



“St. Paul’s

“Epistles”

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The following article is worth a read. It was written by LCMS president Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison. It was featured in the official paper of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod: *Reporter*.

- Pastor Suggitt

Respect for Marriage Act: Misnamed law threatens religious liberty

By Matthew C. Harrison

As we in the church have been keeping busy with our myriad daily vocations and tasks — contemplating the Advent of Christ as a babe at Bethlehem, His continued coming to us in Word and Sacrament, and His return in glory — the U.S. Senate has passed, and the U.S. president has signed, the misnamed Respect for Marriage Act. This bill’s genesis is related to the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision this June on *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade* and caused incalculable alarm.

Some suggest that if the Court could find reason to overturn a half century of legal precedent in *Roe*, a recent ruling like *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which codified same-sex marriage on alleged constitutional grounds, could likewise face judicial extinction at the hands of the more conservative court. The bill was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives without debate. It faced a greater potential challenge in the Senate, but to overcome the hurdles, an amendment was proposed and passed to protect the religious freedoms of those who dissent (like The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod [LCMS] and her agencies, schools and institutions). On Dec. 13, President Biden signed the bill into law.

Critics — and I’m one of them — view the alleged protections as no more than window dressing and believe the bill will make our future more difficult, requiring more legal action for those claiming First Amendment rights (i.e., the free exercise of religion). Amendments that would have offered significant protections failed in the Senate.

For the church, the chief issue at stake is not the troubling rapid drift of America away from Christianity or morality. The chief issue involves government and society on all levels defining what is moral or not for the church, and particularly for churchly institutions that interface with government. The Respect for Marriage Act will invite challenges to the nonprofit status of our faithful agencies of mercy and provide impetus for continued challenges to our schools and universities. This may even affect our congregations, since all of them have nonprofit status. This trend is already a concern for our military chaplains, whose First Amendment guarantees are being squeezed to the conscience-breaking point.

The Gospel is at stake. Christ preached, “The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The apostles preached the same thing. Preaching repentance is integral to preaching the Gospel. We will not yield to any man, government, legal authority or human threat. We must preach the Law and call out sin for the sake of repentance. We must proclaim the Law and repentance in order to preach the blessed Gospel of free forgiveness in Christ. The Law of God condemns us all, including those tempted to homosexual sin. And the Gospel is for all.

This is not about “those” people getting “holy” like us! What Phariseeism we are often guilty of! Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). I will preach as directed by the Word of God. The Gospel is at stake. Compassion and eternal life for all is in the balance. “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

We live in the end times. It is an era of mass delusion and deception. Transgenderism has increased a thousandfold in recent years and is largely a social media-driven phenomenon, as I've pointed out previously. The depression and suicide rates of these young people are astronomical. Hermann Sasse wrote about lies in Germany —precisely in the church — in 1936:

The lie is the death of man, his temporal and his eternal death. The lie kills nations. Through their lies, the most powerful empires of the world were laid waste. History knows of no more unsettling spectacle than the judgment which comes to pass when the men of an advanced culture have rejected the truth, and are now swallowed up in a sea of lies. As was the case with fading pagan antiquity, where this happened, religion and law, poetry and philosophy, life in marriage and family, in the state and society, in short, one sphere of life after another, fell sacrifice to the power and curse of the lie.

Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man, even when dying, lies to himself and others, the terrible dissolution of his culture is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the like of which has never been experienced. If, according to the irrefutable testimony of history, this is the judgment of God on the lie, should God then not also punish the lie in His church? Truly He who is the Judge of all the world will do this! For the power of the lie extends even into the church. Since the days of the apostles there has been lying in the church as in the rest of the world. For people in the church too are and remain poor sinners until their death. (Union and Confession," The Lonely Way [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002], 1:265)

The world remains the world. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He also said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mark 12:17). Christians are to be good citizens. Our participation in our communities as decent neighbors cannot be undervalued. But in many cases, we will have to make difficult choices, especially for our children when public schools intend to indoctrinate them to believe that Christians, even their own parents and grandparents, are bigots.

What do we do?

- We shall pray and believe, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Let's hold to the sacred Scriptures no matter what. Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'" (Luke 4:4). Jesus also said, "From the beginning [God] made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4).
- We shall realize we live in a post-Constantinian period. The Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in A.D. 325. He brought great strength and blessings to both the church and the state. On the downside, in the Western world, the church and the state were radically mixed and confused. While the state was viewed throughout much of Western history as a "protector" of the church, most often government "protection" meant the demise of the Gospel. We Christians know this reality from the New Testament. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
- We shall be people of compassion, after the model of our Savior, Jesus. We shall proclaim Christ in Law and Gospel — come what may — for the salvation of many. And we shall be compassionate to all. Government policies like the Respect for Marriage Act cause unending harm to marriage and family life and encourage lives at odds with both reason and the New Testament. Individuals are confused and hurt terribly. Christ saw the revulsion of the sinners, strangers, lost, hurt, lepers, sick and others, and He was drawn to them. We are witnesses of true love in the name of Jesus.
- We shall remember that we are sinners. Our minds and hearts are every bit as filled with sin and filth as any outward life we encounter. Our message is not, "Get holy and join us holy people!" Our message is, "Stop acting as though you were sinless. As Luther said, 'Christ dwells only in sinners. 'Join us sinners. Repent and believe the Gospel.



CHURCH **ELDERS**

Have you thought of your New Year's Resolution yet? How about trying not to rationalize? What's that you say? Well, here are a few examples.

It's not my fault.	That's good enough.
The dog ate my homework.	They didn't need that anyway.
Somebody else made the mistake.	What do you want from me?
I can't be wrong.	That's all I get?
If somebody would have warned me first....	I don't need help.
Stuff happens!	Quit picking on me.
Ex c u-u-u se me!	I wish you wouldn't bug me.
Sorry I'm late, I got held up.	I don't have time.
It was only a little white lie.	I can't.
I can't be perfect all the time.	I'm too tired.
Can you just wait until tomorrow?	I won't.
I'll get to it soon.	It's OK. Someone else will do it.
Just call in sick.	It's OK, everybody's doing it nowdays.
Who would know?	I didn't say that.
What's it gonna hurt?	Who cares anyway?
You've got to be kidding.	Can you just forget about it?
Don't tell, Okay?	It's just the way things are today.
It wasn't really much.	It's OK just this once.
I'll pay you tomorrow.	
It's only a little dent.	
I would have gotten away with it if someone hadn't told.	Happy New Year!
I didn't need that anyway.	
I didn't do, see, hear, know it.	
Why didn't you tell me first?	The Elder Elder

Sunday SCHOOL



The Children's Christmas Program was short and sweet. The kids did a wonderful job telling the story of Christ's Birth. We had a very large crowd come to hear the children tell the story, sing songs, and play bells. Thank you to everyone who came to the program - the church was almost full of family and friends! The pizza party was also well-attended; we served about 80+ people.

In January we will get back to our regular class schedule, beginning on January 8th – church 8:30 a.m., coffee hour/snack time after service, Sunday School until 10:45 a.m. The snack schedule is posted on the table near the bulletin board in the North narthex. Please sign up to bring coffee hour snacks (5-6 dozen should be enough for kids and adults to enjoy each week).

Planning a Family Game Night on Saturday, January 28th from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. The whole family is invited to come and play board games, enjoy a taco/nacho bar, and spend some time with your church family. Bring the board games/card games of your choice. Please sign up to let me know how many will attend, so I can plan the food accordingly.

The kids will be playing bells in church on January 15th and again on January 29th. And we will be singing *Jesus Loves Me* on February 12th to coincide with our Sunday School Jesus Loves Me Party. All congregation members are invited to stay for crafts and make Valentine ice cream cookie sandwiches with us!

Pork Dinner is tentatively scheduled for February 26th. There will be no class on the day of the Pork Dinner, but we will need lots of volunteers (so check the sign-up sheet and see where your family can help).

Susan Schember, Sunday School Superintendent
bssandsks@yahoo.com 586 246-4567



The youth group helped spread the joy at Christmas by providing gifts for families from: North Huron Schools, Bad Axe Schools, Lakers Schools, and USA Schools. Thanks to your generosity at Advent Supper, we were also able to give gas cards and a TAT gift certificate to parents to help with transportation costs.

Youth group families are invited to the Family Game Night on Saturday, January 28th 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Please sign up.

Youth Group families will be needed for Pork Dinner. We will need volunteers (kids and parents) to help prepare, serve, get take-outs, and clean up. Please check the sign-up sheet to see where you and your family can help out. Tentative date is Sunday, Feb 26th.

All Youth Group kids in 7th grade and older are invited to attend a one-day Youth Gathering at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cass City on Saturday, March 4th. Youth from the Thumb Lutheran Circuits will be invited to enjoy "Called to be Lutheran – What does this mean?"

Lunch, dinner, snacks, guest speaker, breakout sessions, and activities will be included. The event will end with all youth and their families invited to Evening Vespers. More information will be available next month but mark your calendars to attend. Parents are also invited to volunteer that day if they can fit it in!

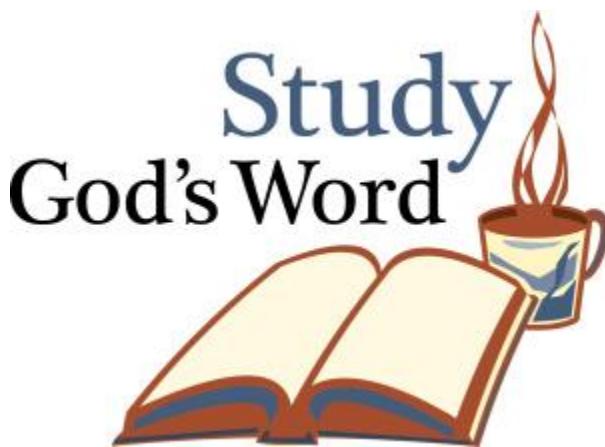
I've talked to Chuck McGathy from *Collide* at Christ the King. They may be planning a sledding day at Sherwood on the Hill sometime soon (when the weather is right). If so, we will be invited to come too. It may be a last-minute plan, so watch your REMIND for anything that pops up!

Susan Schember, Youth Leader
bssandsks@yahoo.com 586 246-4567





- To Faye Erre for all the beautiful music she plays each week, and especially during the holidays! Thanks for working with the adult choir and the kid's choir. God has truly blessed us with your gifts!
- To the Sunday school kids for a great Christmas message and for your wonderful voices and beautiful music in our church services.
- To Sandy Salcido for all the extra hours you spend typing, printing, folding, and mailing during the holiday season.
- To Henry and Kaitlyn and Ava for stepping in to fill the absent shoes of those kids who unfortunately got sick for the Christmas program.
- To the Christmas Decorating Committee for making the church look so beautiful and festive during Advent and Christmas



Come and grow in faith as we read and digest God's Word on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. beginning on January 11, 2023.

PRIVATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

From the Small Catechism: Confession

What is confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

Private, or individual, confession and absolution is available by appointment with Pastor Suggitt. You may call him at 989.551.3976 to set up a time.



Fern Dubs 2423 Smith Road Bay Port, MI 48720 (989) 453-2959	Don Fibranz Satchell's Christian Foster Care Home 2662 E. Caro Road Caro, MI 48723
Peggy Kelly 6282 Pine Street Cass City, MI 48726 (989) 872-5086	Beverly Liedke 160 Country Bay Drive Room 308 Pigeon, MI 48755 (989) 453-3637
Bonnie Nowaczyk 7305 Main Street Owendale, MI 48754 (989) 553-4286 or (989) 678-4286	

Don't Miss the **DEADLINE!**

The deadline for the February issue of St. Paul's "Epistles" is **Sunday, January 22nd**.

Email your article to salcido.sandy8@gmail.com or place in the newsletter mailbox.

Please help us keep the congregation informed as to what's going on in your organization. And don't forget those "Hats Off" items. Thanks!

Life Quote

The world needs your voice to declare Jesus' words of eternal life. The world needs your voice to declare God's value of life in all of its stages. The world needs your voice to declare God's convictions born of His Word. The world needs your voice to declare that God's word of forgiveness purchased with the blood of Jesus extends to all of us sinners, including those who have chosen abortion. The world needs your voice!"

Lutherans For Life

A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life
lutheransforlife.org

Thank You

From Linda Roe:

I wish to thank everyone who kept me in their prayers, sent cards, visits, phone calls, Pastor's visits and mainly, my Lord Jesus for taking care of me and healing me. Thanks to everyone, Linda.

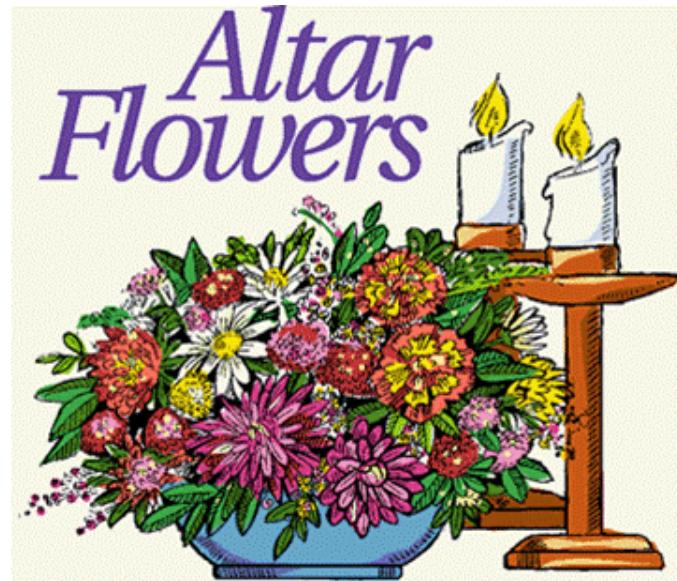
From Sandy Salcido:

It continues to be a pleasure to serve St. Paul. Thank you for the Christmas gift. It is deeply appreciated.



Has your family ever discussed being greeters at church? The job consists of arriving early at church two or three times a YEAR, opening the door for those who need assistance, and greeting people with a smile. That's all there is to it!

If your family is interested, please contact Faye. She will be more than glad to add you to the list and even give you the Sundays that work for your family!



A new flower calendar has been placed in the church office. If you would like to supply flowers for the altar on any given Sunday just sign your name on the calendar. You can purchase them yourself or contact the Altar Flower Committee to take care of it for you.



IN HIS SERVICE

January 1 – Elaine Renn

1 – Josh Sprague

3 – Terrance Dubs

4 – Titus Sprague

6 – Donald Fibranz

8 – Zachory Gilbert

10 – Barbara Adams

10 – Richard Metzger

13 – Maxwell Albrecht

13 – Robert Haag

14 – Lyle Osantoski

15 – Miranda Becker

17 – Ron Wissner

18 – Connor Becker

19 – Marge Weisenbach

20 – Jan Stoeckle

21 – Derrick Holland

22 – Eugene Kady

22 – Patti Reinhardt

23 – Judy Wright

23 – Austin Bruce

26 – Silver Sprague

26 – Meleah Timmons

28 – Linda Roe

31 – Aaron Gaeth

31 – Jim Roe

31 – Wayne Tabar

January Elders

Jan. 1 – Marc Reinhardt & Josh Sprague

Jan. 8 – Joe Salcido & Ken Haley

Jan. 15 – Ron Tabar & Robert Haag

Jan 22 – Marc Reinhardt & Josh Sprague

Jan. 29 – Joe Salcido & Ken Haley

Tithe Counters

Jan. 29 – Jyl Shope & Chris Gettel

Liz Reehl & Kim Krohn

January Altar Guild & Altar Flowers

Wanda Dubs

Peggy Parrish

January Snow Patrol

1 - 8:30 a.m. Timmons

8 - 8:30 a.m. Stoeckle

15 - 8:30 a.m. Fluegge

22 - 8:30 a.m. **Volunteer**

29 - 8:30 a.m. Timmons



At the present time we are short one trustee. Therefore, we would appreciate it if some of our members would volunteer to be in charge of snow removal on the sidewalks and steps around the church occasionally. If you are willing to volunteer for this chore, please sign up on the Snow Removal calendar at the south entrance.



Your help would be appreciated.

Happy Anniversary

18 – Chuck & Kim Dorland

25 – Richard & Char Metzger

26 – Robert & Amy Haag

30 – Richard & Lucille Welchner

January

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1 8:30 AM Service No Catechism	2	3 6:15 PM Elders 7:00 PM Council	4 No Bible Study	5	6	7
8 8:30 AM Service 9:30 AM SS /Coffee Hour 1:30 PM Catechism	9	10	11 6:30 PM Bible Study	12	13	14
15 8:30 AM Service 9:30 AM SS /Coffee Hour 1:30 PM Catechism	16	17	18 6:30 PM Bible Study	19	20	21
22 8:30 AM Service 9:30 AM SS /Coffee Hour Voter's Mtg. 1:30 PM Catechism	23	24	25 6:30 PM Bible Study	26	27	28 5:00 – 8:00 PM Sunday School Family Game Night
29 8:30 AM Service 9:30 AM SS /Coffee Hour 1:30 PM Catechism	30	31				

2023

In case of inclement weather, please tune in to WLEW 1340 AM to see if services are cancelled.

St. Paul's "Epistles"



St. Paul Evangelical
Lutheran Church

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Pigeon, MI 48755

