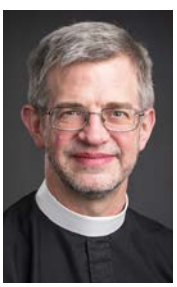
DISTRICT NEWS

INDIANA

It takes a church to raise a village

Getty Images



Rev. Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch
District President

As my wife and I were blessed to spend several weeks in Germany in December, celebrating our 40th anniversary and visiting our son in Munich, we were certainly impressed with the numerous beautiful and breathtaking city churches. Many are masterworks of architecture, engineering and artistry, the likes of which are simply not undertaken anymore in this day and age.

From what we have gathered, each new ruler sought to outdo his predecessors with the construction of an impressive new church, resulting in magnificent structures within blocks of each other. One can question the motives, but the greater sadness is found in the minimal number of parishioners participating in the actual life of the church — a consequence of which is the church buildings are now as much or more tourist attractions than they are houses of faith, prayer and worship for the few remaining congregants in each case.

More striking to me than the towering churches of the cities were the churches that we noticed in each of the little villages that we passed throughout the country as we made our way from one destination to another. Each cluster of houses and buildings, no matter how small, had at least one church or chapel at the center, standing tall (but not too tall!) over the residents and workers in that place.

We had no opportunity to enter most of those little village churches that we saw along the way, and I have no way of knowing how lively or active any of those parishes might be. I also recognize that, even in their heyday, many if not most of those churches were engaged in heterodox theology and practice; and that I say not to be harsh or judgmental. It is simply as an acknowledgment that orthodoxy actually does matter a great deal and makes a great difference because it is the confession and teaching of the Word of God. We should never suppose that our insistence on right doctrine and doxology (orthodoxy) is irrelevant, nitpicky or picayune, but realize that it is for the honor and glory of God and the faith and life of His people, because it is the expression of His divine truth in the life of His church on earth.

All that being said, and notwithstanding the errors of the past or the tragic decline in church attendance, I was still struck by the significance of all those churches, with at least one in each of those little villages. They stand as a testimony to something truer than even their original builders or parishioners may have been consciously aware of. Mortal life in this fallen and perishing world is beset with all

See **MESSAGE**, page 8

Congratulations!

The Lutheran Schools Partnership proudly congratulates this year's recipients of the **John Weber Memorial Teacher Support Fund**

Mallory Behny

Mallory Behny, a second-grade teacher at St.John–Emmanuel Lutheran School, Monroeville, and graduate of Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW), chose Lutheran education as a career to share God's love with the next generation. Her goal is for students to leave her classroom with a strong faith foundation that continues to grow throughout their lives.

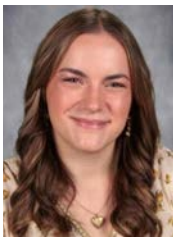
Mallory's own faith journey was shaped by her parents enrolling her in Lutheran schools; her grandfather deeply influencing her spiritual life; and her aunt, a Lutheran school teacher, mentoring her through college. Mallory says her greatest joy in ministry is witnessing students show God's love to one another. Receiving this award is, in her words, "a wonderful honor."

Hollie Johnson

Hollie Johnson, a sixth-grade teacher at St. Peter's Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, and graduate of Concordia University, Ann Arbor, always felt called to teach in a Lutheran school. Encouraged by her own middle and high school teachers, Hollie hopes to have the same positive impact on her students.

She loves teaching religion and weaving faith into every subject — and she finds joy in the fun and energy of working with children.

"There is so much childlike joy to be had when working with children," Hollie says. Grateful for the support of the John Weber Memorial Teacher Support Fund, she adds, "It means a great deal to have the support of the church in so many ways, including financial assistance."



Madeline Goodwin

Madeline Goodwin, a preschool teacher at Emmanuel–St. Michael Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, graduated from CUW in 2025 with a degree in early childhood and elementary education, and a minor in theology. Madeline became a Lutheran educator to share Christ's love and joy with her students and their families.

Inspired by many Lutheran teachers throughout her education — including professors and pastors at CUW — she strives to serve God's children above all else. Her favorite moments are when students boldly lead prayers and demonstrate growing faith.

"I would not be able to do any of the work Christ has called me to do without the influences and gifts of the saints who have gone before me," Madeline says. "I am honored to be part of the legacy of Lutheran educators who have served our community so well."

The Lutheran Schools Partnership introduced the John Weber Memorial Teacher Support Fund in 2022 to encourage new teachers to pursue their careers in the Northeast Indiana-area. The fund is intended to help these church workers with debt reduction, relocation costs and secure housing.

Recipients are recent graduates or candidates in their final year of a teacher training program from a Concordia University System school who will be accepting a call to a Northeast Indiana Lutheran school.

The Lutheran Schools Partnership *(TSLP) is a resource supporting the missions and goals of Northeast Indiana-area Lutheran schools and early childhood programs, bringing them together under a common purpose and connecting them with the community at large.*

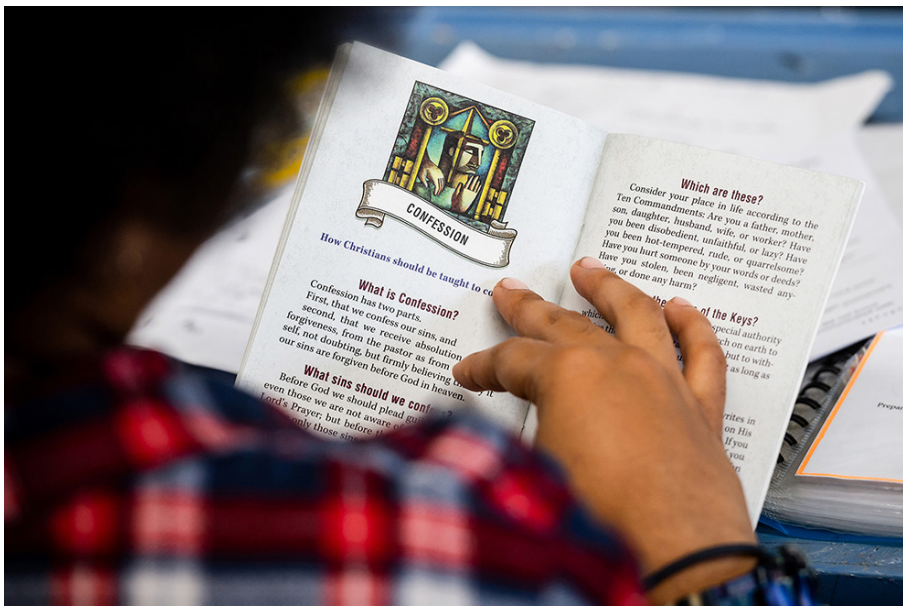
TLSP works to ensure the tradition of a Lutheran education continues to inspire students and families for many generations to come. Learn more about TLSP at **thelutheranschools.org**.

Special education survey request

The Lutheran Schools Partnership has launched an exploratory committee to better understand how our schools can serve students with special education needs.

The first step is to learn more about the needs within our community.

If you are a parent or legal guardian of a child with special education needs, or an educator or church leader, TLSP would greatly value your input. Please take a few moments to complete their anonymous survey online at **shorturl.at/jNmFm**.



Anchored in Christ

Nathan Wingfield
District Executive for Christian Education

In a world constantly attacking Christian freedom and truth, the question of identity has become central for many young people. For students in our Lutheran schools, this identity must not be left to chance or fleeting cultural trends; it must be intentionally and lovingly shaped by the steadfast truth of God's Word. In addition, we should use the texts of the Lutheran Confessions and, most accessibly, the Small Catechism, to teach this identity clearly, simply and fully.

The Small Catechism distills the core of the Christian faith into six chief parts: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Through its daily study, students internalize the central truth of Scripture: that we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

This catechetical instruction shapes identity in two critical ways:

1. Clear teaching on Sin and Grace
The Ten Commandments reveal to the student their sinfulness, their inability to perfectly love God and neighbor. This is the mirror. But the Creed and the Sacraments immediately follow with the Gospel message, assuring them that their identity is not defined by their failures, but by the perfect life, atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They learn they are *Simul Justus et Peccator* (at the same time saint and sinner), unconditionally loved and forgiven.

2. Vocation and Service
Through the explanations of the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, students learn about "vocation," the calling to serve God in their specific stations He has given. Their identity is thus framed not by worldly success, but by humble, Christ-like service to those around them.

The Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession, provide the theological framework for these teachings, ensuring that the students' faith is not merely sentimental, but grounded in the historical, doctrinal truth that the early fathers confessed to be a correct exposition of Scripture. In a Lutheran school, identity is forged not in self-discovery, but in the joyful, biblical discovery of who they are in Christ: a forgiven, baptized child of God.

Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Scott Schumacher, executive director of the Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) of Indiana, is pictured with other LCMS church and school leaders who gathered in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 17, 2025, to discuss new tax credits that could positively impact funding for Lutheran schools. The credits were created by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in July 2025, and will potentially give more families opportunities to enroll their children in Lutheran schools. Read more at **reporter.lcms.org/2026/leaders-discuss-tax-credit-potential**.

Learn more about the Lutheran SGO of Indiana at **lutheransgo.org**.

Rev. Loren Cooper was installed as pastor of Trinity, Ellettsville, on Dec. 14. We extend blessings to Pastor Cooper and all the members of Trinity as they begin this new ministry chapter. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Dr. Alan Scott (emeritus), Loren Cooper and Lawrence Mitchell (emeritus).

Worship Anew has call-in service for aging adults

Worship Anew has launched a convenient phone service that allows aging adults to listen to the weekly Worship Anew program without needing internet access or a television.

The mission of Worship Anew is to engage and equip aging adults with resources to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ. For those with vision impairments, watching the program can be challenging. This new call-in option features enhanced audio descriptions, making it easier to follow and understand the message. This service removes barriers by allowing anyone, anywhere, to hear the Gospel, regardless of local broadcast availability or internet access.

To listen, call the Worship Anew office at 888-286-8002 and select the program from the menu, or dial the call-in service directly at 260-440-8476. Listeners can press any key or say "Play" to begin. The newest program is available by Friday each week, and the service operates 24/7, offering spiritual comfort whenever it's needed most.

In addition, Worship Anew provides closed captioning for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captions are available on TV stations nationwide, online, and through the Worship Anew app. Subtitles display lyrics so everyone can join in singing beloved hymns.

To learn more about all the ways to watch or listen, visit **worshipanew.org/by-type**.

Stephen Ministries to hold anniversary event in Indianapolis

Stephen Ministries is celebrating its 50th year with a nationwide 50th anniversary tour, including a stop in Indianapolis on April 11.

Through Stephen Ministries, more than 80,000 laypeople, church staff and pastors have been trained to serve as Stephen Leader — the individuals who implement the Stephen Ministry system — and they have trained over 600,000 Stephen Ministers. Those Stephen Ministers, in turn, have provided care to millions of people going through difficult life situations.

In 2023, Stephen Ministries published the award-winning book *The Gift of Empathy*, followed by *Caring Assertiveness* a year later. Group discussion guides for both, which have already been used by hundreds of pilot test groups across the country, are set to be published in 2026. The organization also plans to release several other books in the upcoming years on topics such as unexpected ways to care and dealing with the pressures to be positive and strong.

The Stephen Ministries 50th anniversary tour kicked off in St. Louis in August and has already made stops in four cities, with additional locations to come this year, including (along with Indianapolis) Tampa, Phoenix, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Baltimore and Kansas City.

Stephen Ministries staff will lead the events, including Dr. Kenneth Haugk, founder and executive director; Janine Ushe, director of operations; Dr. Justin Schlueter, director of training; Joel Bretscher, program director; and Amity Haugk and Lori Kem, program staff members.

Each of the Saturday events offer participants an engaging look back at the organization's past; presentations on topics like grief, what Jesus teaches us about empathy, caring for a full-time caregiver, and how congregations can help combat the mental health crisis; and a preview of what's coming next from Stephen Ministries.

To learn more or to register for the Indianapolis event, visit **stephenministries.org** and click the "Learn More" link on the homepage. Then scroll down the list of tour dates to find Indianapolis.

Stephen Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Founded in 1975 and based in St. Louis, Stephen Ministries is now in 14,000 congregations in the United States.

Confirmation retreat
• Feb. 13–16

Young people preparing for confirmation are invited and encouraged to attend Christ Academy Confirmation Retreat, to be held Feb. 13–16 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW).

The retreat includes catechetical sessions, time in worship and Christian fellowship. Rev. Michael Salemink, CTSFW assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, will lead sessions on the Lord's Prayer to supplement students' confirmation instruction.

The retreat begins the evening of Friday, Feb. 13, with a full day of sessions and activities on Saturday. Groups have the option of attending Sunday morning church services at LCMS congregations in Fort Wayne before they head home.

"The Confirmation Retreat exposed the youth of my congregation to more of our church body, gave them an opportunity to get an in-depth look at one aspect of their lives as Christians, and allowed them to hear more about serving our Lord's church," said Rev. Daniel Burfiend, CTSFW advancement officer who previously served as pastor of New Hope, Ossian. "Pastors, here is a retreat you don't have to set up and organize. The speaker, the food, even the activities are taken care of by an institution committed to confessional Lutheran catechesis."

Prayerfully Consider Visit
• March 19–21

The Prayerfully Consider Visit is designed to give future pastors and deaconesses a firsthand look at the programs and community of CTSFW. At this free event, you will meet others who are contemplating pastoral ministry or diaconal service, attend classes, talk with current students, meet the faculty, spend time with your admission counselor, and worship in Kramer Chapel.

You will also hear from representatives — from financial aid, housing, and the Food and Clothing Co-op — who will make your transition to seminary life easier. Tours of the campus and the Fort Wayne area will give you an idea of what life here could look like.

For those considering pastoral ministry or diaconal service, Prayerfully Consider affords a vivid picture of what life as a CTSFW student looks like. It is a chance to get answers to questions and find encouragement from those who have already stepped into life at the seminary. We invite you to be part of this informative and impactful weekend.

Easter Evening Prayer
• April 12

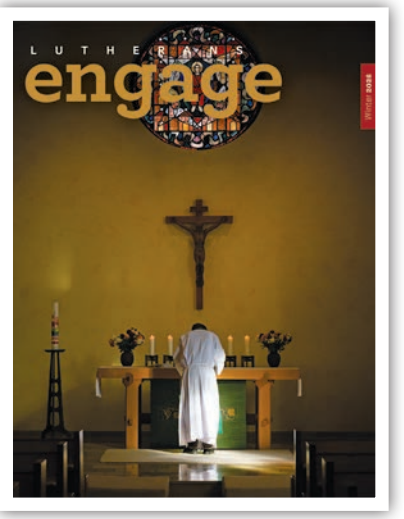
CTSFW will celebrate the second Sunday of Easter with Easter Evening Prayer led by the Kantorei. The service is open to the public and will be held in Kramer Chapel at 4 p.m. (ET) on April 12. If you cannot attend in person, you can livestream the service at **ctsfw.edu/daily-chapel**. The service can also be watched at CTSFW's Facebook and YouTube pages.

The Kantorei is a men's choir of pastoral ministry students under the direction of Kantor Kevin Hildebrand.

For more information, resources and registration, visit ctsfw.edu.

Click the "Events" link at the top of the page and scroll down.

GOD'S MISSION EVERYWHERE



In the Winter 2026 issue of *Lutherans Engage the World*, you'll read about many amazing things that God is doing around the world: engaging youth in the faith, caring for refugees, forming deaconesses for service to the church, sharing the Gospel with people in far-flung places. But the mission of the church is not something that "they" are doing "out there." It's work that all Christians are involved in — whether in their own neighborhood or by partnering with others across the globe.

In an article on the recent FORO in Germany, Eurasia Regional Director Rev. Dr. David Preus says he hopes the FORO participants will return home and tell others, "We have a mission in Germany, and this is what we are doing." In the same way, we hope you will be encouraged by these examples of how your church is sharing the love and mercy of Jesus Christ all around the globe — all to the glory of God.

The issue started arriving in mailboxes in late December. Read it online at **engage.lcms.org**. If you aren't currently receiving the magazine but would like to, visit **engage.lcms.org/subscribe** to sign up for a free subscription. Both individual and bulk subscriptions (for congregations) are available.

LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Advocate for life in 2026

The LCMS speaks up for life, cares for people in body and soul, and teaches about the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. The LCMS Life Ministry network is composed of thousands who are engaged in pro-life efforts, both in their churches and in the culture at large. Lutherans speak for human life by witnessing to our Lord's creation of life and by advocating for the God-given value of all human life in the public square.

Join LCMS Life Ministry and your fellow Lutherans as we stand together at life marches across the U.S.

To see a list of upcoming events, order pro-life gear and find resources on life ministry, visit lcms.org/march-for-life.

PRAYER LIST

Photos: LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

WEEK OF FEB. 1
Circuit 19 – Lexington
- Bread of Life, Georgetown
- Good Shepherd, Lexington
- Our Redeemer, Lexington
- Our Savior, Danville
- St. John's, Lexington

MINISTRY: Cranach Institute, Fort Wayne
LCMS DISTRICT: Southeastern

WEEK OF FEB. 8
Circuit 20 – Evansville East
- Emmanuel, Tell City
- Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Evansville
- Our Saviour, Evansville
- Peace, Owensboro
- St. John, Evanston
- Trinity, Henderson

RSO: Cross Connections, Fort Wayne
LCMS DISTRICT: Southern

WEEK OF FEB. 15
Circuit 21 – Evansville West
- Concordia, Evansville
- Immanuel, Evansville
- St. John, Vincennes
- St. Paul's, Evansville
- St. Peter, Vincennes
- Trinity-Darmstadt, Evansville

RSO: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society for the Chinese, Evansville
LCMS DISTRICT: Southern Illinois

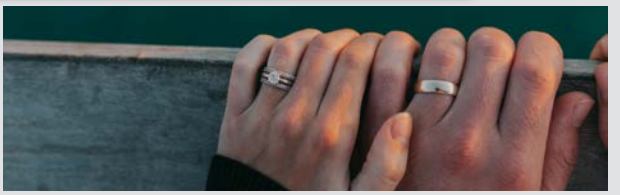
WEEK OF FEB. 22
Circuit 22 – Louisville West
- Concordia, Louisville
- Epiphany, New Salisbury
- Gloria Dei, Elizabethtown
- Grace, New Albany
- Holy Trinity, Leitchfield
- Redeemer, Louisville
- Resurrection, Louisville
- Shepherd of the Hills, Georgetown
- St. John, Lanesville

RSO: Immigrant Mission Field Network
LCMS DISTRICT: Texas

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

SEND TO:
LWeditor@in.lcms.org; or Lutheran Witness Editor; LCMS Indiana District; 1145 South Barr St.; Fort Wayne, IN 46802

Anniversaries *(50 and over)*



Calvary, Indianapolis
Lance and Carol Noble, 50, Feb. 28

Calvary, Plymouth
Ray and Tanya Uhlig, 50, Feb. 14
Jim and Sue Ross, 53, Feb. 17

Concordia, Greenwood
Rick and Linda Snyder, 54, Feb. 5

Cornerstone, Carmel
Gary and Sue Knotts, 57, Feb. 4
Leon and Marilyn Walker, 57, Feb. 15
Phil and Candy Hagen, 57, Feb. 15
Don and Karen Hawes, 58, Feb. 23

Emmanuel, Fort Wayne
John and Cheryl Maxwell, 55, Feb. 20

Epiphany, Westfield
Jack and Maridean Carrington, 66, Feb. 6
Jon and Gwen Dossett, 65, Jan. 28

Grace, New Albany
Jim and Becky Heichelbech, 59, Feb. 11

Immanuel, Seymour
Russ and Susan Terkhorn, 52, Feb. 1
David and Diane Banks, 54, Feb. 13
Charles and Carol Bell, 62, Feb. 23
Jed and Margie Strange, 52, Feb. 24
Jim and Linda Kamman, 56, Feb. 28

Redeemer, Seymour
Larry and Janet Burchell, 53, Feb. 17

St. Michael, For Wayne
David and Lori Hudson, 55, Feb. 6
Dan and Karen Clendenen, 50, Feb. 7
Jim and Karen Martin, 53, Feb. 17
Bob and Vickie Scholl, 52, Feb. 23
Gary and Norma Endersby, 50, Feb. 24
Mike and Suanne Roemer, 61, Feb. 27

St. Paul's, Munster
Nikki and Dian Kutansky, 58, Feb. 3
Richard and Christine Mackowski, 50, Feb. 14
Thomas and Cheryl Breymeyer, 57, Feb. 15
Thomas and Paula Allen, 53, Feb. 27

St. Peter's, Brownstown
Joe and Carol Rorig, 59, Feb. 5

St. Peter–Fuelling, Decatur
Jerry and Sandy Fuelling, 53, Feb. 24

St. Peter, North Judson
Jim and Betty Demo, 52 Feb. 2
Tim and Barb Yeadon, 59 Feb. 11
Bryan and Donna Ness, 54 Jan. 1
Marshall and Gloria Field, 52 Jan. 12

The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Evansville
Mike and Delisa Reininga, 52, Feb. 2

Trinity, Crown Point
Ethel and Willard Schuffert, 66, Feb. 6
Doreen and Gary Dobbs, 51, Feb. 8

Trinity, Fort Wayne
Thomas and Mary Ann Purdam, 67, Feb. 7
Richard and Donna Syndram, 68, Feb. 26
Alan and Vona Orr, 72, Feb. 27

Birthdays *(90 and over)*

Calvary, Indianapolis
Robert Handschy, 95, Feb. 24
Sara Jupin, 92, Feb. 26

Christ, Woodburn
Marcella Baker, 98, Feb. 2
Helen Brown, 90, Feb. 17

Concordia, Greenwood
Sharon Bruhn, 91, Feb. 21

Cornerstone, Carmel
Anneliese Krauter, 91, Feb. 3

Emmanuel, Fort Wayne
Lynelle Detraz, 91, Feb. 11
Pat Yeiter, 94, Feb. 22
Madalene Eggold, 102, Feb. 28
Donna Myers, 94, Feb. 28

Epiphany, Westfield
Jack Carrington, 92, Feb. 21

Grace, New Albany
Dee Belden, 98, Feb. 3

Immanuel, Seymour
Glenn Murphy, 90, Feb. 1
Norma Cottingham, 95, Feb. 2

Redeemer, Seymour
Mary Duncan, 91, Feb. 1

St. Paul's, Munster
Ann Schmidt, 92, Feb. 19

St. Paul, Preble, Decatur
Leroy Werling, 92, Feb. 22

St. Peter, North Judson
Jean Arndt, 100, Feb. 8

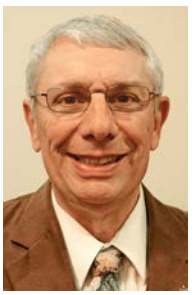
Trinity, Crown Point
Shirley Patz, 90, Feb. 4
Norbert Luebcke, 92, Feb. 10
Irene Ringers, 95, Feb. 26

Trinity–Darmstadt, Evansville
Gloria Arendt, 90, Feb. 25
Wayne Wathen, 91, Jan. 20

Trinity, Fort Wayne
James Schafenacker, 96, Feb. 16

Stewardship

‘He didn’t withold His Son’



Ken Schilf
Holy Cross,
Fort Wayne

Do you do physical therapy to get a T-shirt when you “graduate”? No, that’s not the purpose. I’ve been to many therapy sessions, and the reward I’m looking for is a better self. It’s a reward that sometimes others can’t see, a cache that’s hidden like fewer aches and pains, less swelling, or a better night’s sleep.

For a Christian steward, it’s a cache of something valuable. Hopefully, it’s not something worthwhile that’s stored or hidden for future use. The cache of Christianity is faith in Christ. We don’t hide it, but we share it. We realize that in Him, we are part of something unstoppable, endless, unfathomable! For us and others, Christ is the reward of Christianity.

Are we striving for riches and feel trapped? Do we have enough in the bank? James 1:16-17 says:

> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God doesn’t withhold anything from us. After all, He didn’t withhold His Son. Be content. Be satisfied.

> Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.
> **JAMES 1:22**

Finally, Jesus said in Luke 12:48b:

> “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.”

LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

manner of trials, tribulations and temptations. Those troubles that we are generally most aware of are rather mundane, and as a consequence we too easily suppose that what we need most of all are mundane provisions and protection — utilities and infrastructure, law enforcement and fire fighters, hospitals, doctors and nurses, houses and vehicles, insurance policies and savings accounts, a secure job, and a reliable pension plan. And to be sure, all these things are good gifts of daily bread from the open hand of our God and Father in heaven, who knows our needs and well provides them out of His divine goodness and mercy.

As Christians, however, we know that our deeper and far more dire predicaments are found within our own fallen flesh, in the spiritual distractions and idolatrous enticements of this sinful world, and in the assaults and accusations of the old evil foe. And over against each and all of these we must be armed and armored with the Word and Spirit of God, which calls us daily to repentance, strengthens our faith and preserves us on the path of life in Christ Jesus. What is more, it is also by the Word and Spirit of God that we are able to navigate all the mundane challenges of this present body and life with confidence and courage, wisdom and virtue, and the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

The point is that every village of every size — indeed, every home and family – needs the church and ministry of the Word of God to guard, protect and sustain it in the saving faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. To live before God in righteousness and purity, and to live with one another in charity and love, requires the constant catechesis of the Law and the Gospel. Which means that every home should be a little chapel, in which the father catechizes his family in the basics of the Scriptures and the Catechism. And every village should have a steeple, a font, a lectern, pulpit and altar, where the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the people through the ministry of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.