. As theologian Kosuke Koyama provocatively puts it, we have a "three-mile-an-hour God," a God who moved on earth at the speed of walking. Living in our fast-paced, ever-

changing environment, we easily forget that God chose to take on flesh at a time when walking was the most common mode of transport, before electricity or the automobile, before the telephone or television, before the computer or the internet, before the steam engine or the smartphone. God became man; not machine, not message. God became flesh; not image, not video. God united medium and message in Himself. In Christ, God slowed down to our speed, even coming to a “full stop” on the cross, where He took into Himself all the suffering, sin and evil of the whole world. Koyama nails it (pun intended):

*Jesus Christ came. He walked towards the “full stop.” He lost his mobility. He was nailed down! ... At this point of “full stop,” the apostolic church proclaims that the love of God to man is ultimately and fully revealed. God walks “slowly” because he is love. If he is not love he would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. ... It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is “slow” yet it is lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love.*[\[1\]](#)

**Christ’s incarnational self-giving love is indeed the pattern and paradigm for all the church’s life and work. Below are four key areas where the implications are especially pressing and relevant.**

## 1. In-person worship through Word and Sacrament

Christ’s self-giving most clearly occurs in the context of the church’s worship life, where He has promised to bring life and salvation through the spoken and sacramental Word. Through mundane tangible things like words spoken, water poured and bread and wine received, the corporate Body is swept up together into the great faith-creating mystery of Christ and Him crucified. True Christian worship is fully embodied, profoundly intimate and deeply real. Christ the Bridegroom gives Himself to His bride the church, and the bride receives the life-giving act. Such intimacy and union cannot be fully replicated online, or while alone.[\[2\]](#) Thus, we do not neglect “to meet

together” (Heb. 10:25), and we devote ourselves to the same things the early church did: “to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

## 2. Tech-minimal worship

Stepping into the sanctuary should be like stepping into a different world. Digital technologies intrude into every aspect of life already; we don’t need them playing prominent roles in the sanctuary. We would do well to remove superfluous technological layers of mediation, instead fostering the church’s encounter with God through the mediation He has chosen: Word and Sacrament. We can work to reduce (and hopefully eliminate!) the role of screens in worship and consider leaving our smartphones in the car during the Divine Service.[\[3\]](#)

Sacred space and liturgical practice should retain the pristine physicality and simplicity that make Christian worship as relevant and conceivable in the first century as in the 21st century — as low-tech and embodied as possible. Unencumbered by unnecessary cords and cameras. Uninterrupted by flashing screens and notification dings. In such a place, human finitude encounters divine life through water, Word, bread and wine. In such a place, one is steered away from digital evanescence and restored into the realm of the real, both transcendent and physical. Amid liturgical practices that are embodied, authentic, communal, frequent and ritualized, the habits and patterns of the digital age are disrupted, subverted and overcome by the God-man who gives His redemptive and restorative gifts to man.

## 3. The tangible book

Christians have been known historically as people of the Book. While there is a place for accessing Scripture through screen-based devices, we should not forget the importance of using physical Bibles, hymnals and prayer books, especially for gathered worship, Sunday school and home devotions. This is not for the sake of nostalgia, but because the use of a physical book has an inherent message: It makes a clear distinction between the ever-changing words read on the screen, and the

timeless, objectively true words of Scripture. Physical texts communicate a message beyond the one contained in their pages, while digital versions send a different message that easily obscures Christianity's core incarnational reality. Consider the irony of reading about how "the Word of the Lord endures forever" on a screen where the words vanish into the ether of digital space with a click or swipe. The brain also interacts with physical texts more naturally than digital texts, because a physical book has a landscape by which the brain creates a mental map of the content that greatly aids in understanding, retention and memorization.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### 4. Embodied community and robust church membership

Lastly, in an age of shallow, thin connections, the church offers authentic, thick community. The digital environment offers countless voices and competing authorities that vie for our attention. The experience of consuming so much content can cause us to view the church through a consumeristic lens as just another streaming service or content provider. But becoming a member of a local church fights against these tendencies. You are no longer just choosing from endless preachers, life coaches, podcasts or content online; you are submitting to the authority of the Word and to the pastoral care and oversight of a local body.

The church is a locally embedded but universally embodied communion united to Christ. This means the church plays an entirely different role than online communities or content providers. In the local church, the embodied riches and mysteries of the Gospel anchor us to a place and a people, as our lives are together and forever marked by Christ and His gifts. As more of life is absorbed into the machine and digital content proliferates, opportunities for real, in-person life together are becoming ever rarer and more precious. As AI and deepfake technologies become widespread, the most reliable source of truth will more than ever be in-person, real-time gatherings, something the church has been doing for thousands of years. Further, embracing the embodied community of the local church can help us resist the consumeristic mindset that places the

individual with their ideas and preferences above the Word of God and the church's authority. We must remember that the church is not a gathering of autonomous individuals exercising their tastes in what church they choose or what pastor they prefer. The church is a *body*. St. Paul chooses this profoundly intimate and interconnected image because it is what the church truly is: Christ's Body. It is in Christ's Body that we can know and be known; can give and receive; and can find true intimacy, authenticity, belonging and identity.

#### Conclusion

To be clear, all the above is not to deny any role for digital technologies in the life of the church. Rather, it is an attempt to put such things in their proper place. Digital technologies cannot become substitutes for Word and Sacrament ministry and the embodied life together of the local congregation. Perhaps it is better to think of a church's online presence and use of digital technologies more like the church foyer, or gateway into the church, rather than the church itself. We should do our best to present a polished and compelling representation of our doctrine and practice online to help people make their way into the sanctuary. For that is where Christ gives His gifts.

If there is any institution, belief system — or better yet, Person — designed to withstand the onslaught of the digital age, it is the church, Christian doctrine and Christ Himself — the True Human. The church is primed and prepared for the personal communication of truth, is well-practiced at gathering in person, doing life together, and presenting information orally through proclamation and teaching. The church is an embodied communion, gathered to hear the Word, to receive Christ bodily in the Eucharist and to share in life together with other members of Christ's Body. The church knows how to do this and provides the belief structures and bodily practices to flourish in the digital age. The church brings us into the Divine Life, a life where humanity is fully forgiven and fully alive, united to Jesus, the ever-incarnate One, who still has His body — a glorious, wounded body with holes in His hands, and in His feet, and in His side. And there is nothing digital about that.



[1] Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God*, (London: SCM Press, 2021), 7–8.

[2] For a more thorough treatment of the question of online/streaming worship, see chapter 14 of Phillips and Pauling, *Are We All Cyborgs Now?* I’ve also addressed this issue in: *LOGIA*, “Livestreaming Ourselves to Death”; *The Public Discourse*, “After Zoom Church”; *Modern Reformation*, “Going Upstream of Streaming Worship.”

[3] While this may seem like an impossible task and the practicalities would be challenging, I’d love to see if there is way to work towards our sanctuaries being phone free — not by rule or fiat, but through slow and gentle catechesis encouraging one another along the path, and by individuals choosing to leave their devices at home, in the car, or somewhere else. This is not as crazy as you may think. Brad East argues for this in a recent article entitled “A Vision for Screen-Free Church,” *Christianity Today*, Oct. 28, 2024, [christianitytoday.com/2024/10/a-vision-for-screen-free-church-smartphones-livestreaming](https://christianitytoday.com/2024/10/a-vision-for-screen-free-church-smartphones-livestreaming). He asks: “How, after all, can we disciples be wise and patient and alert and unanxious women and men of prayer, who dwell in the word of God, who know how to be still, who listen for the voice of Christ’s Spirit — how can we be any of these things if every second of our lives is fixated on our screens, eyes scrolling indefinitely and infinitely for the latest image, the latest scandal, the latest outrage? How can we be *different* from anybody else if here, in the midst of God’s people, on the Lord’s Day, gathered to worship in the Spirit, we can’t let go of our digital addictions for even one hour?”

[4] For more on this, see chapter 29 of Phillips and Pauling, *Are We All Cyborgs Now?* and Ferris Jabr, “The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper Versus Screens,” *Scientific American*, April 11, 2013 [scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens](https://scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens).

## About The Author

Joshua Pauling is a husband, father, classical educator, and vicar at All Saints Lutheran Church in Charlotte, N.C. Co-author (with Robin Phillips) of *Are We All Cyborgs Now?*, he has also written for *LOGIA*, *Modern Reformation*, *Public Discourse*, *Salvo* and *Touchstone*, and worked in public education for thirteen years as a high school history teacher and coach.

## Print Feature



## Endurance in Jesus

by Bryan Wolfmüller

Christians have need of endurance: that mix of courage and patience that presses on to the end. We are tempted to weariness. Our flesh is discouraged.

Thanks be to God, the Scriptures are full of passages that spur us on to faithful endurance. The Bible sets the joy of the Gospel, the hope of eternal life, and the strength of the Holy Spirit before our weak and weary hearts. The Bible encourages us on the way. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

The Lord undoes our fear and dismay. “Fear not.” Why? The Lord promises, “I am with you.”

“Be not dismayed,” He commands. And why not? “I am your God.” To these promises He adds three more: “I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you.” Our endurance is His work, as we cling to His precious promises.

Or consider Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians: “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen” (2 Cor. 4:16–18).

The glory of eternal life is at work in us. We don’t see it, but the wasting away of our outer self is helping bring it to the surface. All the afflictions of this life are preparing us for the untold splendor of the life to come.

King David rallies us like spiritual warriors: “Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 31:24).

Perhaps the greatest call to endurance is Hebrews 12:1–3. It begins not with our endurance, but with the endurance of Jesus. For us, He endured the suffering and the shame of the cross. This is a beautiful encouragement.

The picture is of a long-distance race — imagine a marathon or a cross-country meet. You are running, out on the path, up and down the hills, running, running, staggering, and running some more, one foot after the other, dragging yourself forward.

This is the kind of race that ends in a stadium filled with cheering fans. The last lap is on the track, but that feels miles away. You are exhausted, tired, thirsty, ready to give up.

But something happens, a noise. You hear the faint sound of cheering. With each step it gets a little louder. It’s the crowd in the stadium, and you think, “I must be close. The finish line is around the corner.” You are encouraged. You keep running. Drawn toward the finish.

“And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song, And  
hearts are brave again, and arms are strong” (LSB 677:5).

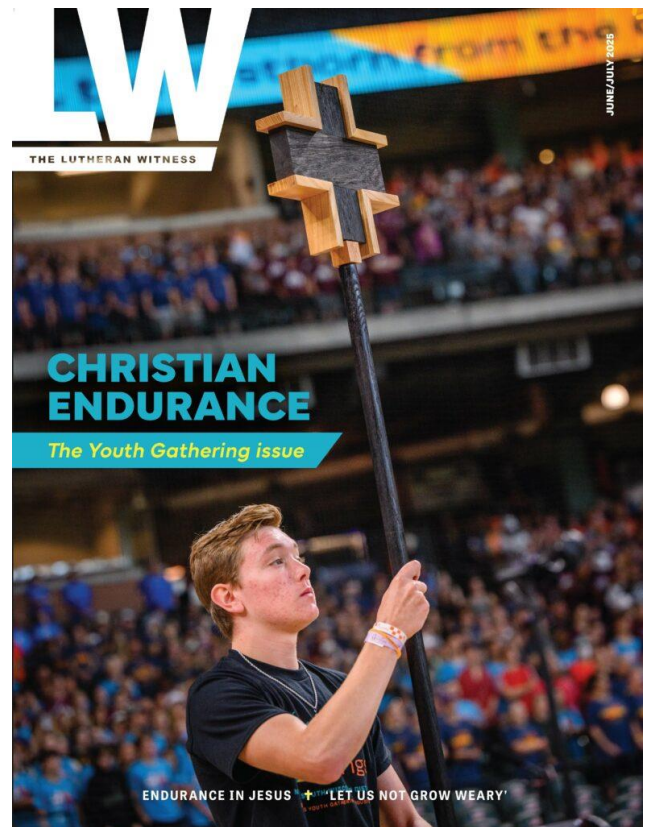
Then you see the stadium, and then the crowd sees you: Their cheering swells, roaring, pushing you forward. You run through the shadow of the stadium onto the track, and you start to see the faces of the people in the crowd, all the people who have gone to heaven before you. There are your grandparents, cheering. There is your parent, your brother, your friend, your child, all there, all shouting for you, “You can make it. We did.” There is the pastor that baptized you, there are your great-great-grandparents that you’ve never met, there are some of the old theologians that you’ve seen in the pictures: Walther, Chemnitz, Luther, Augustine, Cyril, all urging you forward. “Be strong! Be courageous!” There are the apostles. Peter shouts, “The end is near.” Paul, “Finish the race. Keep the faith.” John, “The one who endures to the end will be saved.”

You turn the corner and see the finish line. Jesus is standing there, looking straight at you, arms stretched out. His face is radiant, and you’ve forgotten that you are tired. You’re sprinting now, ready to collapse across the finish line into the hands of your Savior.

This is the encouragement of Hebrews 12:1–3:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

The saints are cheering. Jesus is waiting. We are running with endurance, running with courage and patience. The finish line is close. The Finisher of our faith is by our side. Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest.



# July 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Altar Guild:</b> July 6 - Bonnie Ott & Cheri Koffarnus July 13- Donna Marose & DeAnn Eldred July 20 - Dean & Jan Bergelin July 27 - Dan & Cindy Koffarnus		1	2 8:30 a.m. Spring Clean-up Day	3	4 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton  Independence Day	5
<b>6 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service	7	8	9	10	11 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	12
<b>13 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service Fellowship	14	15	16	17	18 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	19
<b>20 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service	21  Newsletter Articles Due	22	23	24	25 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	26 Wedding  St. Luke Picnic (1-10 pm) and Campfire Service (7 p.m.)
<b>27 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service (NC)  <b>Quarterly Voters Meeting</b>	28	29	30	31		

Divine Services marked (NC) will not have Holy Communion