



The Informer

May 2026

St. John's Lutheran Church

Volume 67 Issue 9

From Pastor's Pen:

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Slippery Slope

Opposition to Christianity is nothing new. It began with Jesus Himself, who was opposed by many, including many of His own. We have been hearing about it on Sundays in the readings from Acts, and it continued into the Early Church. Emperor Constantine instituted freedom of religion – a Christian thing – with the Edict of Milan (313). Neither is conflict within the Church.

Shortly after that, the Council of Nicaea (325) gathered together in the city by that name to talk about opposition to Christianity, but not from the outside. As was the case in the days of Jesus, it was Christians who were opposed to orthodox Christianity. If you would have asked them, the heretical Arians would have said it was Christians who believed like Athanasius who were wrong.

The teachings of Athanasius were overwhelmingly declared by the Church to be biblical, and the Church produced the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles Creeds to confess the true, correct, and biblical teaching (doctrine) on the Person of Jesus Christ. If you want to know what the Arians taught, just ask any Jehovah's Witness – modern day Arians – what he believes about Jesus.

Several more times over the years, the Christians met in "ecumenical" church councils to discuss and decide various doctrinal issues as they came up. Those theological issues were decided on the basis of the teachings of the Bible. When our LCMS gathers in convention in July, any doctrinal issue decided will be decided on the basis of what the Bible says, the way we have always done it.

Not all church bodies do it that way. Beginning about a thousand years ago, the idea that Popes and Councils could make doctrinal rulings based on the Bible *and also other things gained sway*. *The authority of the Bible v. the Authority of Popes and Councils was a major issue brought up by Martin Luther in the course of his leading the 16th Century Lutheran Reformation of the Church.*

Then along came the Age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment began in the 18th Century, and it celebrated human reason. We like human reason and we use it all the time, including when we study the Bible. But as time passed,



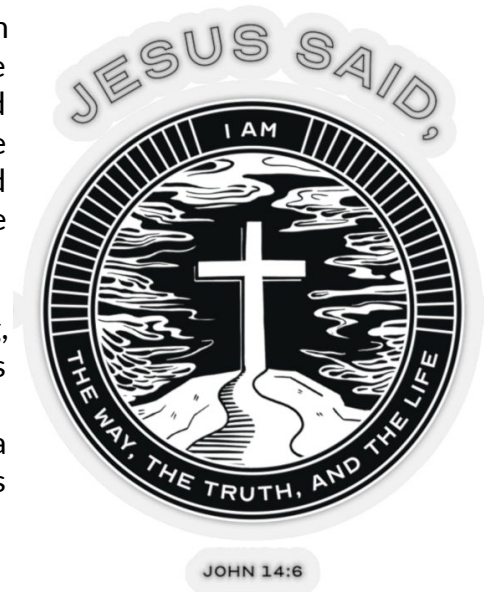
Pastor's Pen continued...

human reason increasingly was used to come to theological conclusions that are not in agreement with and often against the clear teaching of the Bible.

Case in point; the op ed in USA Today a few years ago, *American churches must reject literalism and admit we got it wrong on gay people*. The author says what the title says he's going to say. He says that if we want to stop "hemorrhaging" people, we need to admit what he says we have to admit and change our teaching on gay marriage. The writer of the op ed is Rev. Oliver Thomas.

He's a retired American Baptist Pastor, which is to the Southern Baptist what the ELCA is to the LCMS, and when he says the Church got it wrong, he means that the Bible got it wrong, and that's not a new idea. Back in the 90's, somebody told me something about them, so I called the ABC church in town and asked the pastor if he believes Jesus rose from the dead. "No, we do not."

We're all reading the same Bibles, and they all say the same thing, and Thomas Oliver is honest enough to admit what the Bible says about homosexual sin, a topic about which the Bible is not unclear. He just thinks he knows better than the Bible. Now, that's a slippery slope, and just when you think some of these churches can't sink deeper into their self-made abyss...wait for it!



In Christian Service,
Pastor Anderson

The Christians

"A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying, 'You are mad; you are not like us.'" + St. Anthony the Great, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*



Calling all graduates!

If your child is graduating from high school or college this spring, please let the office know so we can recognize them! We need names, pictures, school graduating from, and the date of the ceremony. Feel free to include additional information such as: the college your grad plans to attend in the fall, majors/ minors, sports played, awards/ honors, etc.!

Serving the Lord This Month

Ushers

Sat, May 2: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, & Larry Ripka

Sun, May 3: Esther Cashion and youths from the congregation

Sat, May 9: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, & Larry Ripka

Sun, May 10: Esther Cashion and youths from the congregation

Sat, May 16: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, & Larry Ripka

Sun, May 17: Esther Cashion and youths from the congregation

Sat, May 23: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, & Larry Ripka

Sun, May 24: Esther Cashion and youths from the congregation

Sat, May 30: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, & Larry Ripka

Sun, May 31: Esther Cashion and youths from the congregation

Greeters

Sat, May 2: Chuck Brokaw
Sun, May 3:

Sat, May 9: Chuck Brokaw
Sun, May 10:

Sat, May 16: Chuck Brokaw
Sun, May 17:

Sat, May 23: Chuck Brokaw
Sun, May 24:

Sat, May 30: Chuck Brokaw
Sun, May 31:

Acolytes

May 3: Briella Churchill

May 10: Nathan Duffy

May 17: Nolan Johnson

May 24: Henry Schmidt

May 31: Briella Churchill



Communion Assistants

May 3: Brian & Kevin

May 17-Ascension: Jim & Ralph

May 24-Pentecost: Kevin & Jim

May 31- Trinity: Brian & Glen

Altar Guild

Kay Iwen and the Schmidt ladies



Thank You

Eternal Candle

May 3: In honor of John and Rhea Oakes' anniversary

May 10: Rod Hopkins, Happy Mother's Day!

May 17: In honor of Zachary Antolik's baptismal birthday

May 24: In honor of Elizabeth Antolik and Nick Meyers' wedding

May 31: In honor of Tanner McAnally's baptismal birthday



Flowers

May 3: In honor of John and Rhea Oakes' anniversary

May 10: Bill and Donna Green, in honor of their anniversary

May 17: In memory of Ed Wachs

May 24: From the Belan family, in honor of Tyler's college graduation

May 31: In memory of Don Davis, from Nancy, John and Susan



Church News

Birthdays

May 1 – Jameson Nitz, Sharron Ripka & Owen Weakley, Jr

May 2 - Hans VanRycke

May 4 – Nancy Bonow

May 6– Alex Verschoore

May 7– John Davis

May 8– Nico Stone

May 11– Nicholas Kjera

May 12 – Pastor Kent Umbarger

May 13 – Palmer Beale & Rachel Duffy

May 14 – Mark Grotelueschen

May 16 - Bob Scheer

May 18 – Katherine Kirby & Kristian Umbarger

May 19 – Hailee Fischer & Kathy Herron

May 21 – Lindsey Rowe

May 23– Grant McManus

May 25 – Kris McAnally & Patsy Mills

May 26– Brandon Descamps

May 28 – Steven Bailey, Keith Foehrkolb, & Kimberly Medina

May 30 – Bill Johnson

May 31– Adam Hess



Weekly Attendance & Offerings

<u>DATE</u>	<u>THIS YEAR</u>	<u>LAST YEAR</u>
3/29/26	128	131
4/05/26	200-Easter	150
4/12/26	118	168
4/19/26	129	214-Easter
4/26/26	96	-

Average monthly attendance of St. John's membership April 2026: 29%
 Average monthly attendance of St. John's membership April 2025: 34%



Membership Report

Address Update:

Joyce Hoffman
 101 N. 1st Ave.
 Colona, IL 61241



Church News

2nd Friday Fellowship

Join us on Friday, May 8th for fun and games with your church friends! We will have dominoes and euchre tables set up. Or bring a board game you like (Trivial Pursuit anyone?) and meet in the activities room at 6:30pm.

Ladies Luncheon

All ladies of St. John's are invited to lunch at the Deerfield Family restaurant on Thursday, May 21st. Please join us at 11:30am- the more the merrier!

LWML - Lutheran Women's Missionary League

An auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
All ladies are welcome!

**LWML will be hosting a
Ladies Salad Luncheon
May 21st at Noon**



All ladies are welcome to attend and invite a friend or two to join us. Please sign-up by May 17th at the sign-up table so we may plan accordingly. If you are able and would like to bring a salad and the recipe to share. We hope you can join us.

Bible, Brats and Beverages

Men of the congregation, note the date of Sunday, June 28th to attend a "Bible, Brats, and Beverages" gathering at St. John's. This will include food, fellowship, beverages, and a Bible study or program. More information and a sign up sheet will be put out in May/June for this summer gathering for all St. John's men 18 and over.

You Are Invited!

Please join us as we celebrate the high school graduation of Demetrius Williams! All are welcome on Sunday, June 14th from 1-4pm in the church gym.



Notes from the Balcony

Are you still good at asking, "Why?" While inquisitiveness in children is well-known, curiosity is a trait that continues in different aspects throughout life. Young children sponge in information in a wide variety of areas. Older children's curiosity concentrates on interest areas and social skills. And with the advent of Google and AI, there is virtually no limit to satisfy adult curiosity. With 432 occurrences of the word "why" in the ESV Bible, it seems to be a popular word even in the Bible.

It came up in a conversation at church that words like *Matins* and *Vespers* are words we use at church without a second thought. *Why are those services so named? Do those words have special meanings? Why don't we follow Matins for the Saturday evening service and have print up a special bulletin of Vespers for it? Let's take a look at the question of "Why?" in reference to these titles of our church services.*

Historically, cathedrals and monasteries used the words of Psalm 119:164 and verse 62, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules" and "At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules," as a model for dividing each day into eight prayer services known as the *daily office*. *Matins*, from the Latin word *matutinus*, meaning "belonging to the early morning," was the first of these offices and was prayed at midnight or in the early morning before dawn. It occurred before the second office, called *Lauds*, which was held at dawn. *Matins* has often been used as the order of worship in Lutheran schools, including the two-room school in northern Wisconsin that I attended. Thus, it was the first order of service I learned to play on the organ. Traditionally, *Matins* was a service where several psalms were recited. It included readings followed by responsories, with the final being the *Te Deum*. Prayer would also be an important part of this daily prayer service.

The term *Vespers* is translated from Latin as "evening" or "evensong." This liturgy of evening prayer focuses on psalms and Biblical canticles. It was the seventh of the eight daily offices and took place in the late afternoon before the evening meal. *Vespers* occurred sometime between *None*, which took place at 3 p.m., and *Compline*, which took place at the end of the day. *Vespers* traditionally consisted of several psalms, a lesson with responsory, a canticle from the Gospel such as the *Magnificat*, and prayers. In Lutheran churches, it is commonly used in evening mid-week services, such as in Advent and Lent.

The format of these services reminds us of Paul's encouragement in Ephesians 5:19-20, "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." I hope this helps us understand why we have these two services in our hymnal so named. They are two more services where we can receive God's gifts from His Word and then respond with praise, which is the main focus of Lutheran worship.

One of His children,

Christine Engebrecht



Church News

St. John's Lutheran Church Call Meeting Minutes April 12, 2026

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m. by president, Brian Engebrecht. 46 members were present.
 2. Pastor Nerud gave the opening message and prayer.
 3. President Engebrecht asked if there was anyone that wanted to be a voting member. There were none.
 4. Jim Homann, Chairman of the Call Committee reviewed The Standing Rulers for Voter's Meeting To Extend A Call. Marsha Boarts made a motion to accept the Rules as printed. Seconded by Margie Schaefer. Motion passed.
 - 5..Jim Homann reviewed the top10 Prioritization of Pastoral Expectations. This was the list the Congregation had voted on last year.
 6. Jim Homann reviewed the five Pastors that the committee had selected for the congregations consideration. They were Rev. Ryan Anderson, Rev. Peter Deberny, Rev. Peter Kufahl, Rev. Julian Lamie, and Rev. Dr. Gregory Truwe. Discussion followed. President Engebrecht asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There were none. 46 Voting members were present voting results were:
Rev. Ryan Anderson – 12 votes
Rev. Peter Deberny – 24 votes
Rev. Peter Kufahl – 7 votes
Rev. Julian Lamie – 2 votes
Dr. Rev. Greogry Truwe – 1 vote
- Rev. Peter Deberny received the majority of votes. Jim Homann asked for a unanimous vote. A motion was made by Larry Hipple to make the call to Rev. Deberny unanimous. Motion seconded by Jeff Belan. Motion passed. Rev. Nerud attempted to phone Rev. Deberny to confirm he was able to accept a call, but was unable to reach him.
7. Jim Homann then presented what would be Rev. Deberny's compensation package: salary (which includes insurance and retirement) \$95,765, moving expenses up to \$10,000 and a forgivable loan for \$32,000 for the purchase of a home. Discussion followed. Dawn Antolik made a motion to accept the compensation package and seconded by Ken Weidenbach. Motion passed.
 8. Brian Nielsen made a motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by Judy Dugan. Motion passed.
 9. Meeting adjourned at 3:10 with the Lord's Prayer.

We very much appreciate all members who attended the Call Meeting.

Respectively submitted by Diana Lackey, Date: April 12, 2026

ARMED FORCES SUNDAY 2026

THE SWORD IN ITS PLACE

SUGGESTED READINGS Habakkuk 1:1–3, Psalm 33:13–22, Romans 13:1–7, Matthew 26:47–56

On the night Jesus was betrayed, men armed with swords seized Him. Peter retaliated with his own sword and wounded a lowly servant. But on that night, the sword did not belong in the hands of a disciple. There was no need—Jesus could have easily called down twelve legions of angels. So He rebuked Peter: “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” No, on this night the sword belonged to His captors. There is a right place and a wrong place for the sword.

Though evil men like Jesus’ captors have borne the sword, good men also have wielded this instrument of death. Only because good men stand ready to exercise force on our behalf can we sleep peacefully at night. Because there is real evil in this fallen world, God has ordained the sword. St. Paul writes of civil authority: “If you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer”(Rom. 13:4). Who is this servant of God, this instrument of God’s wrath? He is the soldier, the sailor, the marine, the airman who defends his homeland. For us, he is the American servicemember who dutifully takes up the sword.

The United States Armed Forces wields the most lethal power this world has ever known. We spend more on defense than China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ukraine, France and Japan ... combined! We have the largest air force, the largest navy, the most technologically advanced army. Our service members are the best trained, our equipment the most lethal—no other country’s military even comes close. In short, the United States has the most powerful military in all of human history.

Yet we must acknowledge the limitations of this great might. King Solomon, who reigned over the most powerful military of his time, recognized that “the horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord” (Prov. 21:31). Our own founding fathers knew that they owed a great debt to God. As George Washington looked back on his many close calls, he said, “I assure you that I now exist and appear in the land of the living by the miraculous care of Providence that protected me beyond all human expectation: I had four bullets through my coat and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt.” So we, as people of faith, trust not in princes, chariots, horses, presidents, tanks or fighter jets, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Our armed forces, our lives and our nation are in His hands.

As He guards and protects us with His left hand, He redeems and sanctifies us with His right hand. With one hand, He bestows the sword upon our Armed Forces, and with the other He bestows His holy Word and Sacraments upon His Church. The sword defends us against those who threaten our bodies and livelihood; the Gospel defends us against that which threaten our souls—sin, death, and the devil. Only Christ, by His death and resurrection, redeems us from these ancient enemies. The sword cannot, and so its place is with the Armed Forces, not the Church. This is why on that night, Jesus rebuked Peter: “Put your sword back into its place.”

Jesus accompanied this directive with a warning: “All who take the sword will perish by the sword.” Does this mean that God punishes all who take up the sword? No, we have already heard how God bestows the sword upon good men who guard and protect us from evil. But there is a right way and a wrong way to wield the sword.

In 1526, a German knight named Asa von Kram had a problem. You see, he was a lethal soldier, but he was also a Christian. How could a man of faith be good at killing? Was there any hope for his soul? Tormented by these questions, he sought pastoral counsel from Martin Luther himself. Luther responded

that the vocation of a soldier is a noble calling from God, but one that comes with great responsibility. Because the sword takes human life, it only belongs in the hand of one who wields it with a good conscience. Luther writes: "Whoever fights with a good and well-instructed conscience can also fight well. This is especially true since a good conscience fills a man's heart with courage and boldness. And if the heart is bold and courageous, the fist is more powerful ... On the other hand, a timid and insecure conscience makes the heart fearful. It cannot be otherwise: a bad conscience can only make men cowardly and fearful" (Martin Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved"). The soldier who takes up the sword with malice in his heart will indeed perish by that same sword. Throughout history, armies that have given themselves over to rampant immorality and great atrocities have indeed perished. The prophet Nahum condemned the evil of the Assyrians: "Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder ... The crack of the whip and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end! ... Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts... I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, "Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her?" (Nahum 3:1-3, 5a, 6b-7). No army is immune to such corruption and depravity. We must hold our Armed Forces accountable; our servicemen must hold themselves to the highest standards. For if we seek to win at all costs, then we lose not only all that our nation stands for but our souls as well. You can see, then, that the hand that wields the sword is a heavy hand indeed. It is the hand of God's vengeance and must steady itself with great moral resolve. This burden exacts an overwhelming price on the one called to bear it. The one who wields the sword must also sheathe it from time to time. For as Solomon reminds us, there is "a time to kill and a time to heal ... a time for war and a time for peace"(Eccl 3:3, 8). Yet the soldier cannot so easily turn off his lethality. Every day, his mind and body are disciplined; every day there is an intensity to his training. Those who have been deployed carry with them trauma that most people can never imagine. In many cases, their souls have been injured, and they bear scars that no one can see. The Christian soldier cries out with the prophet Habakkuk: "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and You will not hear? Or cry to You, 'Violence!' and You will not save? Why do You make me see iniquity, and why do You idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise" (Hab. 1:2-3). Yet God does not abandon the soldier to despair. In His mercy, He provides a guide who shows the right place and the wrong place for the sword. He raises up one who himself does not bear the sword so that he can strengthen those who must. God gives chaplains so that those who take up the sword are not destined to perish by it. The chaplain bears their burden with them. When they carry a fifty-pound ruck twenty miles, so does he. When they sleep in the mud, so does he. When they live on a ship for months at a time away from their families, so does he. As the soldier, the sailor, the marine, and the airman navigate their perilous calling, the chaplain walks with them. He is their moral compass, their compassionate counselor, their trustworthy confessor. But the guidance and comfort he gives is not his own but that of Christ. Only He who has borne our griefs can bear their burden; only He who has carried our sorrows can carry their pain; only He who takes away the sin of the world can take away the violence and destruction that haunts their sleep. Only He can bring life from death. There is a right place and a wrong place for the sword. Christ has seen fit to place it into the hands of American servicemembers. He protects them and steadies their hands to wield history's most lethal force with moral resolve. And He does what no one else can: He sheathes the sword and gives them peace. On this day, let us thank God for our soldiers, our sailors, our marines, and our airmen and pray for their peace. Amen.

Written by Chaplain (Major) Bobby Niemtschk, U. S. Army

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE



From the CID

Lutheran Family Service Support Group- Grounded: Men's Therapy Group

Rev. Nathan Grewe, pastor and mental health therapist at Lutheran Family Service is leading an 8 – week men's therapy group built specially for men. The sessions will include teaching, guided exercises, and honest conversation. We will tackle common struggles men face– anxiety, stress, irritability, overthinking, emotional shutdown, overworking, feeling disconnected, feeling pressured, etc. This is a therapy group with a licensed counselor, meant to be confidential and built for real change.

If you are interested, or know a man who might be, you can visit this website:

<https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/grounded-mens-group>

Who: Any male over 16 years old

What: Therapeutic group for men

Where: We will use the Conference Room at the LFS Bettendorf office (2550 Middle Rd Suite 202, Bettendorf, IA 52722– inside the Time Bank building)

When: It will run 8 weeks starting June 3 to July 15, from 6-7:30pm

Dollars for Missions

The second 2026 project for Dollars for Mission is a new lighted sign for Wittenberg Lutheran Center. \$7,000 will be collected for the cost. The cast aluminum sign will be of the Wittenberg logo and will be placed on the steeple of the building to proclaim the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit for all.

Amount to be funded: \$7,000

Project: A new lighted, cast aluminum sign for Wittenberg Lutheran Center at ISU

LCMS Health Ministry

May is usually a chock-full month for families with school-aged kids. Graduation, music recitals, spring sports tournaments, awards ceremonies...the list goes on! It can be easy to get bogged down with the busyness of May. But this month also serves as a great reminder that there are many people pouring into the lives of our children, not the least being their teachers at school! The first week of May is Teacher Appreciation Month and teachers should receive praise and appreciation for their dedication to helping teach our children. Pray for your teachers. Write thank you cards and notes. Consider giving gifts. Show love to all teachers for using their vocations to serve Christ and His children.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
9am - Worship w/ 10:15am - Bible Study / 10:15am - Confirmation 3pm - Mary Kay Event 3pm - Mary Kay Event	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		1:30pm - Activities Room 6pm - Chimes Pizza Party 6:30pm - Heavenly	10am - Food Pantry 6:30pm - Guitar Jam	10am - Women's Bible 1:30pm - Activities Room	6:30pm - Board Meetings	6:30pm - 2nd Friday	8am - Men's Bible study 9:30am - Choir rehearsal 5pm - Worship
9am - Worship 10:15am - Bible Study /	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		1:30pm - Activities Room 6:30pm - Heavenly	10am - Food Pantry 6:30pm - Guitar Jam	10am - Women's Bible 1:30pm - Activities Room 3:30pm - Fellowship			8am - Men's Bible study 5pm - Worship w/
9am - Worship w/ 10:15am - Bible Study /	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		Informer Deadline 1:30pm - Activities Room 6:30pm - Heavenly	10am - Food Pantry 6:30pm - Guitar Jam	10am - Women's Bible 1:30pm - Activities Room	11:30am - Ladies 1pm - LWMML		8am - Men's Bible study 5pm - Worship
9am - Worship 10:15am - Bible Study /	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
		1:30pm - Activities Room 6:30pm - Heavenly	10am - Food Pantry 6:30pm - Guitar Jam	10am - Women's Bible 1:30pm - Activities Room			8am - Men's Bible study 5pm - Worship
9am - Worship 10:15am - Bible Study /	31	1	2	3	4	5	6



St. John's
Lutheran
Church

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We're On the Web!!
www.stjohnsem.org

See The Informer
IN COLOR
On Our Website

Walking in the Light of Christ!



IN HONOR OF OUR HEROES

Worship Schedule:

Saturday worship— 5:00pm

Sunday worship- 9:00am

10:15am— Sunday School
& Bible Study

Office Hours:

Monday – Wednesday 8:30am-2:00pm

Thursday 8:30 am– noon

