

# ST. PETER COMMUNICATOR

43 N 3rd St., Hilbert, WI 54129

Office: (920) 853-3217

August 2025

## From the desk of Pastor Peterson

Grace, mercy, and God's peace to each of you from our risen, victorious, and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. The summer season is coming to an end, and school will be starting soon. That also means that confirmation will start in September. Confirmation is very important in the development of a Christian. Confirmation though has been treated as graduation. In other words, once a child is confirmed, most do not come back to church. Or. If they do, it is not on a regular basis. That breaks my heart, and also other pastors. When I was growing up in Iowa, church night was always on Wednesdays, and the schools would make sure that there were no events scheduled that day after school. Gradually though society creeps in and events are scheduled that conflict with confirmation. It can be very frustrating to a pastor to have a lesson plan prepared, a test written, and to just get a chance to know the kids in his confirmation class.

Also, children today are exposed to so much more information that is not Christian or takes the Christian faith out of context. With so much information out there it is important for the kids to have a well-founded base for their faith. With so much information out there confronting our kids the questions are asked "*What to do, what to do?*" Pastors have gotten somewhat creative in ways to schedule classes for confirmation. *Yet, if we go back in history, we can see that there are answers. In an article in **The Lutheran Witness, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The Reverend Tim Pauls.*** Pastor Pauls captures the essence of confirmation very well. He writes that confirmation should start at home:

*Each chief part of the Small Catechism begins with the subtitle, "As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household." The Small Catechism isn't supposed to be the mystery book that your child suddenly discovers in confirmation class. It's designed to be used in the home by the family. When teaching the Small Catechism at home, it communicates to your child that it's a book for use in life, not just at church. Also, when parents teach their children the Small Catechism at home, parents begin to build the faith relationship with their kids and most importantly with God.*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I need your help. Plain and simple. To those who are in confirmation class this year, and those that are just starting; I am asking parents to take time, sit down with your kids and go over the Small Catechism with them. Review with them the Christian Questions and their Answers section to start off. Memorize them, and also at least one bible verse. That way they can have a good start on their confirmation process. This is an incredible opportunity to spend quality time with your children. Secondly, show the love of God with your spouse. Show what it means to forgive, to pray with each other, and most importantly come to church. In these times, we need to be a community of faith that supports and loves each other. The next issue will focus on the 10 Commandments.

In His Grip



Pastor Peterson



## LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION

### Back to School - Gifts of the Heart

Our ingathering for August is for our Back to School gifts for the students of Hilbert. School starts on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and we will deliver our items prior to that date. Any items that are useful for school children will be most helpful. Please see the display on the bulletin board. Let's help provide for our less fortunate students. Our donations are always eagerly received by the staff at the school as many children arrive without needed supplies.

### Next Meeting:

Our next meeting is September 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00. All women of the congregation are members of LWML, and all are invited to our meetings for planning and Bible study.

### LWML SWD Fall Retreat:

The 2025 LWML SWD Fall Retreat is September 26-27 and will be held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton MKE/Brookfield (1200 S Moorland Road Brookfield, WI 53005)

This year's theme is *Put on the Whole Armor of God.... Ephesians 6:10-18*

### Retreat Registration:

- \$80/attendee-includes Saturday lunch
- Deadline for registration is September 13, 2025

### Hotel Room Registration:

- Limited rooms available at Embassy Suites by calling 262-782-2900
- Ask for the LWML SWD rate before Friday, September 5, 2025 – Ensures the LWML SWD discount rate of \$119.00 +tax per night (Includes Breakfast)

## The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article – August 2025

---

### Jesus' transforming presence

*"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:8-10 NIV).*

Who knew, all those kids sitting in Sunday school were getting a lesson in stewardship! Generations of children have very often heard lessons based on the familiar account of Zacchaeus. The diminutive tax collector's curiosity surrounding the person and ministry of Jesus is what the Holy Spirit used to set him on a collision course for a total stewardship transformation. This transformation, according to the text of Luke 19, is not just about this life. This stewardship transformation is about eternity as well!

Remember the story: Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Do not think of friendly neighborhood IRS agents. This was more like a toll booth operator, but the governing authorities did not set the toll. They would contract men to staff roadside booths and tax the commerce that was passing along the road. This was an enterprise full of greed and graft. The tax collectors would take as much as they could and only pass on a portion to the government. The rest did not go into the community chest either! It went into the pocket of the tax collector.

This is why the people had such disdain for *Jewish* tax collectors. They were seen as both crooks and traitors. They were crooks in that they extorted their compatriots and others in the toll process. But worse, they were seen as traitors because their efforts supported the occupying Roman authorities.

That is the real reason that the people would not make way so that short Zacchaeus could see Jesus.

For this reason, he runs ahead and climbs a tree. He had heard all the stories. He wanted to see this Jesus with his own eyes. Mercy is on display. This hated crook and traitor gets a direct audience with Jesus — at Jesus' own request! Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' house. This is where the transformation is about to take place!

Notice how Jesus does it. He does not preach a three-week sermon series, nor does He ask Zacchaeus to make a pledge. There is nothing programmatic about Jesus' approach. But Zacchaeus is completely transformed! The transforming force is the very presence of Jesus! Direct time with Jesus takes a crooked, selfish, criminal and makes him the most faithful steward.

This new life of stewardship is marked by the promises made. First, he gives half of his ill-gotten gains to the poor. These are people whom he would not have defrauded at all! Yet, after spending time with Jesus, they are His first concern. Only after this does he double the requirement of the Levitical law on fraud. And what does Jesus say is the result? Salvation!

Doing the acts of stewardship does not save. Rather, the faith in Jesus that is created by the Holy Spirit is what saves! This is critical for us to confess. Failed stewardship can and will cut you off from God. The only antidote for failed stewardship is the presence of Jesus.

We do not need to run ahead and climb a tree for this presence of Jesus. He makes Himself available to us every week in the Divine Service. He speaks His Word of invitation to us in the pages of Holy Scripture. This, and this alone, transforms us from sinner to saint, from owner to steward of all that belongs to the Lord.

Do you want to become a more faithful steward? Spend more time with Jesus. Make the Divine Service a weekly priority. Feast on Christ's body and blood weekly! This is the great gift that brings salvation from God's House to yours!

[lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)



## A Congregation Older Than the Nation

The 360-year-old Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Matthew in New York City has welcomed immigrants throughout the centuries.

**Story by Molly Lackey | Photography by Erik M. Lunsford | Summer 2025**

In Washington Heights, a neighborhood in New York City, an unassuming congregation gathers on Sunday afternoons in a rented sanctuary. This is the 11th location the congregation has occupied in its history — a history that spans back to 1664, more than a hundred years before the American Revolution. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Matthew had its 360th anniversary last December, making it not only the oldest congregation in The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod (LCMS), but the oldest extant Lutheran congregation in the Americas.

St. Matthew is a microcosm of American history. When a group of colonists in New Netherland desired a confessional church that worshiped and taught in accordance with the Augsburg Confession, they banded together as the Congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of Faith and requested a pastor from their mother church in Amsterdam. A pastor came but was denied permission to conduct services and was subsequently deported. After New Netherland was conquered by the British and became New York, the Dutch Lutherans petitioned Richard Nicolls, the first British governor. He granted their request, issuing a charter on Dec. 6, 1664, the legal beginning of the congregation.

## An Immigrant Church and Pastor

The church's seventh pastor, Justus Falckner, was the first Lutheran pastor ordained in America. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, considered by historians to be the father of American

Lutheranism, served as pastor of a German split-off from the church that would later reunite with the original congregation. In 1821, the Rev. Frederick Schaeffer sent the homily he preached at the cornerstone laying of the church's new building to none other than James Madison, primary author of the Bill of Rights, who thanked Schaeffer for sending him the "pleasing and persuasive example of pious zeal." The next year, the church began holding English services under the name the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Matthew.

"I think the church has always been an immigrant church," says the Rev. Peter A.D. Deebrah, pastor of St. Matthew. "In its incipient stage, it was a coming together of people — Lutherans — from different countries in Europe."



The Rev. Peter A.D. Deebrah, pastor of St. Matthew, New York City, distributes the Sacrament to a congregation member during the Divine Service in March.

Deebrah himself is a living example of the American story as well as the story of how God calls workers to His harvest. Deebrah was born just north of Brazil in Guyana, a former British colony that gained independence in 1966. He is descended from Indian indentured laborers brought to the colony to work on sugar plantations after the British Empire outlawed slavery in 1834.

As a young boy, Deebrah remembers imagining what it would be like to be a pastor: "I would look at the pastor there who baptized me, and I would daydream that one day I will stand there in the pulpit and do what he is doing." Highly involved in congregational life as a young man, he applied for permission to attend seminary at the age of 22 but was turned down; instead, he was encouraged to

return to the idea when he was older and more settled. So, Deebrah became a computer engineer and served the church as a deacon.

But his desire to be a pastor remained. When political violence erupted in Guyana in 1998, he moved with his wife and children to America. After expressing his desire to attend seminary, he was recommended for the new DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination) program through Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne — a program designed for lay deacons who desired to become pastors but were unable to relocate to the seminary. Seminary pastors would travel to regional sites for weekend intensives and would grade assignments submitted through the mail while the students served in congregations under the supervision of area pastors. Deebrah began his DELTO coursework in November 1998 and was assigned to St. Matthew, which was vacant at the time. When he completed his coursework in 2005, he was ordained and called as sole pastor.

## In the Cross of Christ We Glory

St. Matthew seems very different today than it was 360 years ago; scratch beneath the surface, though, and you'll find that its foundation on Christ and its history as a church home for new Americans is fully intact.



Congregation members gather in worship together.

Today, most members originally hail from the Caribbean. Upon coming to America, many sent their children to St. Matthew's former day school and became members of the church through outreach done there. This was the case for Claire Charles from Trinidad, whose grandson's catering



business provided the food for their “standing room only” 360th anniversary celebration.

Lois Franklin, originally from Belize, started attending because of her daughter’s experience in St. Matthew’s nursery school. “I like the preaching,” Franklin explains.

Louisa Noel, also from Belize, says that her favorite part of Sunday morning is “feeling refreshed to carry on for another week in these trying times.”

Challenges persist, but faith and hope abound. Deebrah says St. Matthew is “a church on the move,” and always has been. But the largest move the church has made was not physical: In 1885, St. Matthew left the New York Ministerium it had helped found and joined the 38-year-old LCMS, where its confessional stance was more at home. There have been plenty of changes to the church’s physical location too: The congregation has met at locations ranging from Wall Street to Broadway to Harlem.



Deebrah speaks about the history of the congregation.

In 2006 — the year after Deebrah was ordained — the congregation was forced to sell its church building, school and parsonage, and it has been renting space from another church in Washington Heights ever since. The loss of the building did not mean the loss of the preaching, teaching and administration of the Sacraments, however.

“A lot of people thought that ... we would die. But we did not,” Deebrah beams. “With every Baptism, with every person who is received through the affirmation of faith,” the life of the church goes on.

One newcomer is Fordham undergraduate student Will Jing, who has been attending for the last year and a half. Jing did not grow up Christian. Curious about Christianity, he found St. Matthew after searching online. “You forget that it’s a small congregation, because the people are so welcoming,” Jing says. “It doesn’t matter that the congregation is small as long as your religious needs are taken care of and you have a good community around you.”

Roger Clinton, organist and congregational president at St. Matthew, sees the present situation as a blessing: “It feels special, being the oldest Lutheran church in the Americas. And it helps me to reflect on how far we’ve come, and how we’ve been able to still hold on, despite our small numbers.”

Deebrah echoes these sentiments. He feels incredibly grateful to be serving at St. Matthew, especially in light of his family’s history. “That I should be blessed by God to be serving the oldest Lutheran church in America and in the New World ... is humbling ... [as] a descendant of indentured servants.”

He adds, “There is nothing better than being a servant of Christ, to meet people where they are and to listen to them and to cry with them and to pray with them and to celebrate with them. ... We cannot boast of numbers, but it is in the cross of Christ that we glory.”



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

### August

- 4<sup>th</sup>** Nelson Jr. & Jessica Teinert
- 9<sup>th</sup>** Ron Jr. & Lori Ott
- 21<sup>st</sup>** Tom & Betty Ruppenthal
- 26<sup>th</sup>** Gary & Sandra Mirsberger
- 30<sup>th</sup>** Chad & Amber Roehrig

# FORWARD IN CHRIST

A LUTHERAN VOICE



## Continued Conversations

Author: Thomas Nass

Issue: August 2025

Leaders from the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, WELS, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod regularly meet informally to discuss church life and doctrine.

Once a year since 2012, leaders from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) have been meeting, with the latest meeting taking place Dec. 9–10, 2024, in Jacksonville, Fla.

People familiar with the history of these synods know that such meetings are unprecedented. The ELS suspended fellowship with the LCMS in 1955, and WELS did likewise in 1961. Both completely severed relations with the LCMS in 1963 by withdrawing from the Synodical Conference. From 1963 until 2012, only a handful of official meetings took place between LCMS leaders and ELS/WELS leaders (these two synods remained in fellowship with each other), and none had the size and duration of the current meetings. At the 2024 meeting—the 13th annual meeting—the ELS had 4 representatives, the LCMS had 11, and WELS 8.

### Why the meetings?

The current meetings are not understood to be formal doctrinal discussions to see if church fellowship can be restored. The reestablishment of church fellowship—a splendid goal that everyone can pray for—does not seem attainable in the immediate future. Rather, the meetings are understood as informal meetings, designed to help the estranged synods learn about one another through face-to-face interaction and to discuss topics of mutual interest.

One reason why the meetings are happening at the present time is because the LCMS is not at the same

place that it was 60 years ago, when it was tending in a more liberal direction, entering into fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. The LCMS has solidly reestablished its commitment to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions and has ended all official discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Perhaps now is the time for former partners from the Synodical Conference to become reacquainted. The LCMS, WELS, and the ELS enjoyed fellowship in the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America from 1872 to 1961, and when fellowship was severed, it was severed with the hope that someday it might be restored.

### Much in common

The recent meetings have been conducted without joint prayer and worship, since church fellowship is not recognized among all the synods. However, meeting participants have found that they enjoy one another's company, and they have come to understand that the three synods have much in common.

The synods are also blessed in similar ways. Colleges and seminaries spread throughout the synods are functioning well. The finances of each synod are stable, and there are leaders who oversee doctrine and strive to maintain doctrinal integrity. Each synod enjoys a vibrant international church association: the LCMS is a member of the International Lutheran Council with 55 member churches, and WELS and the ELS are members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference with 34 member churches. The opportunities for confessional Lutheran outreach around the world are exploding to such an extent that it is difficult for mission personnel to keep up with the inquiries and opportunities.

Most important, among the leaders of the three synods at the present time, there is a common commitment to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions as a correct presentation of the doctrines of the Bible. Though doctrinal challenges remain, a common foundation has been apparent in the meetings.

### Doctrinal topics

Quite a bit of time in these meetings has been spent on the discussion of doctrine, and the leaders of the

three synods seem to be on the same page with many teachings. Topics that have been discussed with agreement include the doctrines of creation and justification. Agreement has also been presumed on many other doctrines, including the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the sacraments, conversion, election, the two kingdoms, and the end times. When reviews were made of one another's catechisms, a high degree of similarity was noted among them. The same was the case when one another's hymnals were reviewed. Of course, one doesn't know how uniformly these teachings are confessed and practiced throughout each synod.

The main doctrinal challenges are found in three areas—long identified as disputed. One is church fellowship. Though we all agree on the general principles and on the practice of closed communion, we differ on prayer fellowship, with the LCMS allowing for joint prayer outside the parameters of pulpit and altar fellowship.

The second involves the roles of men and women. Though all agree that there is an “order of creation” with male headship, we differ on how that is best expressed and implemented. The LCMS, for example, allows women to vote in all congregational and synodical meetings.

The third deals with the public ministry. Though we all have pastors and a variety of other church workers, we talk in different ways about what is divinely instituted. The LCMS says that Christ instituted the Office of the Public Ministry (preaching office), while WELS and the ELS present the divinely instituted public ministry more broadly.

In the discussions on these topics, it has been useful to hear directly what the other synods teach and to understand better why they teach as they do. In some cases, caricatures have been removed, and the differences have been shown to be less than had been imagined. Still, genuine differences do exist, and the ramifications of these differences need to be part of any future discussions among the synods.

### **Future interaction**

Meeting participants are hoping to open up intersynodical discussion more broadly in the coming years. Plans are being made for one or more free conferences in 2026, designed for people from

all three synods—clergy and laypeople alike. In this free conference setting, a fuller report on the annual meetings will be given. Just as the leaders from the three synods have benefited by becoming acquainted, so also local church leaders may benefit by similar interaction with their intersynodical neighbors.

Another leadership meeting is planned for December 2025, in keeping with the will of the synods. Since 2012, all three synods have passed convention resolutions that have encouraged continued discussions. Where the conversations will go, under God's guidance, is unknown. But by God's grace, there has been a noteworthy rapprochement among leaders from the LCMS, WELS, and the ELS in the past decade.

*Thomas Nass, who recently retired as a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., has attended these joint informal meetings since they began in 2012. He served for many years on the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations, a commission under the Conference of Presidents that represents the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies. He currently is president of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an international fellowship of 34 confessional Lutheran church bodies including WELS and the ELS.*

*Featured image above shows the logos of (left to right) the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.*

## **THE LUTHERAN WITNESS**

### **Letter From the President**

### **Suffering Produces Endurance**

*“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame” (Rom. 5:3–5).*

Do you ever feel like quitting? Quitting friends? Quitting family? Quitting a class? Quitting sports? Quitting school? Quitting church? Quitting life? Of course you have. We all have, and the reasons vary. Life is painful and complicated. It's a good thing to

get out of toxic situations or at least take steps to right them.

And yet, Christians have a unique view on “quitting.” We know that suffering is good — and not just in the sense of “no pain, no gain.” We believe that God works profound blessings through suffering, even when those blessings may not be at all evident to us.

On the road to Emmaus, a couple of Jesus’ disciples spoke the greatest words of irony ever recorded. They said to Jesus (whom they did not recognize), “Jesus of Nazareth ... was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. ... [Our] rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:19–21). The irony is this: It was precisely by being put to death that Jesus did “redeem Israel.” He “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). Jesus’ suffering on the cross was the greatest good in history, and yet to His followers who saw it happening, it was scandalous and devastating. It appeared to them that God hated Him and them. But the opposite was true: On the cross, suffering worked the ultimate good. My sins and yours are paid for.

Jesus taught, “Take up [your] cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). In this life, we suffer. We suffer sins against us. We suffer illness. We suffer family problems. We suffer our own failings and weaknesses and those of others. St. Paul — who himself suffered terribly — wrote these comforting words:

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:1–5)*

We have peace with God in Jesus. Our sins are forgiven, all of them.

In Jesus, we have access to the Father by faith because of His love and grace.

We can rejoice even when we suffer, because suffering helps us tremendously. We learn to endure. And enduring, our character grows strong. And as our character is forged, we learn to hope, to look beyond the present, knowing that in Jesus the future belongs to us. We bend, we even break sometimes. We doubt. We fear. We fail. We cling to Jesus; but more importantly, when we have nothing left, Jesus clings to us. What Jesus said to His apostles, He says to you: “I chose you. You did not choose Me” (see John 15:16).

Love is forged through these trials. Paul says it’s poured into our hearts. God loves me, and ironically, its precisely in trials that I learn that. God loves those around me, and by my suffering I learn to be compassionate and love those suffering around me. And that includes just about everybody I know. “Suffering produces endurance.”

— Pastor Matthew C. Harrison



- 1 Debbie Kalies
- 3 Alyssa Ecker
- 8 Abel Weyenberg
- 19 Dean Schroeder
- 23 Susan Hostettler
- 27 Emily Sowinski
- 28 Caroline Hilton
- 29 Bonnie Teinert
- 31 John Lau



# August 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Altar Guild:</b> Aug 3 - Bonnie Ott & Cheri Koffarnus Aug 10 - Donna Marose & DeAnn Eldred Aug 17 - Dean & Jan Bergelin Aug 24 - Dan & Cindy Koffarnus Aug 31 - Bonnie Ott & Cheri Koffarnus					1	2
					←---- Pastor Away -----	
<b>3 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i>  8:30 Divine Service	4	5	6	7	<b>8</b>  <i>10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton</i>	9
<b>10 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i>  8:30 Divine Service (NC) Fellowship	11	12	13	<b>14</b>  6:00p Elders Meeting	<b>15</b>  <i>10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton</i>	16
<b>17 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i>  8:30 Divine Service	18   Newsletter articles due	19	20	<b>21</b>  6:15p Council Meeting	<b>22</b>  <i>10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton</i>	23
<b>24 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i>  8:30 Divine Service (NC)	25	26	27	28	<b>29</b>  <i>10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton</i>	30
<b>31 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</b> <i>Green</i>  8:30 Divine Service						

Divine Services marked (NC) will not have Holy Communion