

# The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

September, 2011

Peace Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We believe, teach, and confess the doctrine of the evangelical, catholic faith as it is taught by Holy Scripture and faithfully confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580. We are committed to the pure preaching of God's Word and the right administration of the Holy Sacraments, catechesis of all people in the Christian faith, and liturgical worship consistent with our Reformation heritage. We are an evangelical, orthodox, and catholic congregation, proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and reigning for the salvation of the world!



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## *From the Desk of Pastor Messer* **"We Need More Butts in the Pews!"**

The Special Voters' Assembly we held on Sunday, August 28, was, I believe, a wonderful example of the love and faithfulness with which our Lord has blessed our beloved congregation. It was a tough meeting, to be sure, for we were forced to take an honest look at our financial struggles and to consider the impact those struggles may have on our life together in the days to come. That's never easy, but it is required of us at times like this, and it is a painful reminder to us that we still live here in the "valley of the shadow of death," where struggles and suffering abound. This is why we Christians pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," for we long for the Day when the trials and tribulations we must face in this dead and dying world will be gone for good. Until then, we can expect to struggle. But, the love and faithfulness with which we are blessed was evidenced by the fact that we were able to express our concerns, opinions, and ideas related to our struggles to one another in love. There was no bickering or arguing or anger, but a wonderful give-and-take between brothers and sisters in Christ, all of whom are sincerely concerned for our future as a congregation and want to find a way to overcome our struggles faithfully. I pray that this same spirit of unity, peace, and love will accompany our future conversations related to these struggles.

I want to take some time in this article to address one of the concerns I heard raised during the meeting, which I've heard raised many times in the past, namely that "we need more butts in the pews." I certainly understand this sentiment. It would be wonderful to have the Lord's House packed every week and it is true that, if we had more people, we would probably have more income from offerings and may not be in the boat we're currently in financially (although not a guarantee). But, there is also a danger in thinking this way, for it almost always leads to asking the question, "What can WE do to get more butts in the pews?" And when we begin asking that question, we're heading into dangerous turf.

To avoid this danger, I'm going to say something that will probably sound shocking to some of you at first, but hopefully will make sense once you've heard me out: We do not NEED more butts in the pews!

I know, sounds crazy, doesn't it? Nevertheless, it is absolutely true. We do not need more butts in the pews. What we need is Jesus. Period. Jesus is all we need and, thankfully, He gives Himself to us via His Holy Word and Sacraments. In Jesus, we have ALL that we need, and if we never had a single more butt sit in our pews, we

would still have ALL that we ever need in Him. And, if we recognize that we have all that we need in Jesus, the thought of needing something else (anything else, including more butts in our pews) will be replaced with thankfulness and joy at having been given all that we need. How can we be thinking about what more we need when we have all that we need in Jesus? As we sing in that beautiful hymn:

What is the world to me  
With all its vaunted pleasure  
When You, and You alone,  
Lord Jesus, are my treasure!

That's more than a pretty hymn. That's our theology. That's what the New Man (the regenerated spirit) who lives inside of all of us who have been baptized into Christ believes. He is perfectly content with Jesus. Jesus is all that the New Man in us ever needs.

Unfortunately, we still have that nasty Old Adam within us, our sinful nature that only and always wants to satisfy its sinful desires. Old Adam is not interested in what he needs, but only what he wants. And, he's never content; he always wants more. If Old Adam wrote a hymn, it would go something like this:

What is Jesus to me  
With all His heavenly pleasure  
When you, and you alone,  
O World, are my treasure!

Not as pretty a hymn, is it? But, the truth is that Old Adam has us singing his hymn more than any of us would care to admit. We are not content with Jesus. We poor, miserable, sinners want more. The New Man in us assures us that Jesus is all we need, but the Old Adam all too often convinces us otherwise.

The New Man in us would never say, "We need more butts in the pews!" It is the Old Adam in us that causes us to make such statements. And this is why making the statement is dangerous, for once you give Old Adam an inch, he'll take a mile. Once Old Adam convinces us that all of our problems would be solved and everything would be made right if we had more butts in the pews, he will do his best to lure us into believing that the whole "getting butts in the pews" enterprise is our doing, and that we should get busy doing it. In fact, if we allow Old Adam to take us this far, he will have little trouble convincing us that "getting butts in the pews" can be used as a measuring stick for our faithfulness. If we have lots of butts in the pews, we must be faithful; if we do not, we must be unfaithful. Old Adam is relentless like that. He will not stop until he has us believing that everything depends on us—not only our salvation, but the salvation of others. The New Man declares in return: Neither your salvation nor the salvation of others depends on you!

So, back to my crazy assertion: We do not NEED more butts in the pews. We have ALL that we need in Jesus. But, from this it does not follow that we should not DESIRE to have more butts in our pews. We should, and we do, for the New Man lives in us, and his will is one with God's will, which is that all people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Don't miss the reason for our desire, dear friends. We do not desire more butts in our pews so that we can get more money and meet our budget, but because we share God's will that all be saved. When the Old Adam has us looking at people as potential dollar signs, there is but one thing for us to do: Repent! For how sinful is it to look at people in such a way? No, we desire more people in our fellowship, because we desire their salvation.

"We NEED more butts in the pews" comes from the Old Adam; "We DESIRE more butts in the pews" comes from the New Man. And these are not the same thing; the two statements do not reveal a distinction without a difference, as many falsely

believe. They are as different as they are distinct, and maintaining not only the distinction, but also the difference, is necessary if we are to be faithful to what God teaches us in His Word as we address the question which must necessarily follow upon either of these statements, namely, “How can our need (wrong) or desire (right) to have more butts in our pews be fulfilled?”

The answer to this question is the same whether we ask it from the wrong or right motivation: Only by the grace of God. God alone is responsible for getting more butts in the pews. He alone creates and sustains faith. He has predestined all those whom He will call forth out of the darkness of this sinful world and bring into the light of Christ and His eternal kingdom. He has elected them before the foundation of the world was laid, and He will bring them into the light of Christ in His way and in His time, according to His will. God has things under control. Saving people is His business, and He knows what He’s doing. And He has told us in His Word exactly how it is that He goes about His business of saving people, namely through the means of grace He Himself has established—His Holy Word and Sacraments.

The Old Adam doesn’t like this arrangement at all. As mentioned above, he would have us believe that getting more butts in the pews and saving people is our business. And he has a couple of ready allies in the old evil foe and the sinful world, both of whom join Old Adam to tempt us into making this our business, rather than leaving this to God. You can even hear that ancient serpent’s voice coming through in the temptations foisted upon us: “Did God really say that getting more butts in the pews and saving people is His business? Surely He meant that you must do your part first. How can God save people if you don’t do your part and get people in the pews?” And if this doesn’t work, he’ll try to guilt us into making this our business: “Don’t you care about the lost? There are people dying and going to hell every day and you are doing nothing to prevent this. What kind of Christian are you, anyway?” And the sinful world will further confirm the temptations of the Old Adam and the devil, saying, “If you are going to get your congregation to grow, you need to adopt the tried and true principles that work in the world. You need to view your congregation as a business, the Gospel as the product you’re selling, and the unchurched people in your community as potential consumers. If you are going to reach these unchurched people, you need to repackage the Gospel in a way that is appealing to them, and we can show you exactly how to do that. Or, don’t you care?”

To all of this, the New Man in us says, “Phooey! You are dead wrong Old Adam. You, too, devil. And, you three, world. This is God’s work and He will accomplish it as He promises. He doesn’t need our help. He can take care of things just fine. He knows what He’s doing. His will be done. It is always best.”

So, if the New Man is right, where does this leave us? That’s the question, isn’t it? The answer is provided in Acts, where we read, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). There is where our attention should be, not on getting more butts in the pews, but on being in the pews ourselves, where we are instructed in the Word of God (the apostles’ teaching about Christ crucified and risen for us), sustained in the fellowship of believers (the fellowship we have with one another through our fellowship with our Triune God, into which we were brought when He placed His Divine Name upon us at Holy Baptism and brought us into His Divine Family), strengthened and preserved in the faith by the breaking of the bread (the reception of our Lord Jesus Christ’s very Body and Blood in the Holy Supper), and where we bring our petitions to our Heavenly Father, by the Holy Spirit and in the Name of Jesus, the Father’s Son, our Lord (praying for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs). What do we do? We “abide in Jesus’ Word.” That’s what His disciples do.

Our task as Christ’s disciples is to abide in His Word. That’s it. Remember, all we NEED is Jesus, and He gives Himself to us via His Holy Word and Sacraments, as we gather in His Name in the Divine Service to “devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.” My calling as your pastor is to serve you in Christ’s stead and by His command, preaching to you the Law in its full severity and the Gospel in its full sweetness, and administering the Holy Sacraments according to Christ’s administration, as a “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

My calling is not to “get more butts in the pews,” but to “feed the flock” I have been called to serve by my Lord, Jesus (cf. John 21:15-19). Your calling as Christ’s disciples is to avail yourselves of the preaching of His Word and reception of His Sacraments, that is, to “abide in Jesus’ Word,” so that you may “grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

But, what about all those passages that seem to be telling us that we need to be out in the world telling everyone about Jesus? Shouldn’t we be “letting our lights shine” (Matt. 5:16) and “proclaiming the praises of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9)? Absolutely, we should! But, what are these passages, and the many others similar to them, calling for us to do? How do we let our lights shine and proclaim the praises of our Lord? We do so as we live out our faith in Christ as His disciples wherever He has placed us in our various vocations. We let our lights shine and proclaim His praises when we perform the duties of our vocations in this world with integrity, honor, and diligence, to the best of our ability, as Christ’s disciples. Are you a parent? Take care of your children. Provide for them, discipline them, love them, and bring them up in the admonition of the Lord. Are you a teacher? Teach your students to the best of your ability. Care for them. Love them in such a way that you perform your duties with the desire that they learn. Are you a factory worker? Do the tasks your employer has given you to do to the best of your ability. Be on time, work hard, and show your boss the respect he deserves, even when you disagree with his management or believe he is expecting too much. And so forth. Where has God placed you in life? Wherever that is, serve to the best of your ability, as Christ’s disciples, seeking to love God and to love your neighbor as you fulfill your duties. And, yes, when you are given the opportunity to confess your faith and to “make a defense for the hope that is in you” (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15), you do so, the Holy Spirit leading you. That’s how you let your lights shine and proclaim His praises.

How this plays itself out in the context of a congregation is much the same. Rather than seeking to “get more butts in the pews,” we should be focusing on loving God and neighbor by supporting His Ministry and Mission, helping the needy among us and in our community, praying for each other and those in our community, and so forth. In fact, if we continue reading that passage from Acts 2 mentioned above, we will find that this is exactly what the disciples who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers” were doing. They were filled with awe at the grace, mercy, and love their Savior had for them, and were moved by that grace, mercy, and love to share all that they had with each other and to provide for all in need. They praised God with their love for one another and their acts of mercy both within their fellowship and throughout their surrounding community, so that they had “favor with all the people.” Sounds a lot like what our Lord Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room on the night when He was betrayed: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). And, as the disciples who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” loved one another and extended the grace, mercy, and love they received from the Lord to others within their fellowship and community, we’re told that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).

Who added to their number? The Lord. And did He do so because they developed some dynamic evangelism program and went out into their community to try to get people to join their congregation? No. Did He add to their number because they had organized enticing “outreach programs” to draw people into their fellowship? No. Did He bring them growth because they were out there preaching about Jesus to everyone they met. No. They “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers,” and, moved by the grace, mercy, and love they received from their Lord, they loved one another and showed love and mercy to all, and the Lord added to their number, in His way and in His time, according to His will. Do you see it?

Now, does all of this mean that we need to disband our Evangelism Committee (S.A.L.T.) and avoid holding any sort of outreach events? Not at all. It just means that our Evangelism Committee does not exist to find ways to “get more butts in

the pews,” and the outreach events they might organize are not held for that purpose. Instead, our Evangelism Committee should seek to do what the name they’ve given themselves means: S.A.L.T—Sharing with All the Love and Truth of Jesus. Whether they organize inreach, outreach, or service events, the purpose is to share the love and truth of Jesus with each other and with others in our community, without expecting anything in return, but simply as they are motivated by the grace, mercy, and love of our Savior. Whether the Lord adds to our number is His business.

A good summary of what I have written here (and if you have continued reading to this point, God bless you!) is provided in the following quote from my good friend and brother in the Office, Pr. William Weedon, who shared these “Brief Thoughts on Witnessing” a while back on his blog ([www.weedon.blogspot.com](http://www.weedon.blogspot.com)):

What I have come to rejoice in is this: Our Lord did not command, "Go, fish for men!" He rather promised, "Follow me and I will make you a fisher of men." He did not say: "Go, witness!" He promises, "Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth." And He does make us so: fishers and witnesses. As we follow Him, as we seek to love Him and to love our neighbor, serving them and honoring them and opening our mouth whenever they ask us to account for the hope that is in us, the Lord actually has use of us in bringing others to faith. But He solidly keeps His hands on the verbs for conversion. Not only is it true that I cannot believe by myself; I cannot give faith to a single other person out there - no matter how clever I may be in my attempts. But I can love them, serve them, rejoice in them, and whenever they ask an account - open my mouth to declare this great joy in which we live with our sins forgiven, our death destroyed, secure in the love of a Savior who loves them, too, and did all this for them as well.

Have you ever been in a conversation where you had the distinct impression that the other person asked a question of you, but really wasn't listening, wasn't interested, and was only waiting to talk? How frustrating is that? And, yet, that's how we've made evangelism come off too often. What a different critter it is when our witness to the Savior comes as a result of genuine inquiry. And with no need to pressure the person - just to share with them the love that we have come to know and rejoice in and live from - and to assure them that it is for them as much as for us. I see that as the Lord's keeping His gracious promise to us - to make us fishers, to make us witnesses. Gift, not demand. Promise, not burden. Peace, not pressure.

I love the way Pr. Weedon ends his brief thoughts: “Gift, not demand. Promise, not burden. Peace, not pressure.” Evangelism is not our business, but our Lord’s. Does He use us in bringing others to faith? Sure. As we live out our God-given vocations in this dead and dying world, faithfully performing the duties we’ve been given to perform, loving and serving others as we are able, and always being ready to confess our faith when called upon to do so, our Lord will use us to accomplish His will. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). But, the burden of rounding up the elect and bringing them into the Kingdom is not ours, but God’s. It is enough for us to “abide in His Word” and to strive to love God and neighbor as we journey through the wilderness of this sinful world. God can handle the rest!

So, do we NEED more butts in the pews? No. We have ALL we need in Jesus. Do we DESIRE more butts in the pews? Absolutely, for we share God’s will that all people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. How do we fulfill this desire? We don’t. God does, in His way and in His time. What, then, are we to do? Devote ourselves “to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (i.e. “abide in His Word”), which will motivate and empower us to love and serve God, one another, and our neighbors in our surrounding community. This is enough. The rest is up to God.

Your servant in Christ,

*Pastor Messer*

## The Fourteenth Annual St. Michael Liturgical Conference



**Monday, September 26  
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Detroit, Michigan**

### Registration

The registration fee is \$35 before September 15. After September 15, the registration fee is \$45. The registration fee includes the cost of the conference, distribution materials, breaks, and lunch.

### Schedule

8:15 a.m.	Registration
9:00 a.m.	Holy Communion
10:45 a.m.	Keynote Address
12:00 p.m.	Sext (Service of Prayer)
12:15 p.m.	Luncheon (Greetings from Bp. Stecholz)
1:15 p.m.	Workshop
2:30 p.m.	Break
2:45 p.m.	Workshop
4:00 p.m.	Vespers
till 7:00 p.m.	Gemütlichkeit at the Rectory (Fellowship time)

### The Conduct of the Services, Revisited

First published in 1972, *The Conduct of the Services* was written by the Rev. Fr. Charles McClean. Outlining the proper rubrics, ceremony, and rite, it is one of a very small number of handbooks for those who desire to rightly and reverently conduct the Lutheran Common Service, and the Divine Offices of Matins and Vespers. We will be blessed to hear Fr. McClean revisit this important work in his keynote address.

### Presenters

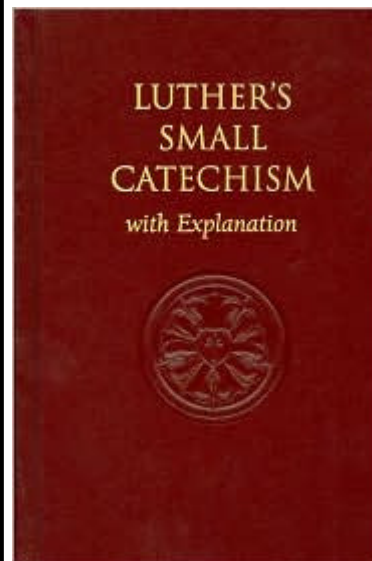
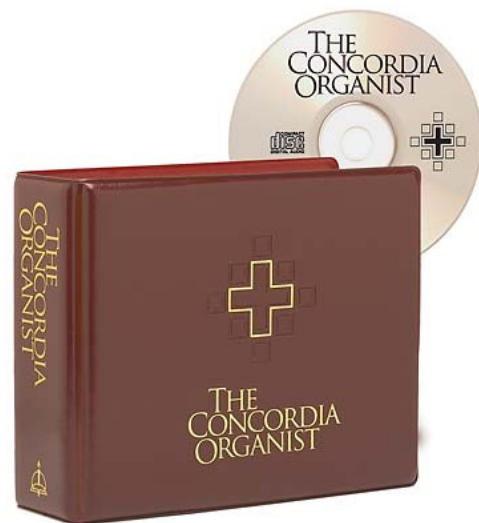
The Reverend Fr. Charles McClean—Keynote Speaker (Visitation Pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria, VA); The Reverend Dr. Daniel Reuning (Kantor and Church Musician at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, IN); The Reverend Fr. Mark Braden (Pastor of Zion Lutheran in Detroit, MI, and Adjunct Faculty Member of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN); Mr. Allen Kerkes (Organist-in-Residence of Zion, Detroit, and Vice President and Program Director of the Lutheran Church Musicians Guild of Michigan).

*This conference is for all clergy and laypersons who are interested in learning more about the historic liturgy of the Church. If that means you, you are more than welcome to attend! If you are interested in registering for this conference, or if you have questions about it, please see me soon (there are also some brochures on the table in the fellowship hall). We need to get our registration forms in by September 15. I have been blessed to attend this most excellent conference 8 times and could not recommend it more highly. The beauty of the Divine Service and other Prayer Offices is simply heavenly, and the information shared in the Keynote Address and Workshops comes from expert theologians. It would be wonderful to have some of you attend with me!*

*In Christ,  
Pastor Messer*

## Looking for Donations

We have talked at Council about the possibility of using our Memorial Fund to purchase “The Concordia Organist,” which is a 31-CD collection that contains music from some very talented organists for the liturgies of all the Services, and all of the hymns, in Lutheran Service Book, our hymnal. To order the set and the electronic devices we would need to acquire and install this resource, we would need to raise around \$400 more than we currently have available in the Memorial Fund. So, we are looking for donations. This would be a wonderful blessing to have at our use for those times when Mary is not able to play for us and we cannot find a replacement, but would also give us the ability to hold daily Matins or Vespers Services in the future, should we decide to do so. If interested in donating toward this project, please see Pr. Messer.



We are also out of stock on Small Catechisms, but have no money left in our Christian Ed. Budget, so anyone wishing to donate toward the purchase of Small Catechisms to keep in stock for new members/confirmands would be greatly appreciated. See Pr. Messer if you wish to donate.

## Synopsis of July 5, 2011 Council Meeting Minutes

### Call To Order & Opening Prayer

- President Brown called the meeting to order at 7:04pm. Elder Elliott conducted the opening prayer. The following members were present: Carol Zeile, Chris Brown, Gary Miller, Sharyn Greening, Vern Jakolat, Larry Elliott, Ken Hill, and Cassie Tennant.

### Approval of Agenda

- Motion to approve by President Brown, supported by Gary Miller, motion carried unanimously

### Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion made by Sharyn Greening, supported by Gary Miller to approve the June 7 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

### Report(s)

- **Pastor** – No report. **Treasurer's Report** – Report Attached. **Financial Secretary** – Quarterly reports were distributed
- **Boards:** **Board of Elders** – No report. **Board of Trustees** – Chris is getting the materials to get the roof done. Parking lot also needs to be done, Elder Elliott will prepare an estimate for filling the cracks. **Board of Christian Education** – VBS was June 20-24<sup>th</sup>, 10 children including a few visitors. **Board of Evangelism** – Baseball game August 14th. **Board of Stewardship** – No report
- **Organization and Committee Reports:** **Peace Lutheran Ladies Guild** – Had a funeral luncheon on July 5. **Peace Youth Group** – No report.

### Business

- **Update on appraisal** – Appraisal has been done, should have report next couple of weeks
- **Presentation by Vern** – Vern's son, Michael, is a financial advisor and has offered to talk to Council. Motion made by Carol Zeile, supported by President Brown, to invite Michael to the next council meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

### General Comments: No General Comments

### Adjournment & Closing Prayer

- Motion made by Gary Miller, supported by Elder Elliott, adjourn at 7:55 pm. Motion carried unanimously. Elder Elliott closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Tennant, Secretary

## Synopsis of August 2 Council Meeting Minutes

### Call To Order & Opening Prayer

- President Brown called the meeting to order at 6:57pm. Elder Elliott conducted the opening prayer. The following members were present: Carol Zeile, Chris Brown, Gary Miller, Sharyn Greening, Vern Jakolat, Carolyn Johnson, Larry Elliott, Ken Hill, and Cassie Tennant.

### Approval of Agenda

- Motion to approve by President Brown, supported by Gary Miller, motion carried unanimously

### Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion made by Gary Miller, supported by Sharyn Greening to approve the July 5 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

### Report(s)

- **Pastor** – No report. **Treasurer** – Report Attached, Motion by Ken Hill, supported by Gary Miller, to transfer \$5000 from CEF. Motion passed unanimously. **Financial Secretary** – No report.
- **Boards:** **Board of Elders** – No report. **Board of Trustees** – No report. **Board of Christian Education** – Sunday School to start Sept 11; Theme - "Teach Them to Observe All Things" (a study of the Gospel of Matthew). **Board of Evangelism** – Baseball game August 14th. **Board of Stewardship** – Brainstorming ideas.
- **Organization and Committee Reports:** **Peace Lutheran Ladies Guild** – No report. **Peace Youth Group** – No report.

### Business

- **Music** - visiting organist told Gary about a set of CDs of all hymns ("The Concordia Organist"). Discussion tabled until

next meeting when Pastor is available.

- **Hospital Meeting-** Larry and Ken to meet with the hospital hopefully this week.
- **Budget-** need to balance; develop a plan to use the funds from sale of the land. Common ground for such a plan: continue to exist, continue congregation unity, invest a portion of the funds, and pay off \$22,000 loan balance, Larry to explore Pastor's benefits. Larry will also develop a document of ideas/options, show budget impact. Motion by Carolyn Johnson to table discussion until next, supported by Gary Miller, passed unanimously. Motion to meet again in two weeks (Aug. 17) at 7 pm by Larry Elliott, supported by Gary Miller, passed unanimously.
- **General Comments:** No General Comments.
- **Adjournment & Closing Prayer** – Motion made by Gary Miller, supported by Sharyn Greening, adjourn at 8:22pm. Motion carried unanimously. Elder Elliott closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cassie Tennant, Secretary

## Synopsis of August 28, 2011 Special Voters' Assembly

### Call To Order & Opening Prayer

- President Brown called the meeting to order at 11:15am. Pastor Messer led congregation in prayer. 39 members were present.

### Pastoral Concerns

- Pastor Messer expressed some pastoral concerns he has about the rumors and gossip circulating through the congregation concerning our financial crisis, the ideas being proposed to deal with it, and his intentions as our pastor, all of which were made known to him by concerned members. He indicated that some of the rumors and gossip have been instigated by former members of Peace, who transferred out a couple of years ago, and stated that, while he wishes those former members well and continues to pray for them, he believes it is wrong for current members to share the rumors and gossip initiated by former members, all of which are blatantly false, with other members of Peace. The specific rumors he addressed included:
  - He has placed himself on call lists and plans on leaving – Pr. Messer made it clear that he is not on any call lists, has never placed himself on any call list, and has no intention of doing so. He shared that the only time he was on a call list was earlier this year when the members of St. Paul's in Manito, IL (where his good friend, Pr. Aloysius Majewski served before being called home by our Lord last December) notified him that they had placed him on their call list. He made it clear to the head elder, who contacted him, that he was perfectly content here at Peace and believed that this is where the Lord desired him to serve. Subsequently, St. Paul's in Manito, IL did not call Pr. Messer, but another pastor they had on their list. Pr. Messer stated that he has no desire to leave Peace and would be perfectly happy to remain at Peace for his entire ministry, should the Lord will it.
  - He doesn't visit the shut-ins and hospitalized – Pr. Messer made it clear that this rumor, which was begun by disgruntled members a couple of years ago, but still manages somehow to resurface, is blatantly false. He takes seriously his call to serve our shut-in and hospitalized brothers and sisters in Christ, and does so regularly.
  - He is motivated by greed – Pr. Messer stated that if he cared about money, he would have never left Ford's to pursue becoming a pastor. He shared how he entered seminary with no debt and an excellent credit rating, but left with massive debt and a destroyed credit rating, which is sadly the case with many pastors in our synod today. He shared some of the history surrounding past financial decisions made by the congregation (e.g. selling of the parsonage; his raise in 2007; the 2009 loan the congregation gave him, etc.) and gave his perspective on those decisions. Unfortunately, because of Pr. Messer's financial struggles, which will increase in the near future as he will soon have to start paying on some of the debts he has been able to put on hold until now, he will struggle to support his family even if the congregation was to continue paying him his current salary, and will not be able to do so if his salary must be decreased.
  - Ideas about how to use the money the congregation would acquire from selling its excess land – Pr. Messer shared that the three main ideas that had been discussed at Council included: 1) Pay off his debt and decrease his salary; 2) Buy pastor's home and convert it into a parsonage; 3) Invest the money and use some of it as an endowment fund to supplement our income from offerings. Pr. Messer stated that the idea of paying off his debt and reducing his salary was instigated by him, and his motivation for this idea was solely to provide a solution that would enable him to continue serving as our full-time pastor while taking a reduction in salary that would make the congregation's budget sustainable.



### **Financial Situation**

- Pr. Messer stated that God's Word makes it clear that the church is not a business, and that the congregation needs to keep this in mind as it proceeds in addressing the financial situation. He read the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and the commentary found in the study notes of The Lutheran Study Bible. Everything we have, both as individual Christians and as a congregation of Christians, belongs to our Lord, and we are merely stewards of His gifts to us. As our Lord teaches us in this parable, we are to put His blessings to use in serving Him and His kingdom, and not to hoard it away.
- Pr. Messer stated that he believes the time has come for the congregation to address our financial struggles, which means passing a budget for 2012 that we can actually meet (if we continue on our current trend, we will be out of money by next July). Based on the projected income for 2011, which is \$94,560, and the 2011 budget, which is \$109,565, we need to eliminate \$15,000 from our budget in the coming year. The only line items in our budget left to cut are the salary/benefits line items. This means that the congregation will have no choice but to significantly reduce Pr. Messer's salary for next year. This also means that Pr. Messer will have to get a second job to support his family, which means that he will have to become a part-time pastor, no longer available to us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and this will undoubtedly impact some of the additional opportunities members currently have to be in the Word, both in worship and study.
  - Some members expressed their concerns about this, stating their wish that members would consider giving more to avoid this from happening, but Pr. Messer (and others) explained that, while everyone should always be analyzing their giving and seeking to give more, the congregation is simply not in a position to hope that this will happen, and needs to move forward based on the reality of our income and expenses.
  - Pr. Messer stated that, while he is willing to take on a second job for the time being to keep the congregation going, he fears that the congregation might become complacent with this arrangement and expect it to continue into the future. If that happened, he stated that, while he has no desire to leave Peace, he would be more prone to take a call to serve elsewhere as a full-time pastor. Pr. Messer also mentioned that if the congregation decided to sell the excess land and was successful in doing so, he hoped that the congregation would use some of the proceeds in some way to get back to being a full-time congregation with a full-time pastor.
- During the course of the discussion, some members expressed their interest in getting the Budget and Finance Committee going again to assist the congregation as it seeks to address our financial situation. Those interested were directed to see President Chris Brown after the meeting.

### **Selling our Excess Land**

- Pr. Messer turned the meeting over to Larry Elliott, who led the congregation in a discussion over whether or not we want to sell our excess land. He explained that we currently use 1.7 acres, but would be keeping 2.47 acres and selling the excess 4.0 acres, which is an L-shaped piece of land consisting of property behind us (north) and beside us (east). That 4.0 acres was appraised at \$435,000 in the appraisal paid for by the hospital. Larry and Ken Hill met with the hospital and they are no longer interested in purchasing that land. Larry shared that the investment manager who owns land behind us might be interested, but would not discuss things until they had a price. After a little discussion, Gary Miller made a motion to list the property for sale, seconded by Miguel Ortiz. A friendly amendment was offered by Carol Zeile and seconded by Jo Wendt. The friendly amendment was accepted by Gary Miller and the final motion was to pursue selling the land first to other interested parties before listing the property. Motion passed unanimously. Mary Girard made a motion to have our asking price start at \$450,000, seconded by Carol Zeile. Motion passed unanimously.

### **General Comments**

- No general comments.

### **Adjournment & Closing Prayer**

- Motion to adjourn by Gary Miller, seconded by Miguel Ortiz. Pastor closed with prayer and benediction. Adjourned at 1:38pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
**Cassie Tennant, Secretary**

# PEACE NEWS & NOTES

*A Pastor, A Pope, An Assassin*

## Warrior Monk

A Pastor  
Stephen Grant  
Novel

Ray Keating

"Ray Keating has created a fascinating and unique character in Pastor Grant. The way Keating intertwines politics, national security and faith into a compelling thriller is sheer delight."

-Larry Kudlow  
CNBC's "The Kudlow Report"

## Introducing "Peace Book Club"

The idea to start a book club at Peace has been kicked around for some time, but has finally come to fruition, and all are welcomed to join the club. The first book we'll read and discuss is pictured to the left. You can order "Warrior Monk" on amazon.com for around \$17 (or less, if you get one used). If you need help ordering, or if you don't have the means to purchase the book, but want to be a part of the club, see Pr. Messer and he'll arrange to get a copy in your hands. It's a great book and will make for great discussion. That discussion will take place at our first meeting, which will take place on **Tuesday, October 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Elliott's home** (723 N. River Ave. in Alma). This will give everyone ample time to get the book and read it before we meet to discuss it. The group will decide which book to read next that night, and we'll go from there, meeting on a monthly basis to discuss books we've read. If you have any questions, see Pr. Messer. Hope you'll consider joining us!

## FIRST COMMUNION BLESSINGS

During Divine Service on Sunday, August 28, we were blessed to witness the Rite of First Communion Prior to Confirmation, as Myka Luplow, Farrah Blair, and Savannah Blair, received the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament for the first time. This is the second group of youngsters to go through our First Communion Class since we adopted our new policy last July, and these three young ladies did an outstanding job preparing. It was a pure joy to instruct, examine, and absolve them in preparation for Holy Communion, and I could not be more pleased with, or proud of, them. Well done, ladies!

*Heavenly Father, whose Son Jesus Christ loved the young and called them to Himself, we ask You to bless Myka, Farrah, and Savannah. Strengthen them in the faith through the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood so that they may grow spiritually and bring forth the fruits of faith in a life of love toward others to the praise and honor of Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*



WeightWatchers®

LOSE  
FOR  
GOOD®

Weight Watchers has begun its fourth annual Lose For Good campaign. Through the efforts of members nationwide \$1 million will be donated to two organizations to help combat hunger. The members of WW who meet at Peace have been given the opportunity to donate food to our food bank which is distributed to those in need by our SALT committee. We invite members of the congregation to participate as well by donating non-perishable items through October 15. A collection site is set up in the fellowship hall. If you have any questions please see Sharyn Greening.

# PEACE NEWS & NOTES CONT'D



## NEWS

<u>September</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>End</u>	<u>Location</u>
	Monthly Meeting	9/18	5:00 pm	7:00 pm	Fellowship Hall
	Fellowship	Sundays	10:45 am	11:15 am	Senior Class Room

Greetings in Christ,

Welcome back from your summer breaks. I hope you enjoyed the wonderful days that the Lord gave us this summer.

We will begin our monthly Bible study and Fellowship meetings on the 18th. We start with Fellowship from 5-6. This gives everyone some flexibility in getting here. From 6-7 is our Bible study and discussion time.

Keep an eye on the PYG board for more events and schedules.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support of the Youth here at Peace. Your time and words are appreciated and valued.

May the Spirit of the Lord be with you.

Jonathan Penzien



## Adult Choir

Choir practices will begin on Sunday, September 18 at 8:30 am. before the Divine Service. We practice for a half hour each Sunday preparing for support to the congregation and supplementing the liturgy with song.

There is only one requirement—that you like to sing. If you like to sing, we invite you to join us. We try to keep our music as easy-going as possible as we “make a joyful noise to the Lord.”

## SALT NEWS

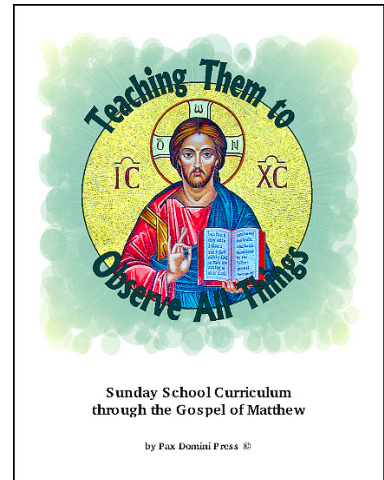
SALT will have a meeting on  
Thursday, September 15 at 6:30 pm

### SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

**SUPPORT OUR TROOPS** is an ongoing outreach for the SALT Committee. If you know of a person in the armed forces who is serving abroad, please contact Carolyn Johnson (email [ckj1969@yahoo.com](mailto:ckj1969@yahoo.com) or telephone 463-3052). Check the SALT bulletin board for more info and announcements!

### CONFIRMATION CLASS MEETING

A short meeting for this year's confirmands and parents will be held after Divine Service on Sunday, September 18 to determine when classes will meet this year.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL RALLY DAY SEPTEMBER 11, 2011

Sunday School begins September 11. We will have a Rally Day potluck after Sunday School. Please bring a dish to pass. Table service and beverages will be provided.

## SECRET PALS

**IT'S TIME TO REVEAL SECRET PALS.** We will meet at Big Boy on Sunday, September 18 for lunch at 1:00 pm. Please pick up a new info sheet to join for next year. You will find them on the Secret Pal table. Any questions, please see Lisa Messer.

## COUPONS FOR TROOPS

Please join us in collecting coupons for our troops. They can use any and all coupons you don't need (even expired ones). There is a manila envelope on the bulletin board titled "Coupons for Troops" in which to place them. Thank you for your help!



# PEACE NEWS & NOTES CONT'D

## CHURCH DIRECTORY

Corrections to August 2011 Peace Directory

Cummins, Jeffery

Moved, left no forwarding address

Gorsline, Virginia

11255 Allen Road, Apt 1111

Southgate, MI 48195-3382

Hill, Ken and Phyllis

Florida email phill43@verizon.net

Please notify the church office of any changes in the directory and they will be published in the newsletter each month. Thank you.

## THANK YOU

*Thank you to all my Brothers and Sisters at Peace Lutheran Church for your prayers, cards, visitation and for attending Gary's funeral. Thank you for the memorials in his memory. A Special Thank You to Pastor Messer who came to the Emergency Room and spent time with Gary's family and myself and had prayer with us. You are all very special. God Bless each of you.*

*Dorothy Trgina*

## SAVE THE DATE:



## Advent Tea

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13**  
**7:00 P.M.**



## PEACE MOVIE NIGHT

**Friday, September 16**

**6:30 pm - Pizza; 7 pm - Movie**

**"Like Dandelion Dust" (Rated PG-13)**

**Join us for a night of fun and fellowship!**

## Ladies Lunch Bunch

*For our third annual visit to Loafers Glory in Blanchard, we will meet at church on Tuesday, September 13 at noon to carpool. Loafers Glory is not open on Mondays.*

*Lunch is reserved for 1:30 pm*  
*in the Wild Flower Tea Room*

*Come visit a village of yesteryear. Explore shop after shop filled with a wonderful collection of collectable and home furnishings. Visit the Sunflower Bakery and Aunties House next door to the Tea Room.*

*All ladies of Peace are welcome and also may invite a guest—someone without a church or someone living alone. Please enter your name on the signup list posted in Fellowship Hall and join us!*



## AUDIO OF DIVINE SERVICES

If you haven't heard by now, we are now recording our Sunday Divine Services. The primary reason for this is to take these recordings to our shut-ins each week, so that they can listen to them and join us from afar. But, we are also posting these recordings on our website so that anyone who wishes can listen to them anytime they want. Special thanks to Larry Elliott for setting this up for us. You can go to our website and click on the link "Worship" in the sidebar to listen. Check it out—pretty cool!

## TABLE TALK

Our Table Talks are informal and informative discussions with Pastor Messer on various topics decided by the group in attendance. Plus, THEY'RE FUN! Our next Table Talk will take place on **Friday, September 30 at 7:00 p.m.** We will gather around the campfire at Pastor Messer's house (weather permitting). Bring your own snacks and beverages if you wish. We hope you'll be able to join us!

# Ladies Guild

## Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies' Guild next meeting will be **Monday, September 12, at 12:30 pm.** Hostess will be Lois Ramsey. All Ladies of the congregation are invited to attend our Guild meetings. If you are a confirmed female member of Peace, you are a member of Guild. We would sincerely encourage you to participate and be an active member of the Guild.

## PLC Women's Prayer Chain

The current list is posted on the Ladies' Guild Bulletin Board. All participants should have a copy. If you wish to be added to the prayer chain as a caller, or if you wish to have yourself or someone else "sent through the chain," please see or call Marlene Miller at 463-3710.

## Altar Flowers

There is a flower calendar for 2011 is posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. We are now working toward ordering altar flower arrangements that coordinate with and enhance the liturgical colors of each Season of the Church year. Depending on the dates, flowers may not always be displayed for a calendar month. Some Seasons of the Church year cross calendar months. If you wish to place flowers on the altar sometime during the year, please put your name on the calendar and contact the church office with any information that you wish to have included in the bulletin. If there is a specific date in the month that commemorates an occasion, please also enter that date. A bouquet costs \$25. We encourage two persons (families) to purchase flowers each month, one for each plant stand. Please make checks payable to Peace Lutheran Church, attach a note marked "Altar Flowers" and place in the Financial Secretary's envelope in the church office. Any questions may be directed to Carol Zeile. Thank you for helping to beautify our chancel.

## PEACE LADIES GUILD COOKBOOK

Cookbooks are now available; price is \$13.00 and can be purchased during fellowship time from any member of the Guild. There are flyers available in the fellowship hall to be used for posting on bulletin boards at grocery stores, offices, and the like. You may use your phone number for contact information or Coaline's name and number. Questions, ask a member of the Guild.

## LADIES GUILD ON THE WEB

Ladies Guild coffee hostesses, Altar Guild assignments and Ladies Guild events appear on the Peace website. See [www.peacealma.org](http://www.peacealma.org) and click Ladies Guild.

## PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES GUILD



### SCHOOL KIT

- 4 - 70 SHEET NOTEBOOKS
- 1 - 30 CENTIMETER RULER
- 1 - PENCIL SHARPENER
- 1 - BLUNT SCISSORS
- 5 - PENCILS
- 5 - BALLPOINT PENS
- 1 BOX CRAYONS 16 -24 COUNT
- 1 - 2 ½ " ERASER

ONE STURDY DRAWSTRING BACKPACK-STYLE  
CLOTH BAG APPROXIMATELY 14 X 17  
WITH SHOULDER STRAPS

**COLLECTION DATE: JULY 1 – SEPTEMBER 30**

## LADIES GUILD SELLS CUTLERY

Rada cutlery is on display the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall during the coffee hour. We have seven different items in stock: Paring Knife, Large Slicer Knife, Tomato Slicer, Serrated Steak Knife, Spatula, Pie Server, and Veggie Peeler. A product catalogue is available for viewing and orders may also be placed through the catalog.



### September

Coaline Luplow



- 4 Jennie Harmon
- 11 Janice Sager
- 18 Peace Youth Group
- 25 Carolyn Johnson

### October

#### *Altar Care*

Lois Ramsey

#### *Coffee Hostesses*

- 2 Jenny Baughman
- 9 S.Greening/M.Brown
- 16 Lisa Messer
- 23 M.Isaksson/H.Meyers
- 30 Tina Schafer

### November

Megan Brown

- 6 Dorothy Trgina
- 13 Lois Ramsey
- 20 Coaline Luplow
- 27 Gretchen Harrison

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

## Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

- Sunday School (resumes September 11) and Adult Bible Class (currently studying *Philippians*) is offered on **Sundays at 11 am.**

## Together in the Word

- We meet every **Thursday at 10:00 am.** We are currently studying *1 Samuel*. All are welcome to join us!

## Christian History 101

- Weekly Wednesday classes meet at 6 pm, followed by Divine Service at 7 pm (during Advent and Lent, class is at 5 pm).

## First Communion and Confirmation Classes

- First Communion Classes take place as arranged; Confirmation Classes to begin soon (see note at bottom of page 11).

### TALK RADIO FOR THE THINKING CHRISTIAN!

Listen to what you want, when you want, at:

[www.issuesetc.org](http://www.issuesetc.org)



### PASTOR MESSER'S BLOG:

[www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com](http://www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com)

*Check in from time to time  
to see what's on his mind.*



## SEPTEMBER

### Happy Birthday to:

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 3 Marion Greening  | 12 Joshua Schafer |
| 3 John Isaksson    | 12 Abby Brown     |
| 3 Farrah Blair     | 14 Kim Penzien    |
| 5 Lisa Messer      | 20 Brenda Stroven |
| 11 Maxine Isaksson | 23 David Zeile    |

### Happy Anniversary to:

- 4 Bob and Jo Wendt
- 8 Vern and Mary Jakolat
- 12 Brian and Brenda Stroven
- 19 James and Janice Sager

*If we ever miss your birthday or anniversary, please  
let us know so that we can update our records.*

### "The Ears of a Disciple"

By Rev. Rick Stuchwisch

Pastor, Emmaus Lutheran in South Bend, IN

It is not faith but self-righteousness that would ever say, "I've got things sorted out with God for myself, so I have no need to consider my neighbor or anything I might do for him."

Nor does faith ever ask, "Should I love my neighbor?" or "Do I have to love my neighbor?"

Faith, rather, confident before God and secure in His love, is free and unafraid to love the neighbor, and so gladly listens for that sure and steady Word of God which says, "This is what life and love shall look like for you." Precisely because He is our Savior, and we are His beloved.

In the ears of a disciple, to the heart of faith, the Law of Love looks just like Jesus loving all of us, who listened with the ears of a disciple, Himself, to the good and acceptable will of His Father for our salvation, and so humbled Himself in obedience, even unto death upon the Cross.

Which is why faith and love end up looking the same in Christ Jesus.

### PAROCHIAL REPORT

(as of 8/28/11)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 136; Confirmed - 118

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 0

Financial Report as of 8/28/2011

YTD Budgeted.....\$ 73,745.00












YTD Receipts.....\$ 62,148.55

Difference.....\$ -11,596.45

Rev. Thomas C. Messer  
 (989) 463-3093—Home  
 (989) 388-2037—Cell  
 pastor@peacealma.org  
 pastormesser@gmail.com  
 www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

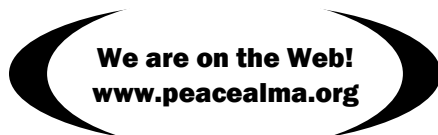
Peace Lutheran Church  
 325 E. Warwick Drive  
 Alma, MI 48801  
 (989) 463-5754  
 contact@peacealma.org  
 www.peacealma.org

# September 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>4 11th Sunday after Trinity</b>  <b>9:30 - Divine Service</b> 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - Bible Study	<b>5</b>  Church Office Closed	<b>6</b> <i>Pastor Messer at Winkler</i> 7 pm - Church Council	<b>7</b> 6 pm - Christian History <b>7 pm - Divine Service</b> <i>Zacharias and Elizabeth (Obs.)</i> 	<b>8</b> 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers 7:30 pm - Budget/Finance	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11 12th Sunday after Trinity</b>  <b>9:30 - Divine Service</b> 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC-SS 12:00 SS Rally Day	<b>12</b> 12:00 pm - Ladies Guild	<b>13</b> 1:30 pm - Lunch Bunch 4:30-7:00 - Organization Fair at Alma College	<b>14</b> 6 pm - Christian History <b>7 pm - Divine Service</b> <i>Holy Cross Day</i> 	<b>15</b> 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers 6:30 pm - SALT	<b>16</b> Peace Movie Night "Like Dandelion Dust" 6:30 - Pizza 7:00 - Movie	<b>17</b>
<b>18 13th Sunday after Trinity</b>  8:30 - Choir <b>9:30 - Divine Service</b> 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC-SS 1:00 - Secret Pal Lunch 5-7 pm - PYG	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 6 pm - Christian History <b>7 pm - Divine Service</b> <i>St. Matthew, Apostle</i> 	<b>22</b> 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25 14th Sunday after Trinity</b>  8:30 - Choir <b>9:30 - Divine Service</b> 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC-SS	<b>26</b> <div>Newsletter articles due</div>	<b>27</b> 7 pm - Stewardship	<b>28</b> 6 pm - Christian History <b>7 pm - Divine Service</b> <i>Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Martyrs (Obs.)</i> 	<b>29</b> 10 am - Together in Word 5 pm - Weight Watchers	<b>30</b>	<b>October 1</b>
<b>2 St. Michael and All Angels</b>  8:30 - Choir <b>9:30 - Divine Service</b> 10:45 - Fellowship 11:00 - BC-SS	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 6 pm - Christian History <b>7 pm - Divine Service</b> <i>Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (Obs.)</i> 	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

Peace Lutheran Church  
325 E. Warwick Dr.  
Alma, MI 48801

Church: 989-463-5754  
E-mail: [contact@peacealma.org](mailto:contact@peacealma.org)  
Mary's Home: 989-463-3067  
Pastor's Home: 989-463-3093  
Pastor's Cell: 989-388-2037



*The mission of Peace Lutheran Church is to welcome all people into the fellowship of God's love by proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and to nurture our members with God's Holy Word and Sacraments.*

## *Serving in September*

September	ELDERS	ACOLYTES	USHERS	GREETERS
4 - 9:30 am (Trinity 11)	Terry Luplow	Samantha Messer Sierra Luplow	Vern Jakolat Phillip Schafer	Leroy & Maxine I.
11 - 9:30 am (Trinity 12)	Miguel Ortiz	Natalie Penzien Myka Luplow	Gary Miller John Lemmermann	Lisa Messer and Family
18 - 9:30 am (Trinity 13)	David Zeile	Savannah Blair Paige Harwager	Vern Jakolat Gabriel Blair	Helen Meyers
25 - 9:30 am (Trinity 14)	Larry Elliott	Aaron Messer Morgan Johnson	Terry Luplow Chris Brown	Miguel and Sue Ortiz
October				
2 - 9:30 am (St. Michael & All Angels)	Terry Luplow	Farrah Blair Samantha Messer	Tyrell Harwager Jonathan Penzien	Jim and Janice Sager

*"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men" (Eph. 6:7)*