



First Things – May 2025

Greetings dear sheep of Christ's fold,

This is a continuation of the series where I share with you some of the things that God gives you through a pastor or simply by being a member of a Christian congregation.

As Jesus prepared to ascend into heaven, some of the final words he left with his disciples, the Christian Church, were "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) With these words, Christ gives us the blessing of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Just as a reminder so that we understand all the terms being used, a "sacrament" is a sacred act that 1) Is established by God 2) uses earthly elements (such as water) together with God's Word and 3) offers, gives, and seals to us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Baptism is considered a sacrament because it fits all three criteria. The other sacrament that we would recognize is the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is a word which literally means "to wash with water." And so Jesus is commanding us to engage in a washing with water through the Word (Ephesians 5:26). This act offers to us tremendous blessings. Jesus says in Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." With these incredible words of our Savior, we learn that "baptism saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). You who are baptized have the assurance of knowing that you are safe from damnation for your sins, the life that Jesus has is your own, the devil has no power or right to accuse you. We rightly sing stanza 3 of God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It:

Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ!

Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed.

Now that to the font I've traveled, all your might has come unraveled,

And, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!

In this song, we get to see the beauty of baptism, that it is not simply a one-time act but it changes our status before God. We don't say "I was baptized" but "I am baptized." And so from your church and pastor, you can expect that you will continue to be formed as a baptized child of God. This is what Luther is getting at in the Small Catechism when he teaches us to ask, "What does baptizing with water mean?" and answers:

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

You have a new identity thanks to your baptism – child of God. With this identity, you can have no fear or shame in shoving the head of that ugly old sinful nature under the waters and killing it until it's dead. That sinful nature, that old Adam, has nothing to do with who you are now. Each morning you can awake and come before your heavenly Father and confidently ask of him as a dear child asks his dear father. For you are baptized and none of your sins from the day before are held against you. This is a daily washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. You get to have this for your entire life.

With this status then, you are able to approach each day from a different perspective. You get to step out of your bed as a child of God, his heir, and a citizen of his heavenly kingdom. Therefore, you are able to approach your tasks each day with this new status in mind. How would you approach each day if you knew without doubting that you were going to live forever? That you were richer than the richest person in the world and that you get to enter into that inheritance whenever your Lord should decide to call you home? This is the perspective that baptism affords you. You get to approach each day making it your dearest ambition and goal to use what time you've been given to serve your Lord by faithfully carrying out the tasks he has called you to; whether that be "well fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12), because you are the baptized.

Pastor Pilarski

Our Summer in Scripture



In our recent Voters' meeting the discussion of Bible translations was brought to floor. Currently our congregation provides the New International Version 1984 translation in the pews. This translation is no longer being printed and no longer being provided digitally. This change has created the opportunity to select a new translation that we can use in worship and in print. The translations for review are the New International Version (NIV 2011), the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

To help provide insight regarding the changes between translations we will be comparing a different translation with the NIV 1984 translation each month.

May: NIV 2011 **June:** EHV **July:** ESV **August:** all three translations side by side

What will this look like? You will find the translations printed for you in your Worship Folder for each service. Our hope is that over the course of each month you will take a moment to see some of the subtle, and potentially not-so-subtle, differences between the translations and familiarize yourself with them. Pastor Pilarski will be providing additional information and insight regarding these translations over the next few months.

Basement Floor Project

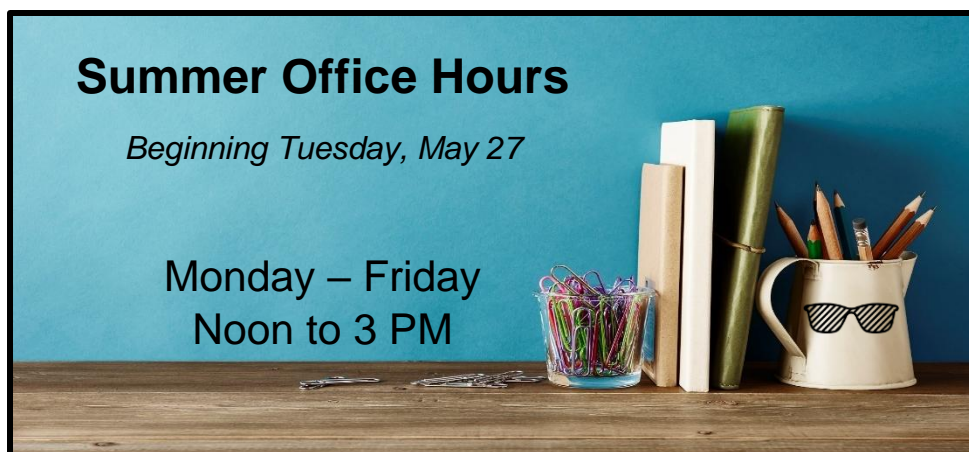
Thank you for the donated funds, and efforts, to help cover the costs of the basement floor renovation. With the addition of finishing the kitchen floor there were additional costs than originally projected. Our remaining balance is: \$3,894 (as of March 31)

Fellowship Opportunities and Events

- Sunday, May 4** LHS Spring Spotlight- This concert will feature music from the Concert Choir, Cantate Choir, Handbells, Sound Foundation, Concert Band, Jazz Band, Lancer Band and Sabre Band. WSMA participants and letter winners will also be recognized at the concert.
- Friday, May 9** LHS Knight Review- This concert features a variety of pieces performed by members of the Sound Foundation choir. These students have a great time sharing their musical talents using a variety of musical instruments and styles.
- Sunday, May 11**
-
- Wed, May 14** Conference of Delegates Meeting- The Conference of Delegates is the governing body of Luther High School and conducts four regular meetings annually. Meeting at 7:30 PM.
- Sunday, May 18** Examination & Confirmation Sunday- This Sunday we will observe the examination Claire Christensen, Natalie Hanson, and Josiah Schroeder. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide, strengthen, and inspire them as they grow in their faith.
- Saturday, May 24** Luther High School Graduation Service- Located in the ACE Gymnasium at Luther High School at 10:00 AM. Our very own First Member, Payton Holub, is graduating.

Committee Members Needed

In our most recent Voters' Meeting two committees were created to assist with ongoing studies needed regarding the update to our current church constitution, and worship hymnal use. Please consider assisting with the Church Constitution and Bylaws Review committee or the Worship Review: use of the Blue and Red Hymnals committee. If you would like to be an integral part of either of these committees, please let Diana know in the office by email (churchoffice@keepchristfirst.com) or phone call (church office: 507-895-4775). Thank you!



March

Summary of Financial Information 2025

Financial Summary				
	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference	Comments
Net Income (Loss) Church	(\$2,677)	\$0	(\$2,677)	
Net Income (Loss) ELC	\$22,098	\$8,880	\$13,218	
Total	\$19,421	\$8,880	\$10,541	
Grants (net)	(\$5,784)	(\$3,964)	(\$1,820)	
Without Grants	\$13,637	\$4,916	\$8,721	

Total Deficit of ELC	
2018	(\$17,051)
2019	(\$23,087)
2020	(\$2,544)
2021	\$39,832
2022	(\$10,484)
2023	(\$8,202)
2024	\$10,716
2025	\$22,098
	<u>\$11,278</u>

Giving Summary				
	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference	Comments
Offerings	\$60,978	\$63,322	(\$2,344)	96.3%
Debt Reduction	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total	\$60,978	\$63,322	(\$2,344)	

Assets				
	2024 December	2025 March	Change	Comments
Checking Account	\$61,664	\$71,652	\$9,988	
Money Market	\$51,540	\$52,097	\$557	
Total	\$113,204	\$123,749	\$10,545	Net increase in cash balance

Liabilities & Equity				
	2024 December	2025 March	Change	Comments
Dedicated Funds Total	\$87,041	\$78,384	(\$8,656)	
Other Liabilities	\$1,830	\$1,610	(\$219)	
Assets less Liabilities	\$24,334	\$43,754	\$19,421	Net increase in equity
Mortgage Balance	\$265,674		Interest Rate	6.34%
Balloon Payment Due	11/1/2027		Monthly Payment	\$2,587.01

Basement Floor Project	
Total Cost	\$15,376
Donations to Date	\$12,532
Amount Needed	<u>\$2,844</u>
As of April 30	

Required Offerings	
April Offerings Needed	17,028
April Offerings Received	18,176
May Offerings Needed	20,680