

What's the Purpose of Our Church?

Why do churches exist? Even more specifically, why does our church exist? In the April newsletter, I encouraged you to stop and think about that so that we can determine how we will live it out.

According to Lee Kricher, author of the book *For A New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church*, "Churches exist primarily as places for people to develop a genuine, life-changing faith in Jesus Christ." How that is carried out changes from place to place because each congregation needs to be focused on connecting with the people in their context. Who in our community needs to hear the message about Jesus' love? Who isn't in our church who might need to hear about God restoring a broken world in Jesus? How do we as a congregation need to focus our time and energy so that we are being faithful in telling the next generation about God? What changes might our congregation need to make so that we can reach out to others and especially to the younger generations?

The Spencer church council has spent time studying scripture, praying and discussing these very questions. At the end of March they spent an entire day on a retreat to continue to do this work. As a result, they have drafted a proposed new mission statement, some guiding principles and identified four essential areas they see the church needs to focus on in order to make sure our church's mission continues into the next generation.

Now, it is time to share their work with you and continue the conversation as a whole congregation.

Take a look at the draft below, spend some time in prayer, read scripture especially the book of Acts, tune in to the sermon series "Turning Point" (June 18 – July 2) and be ready to join in one of the small group conversations coming soon. We want everyone to be part of the conversation.

The proposed mission statement:
Praising God, building relationships and sharing the love of God. Together!

Guiding Principles

1. Jesus is Lord and Savior
2. Growing in our relationship with God is lifelong
3. Our faith is lived out beyond our doors
4. We respect and care for each other.
5. God's love and grace are for everyone.

Essential Areas we need to focus our time and energy:

1. Worship
2. Small Groups
3. Children and Youth Ministry
4. Service Projects/Missions

I look forward to the conversation with you.
Pastor Rebekah Tarras

Worship Times

8:00 am Sunday @ Spencer
10:00 am Sunday @ Spencer
9:00 am beginning May 28
11:00 am Sunday @ Riplinger

Church Office

B3750 State Hwy 13
Spencer, WI 54479
715-659-5158

Website:

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Pastor

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Mission Statement

(Spencer)
LIVE Daily in God's grace
GROW in our discipleship
SHARE Christ with all

Communication Deadlines

Help us keep people informed by submitting your information to the church office before the following deadlines:

- Weekly e-mail:
Tuesday 9 am
- Sunday bulletin
Thursdays 9 am
- Monthly Newsletter:
20th of each month

Synod Assembly Notes

On Saturday, April 29 Pastor Rebekah, Brandon Kopp (male voting member), Cindy Weiler (female voting member) and Jenny Nieman (serving on the Synod council) attended the Synod Assembly for the Northwest Synod of WI.

The Synod Assembly is an annual event with voting members and clergy from the congregations of our synod who meet together to learn about mission and ministry and conduct the business of our synod.

The following is a summary of the 2017 Synod Assembly:

- 125 Clergy and 243 Lay voting members
- Recognized pastors celebration 25 and 50 years of ordination and retirements
- Worship offering split between Malawi and LSS Transitions (\$6000)
- "Ted Talks" by 4 pastors from our synod sharing ideas and insights of why their congregations are growing
- Elected new members to the Synod Council
- Approved the 2018/2019 Financial Mission Plan
- Approved the 2018 Minimum Standards for Compensation and Benefits
- Accepted St. Stephan's of Edgar into the Northwest Synod of WI (they are sharing a pastor with St. John, Edgar)
- Approved a resolution presented by the Synod Youth Board against racial injustice
- Approved the non-required provision changes to the synod constitution to bring it in alignment with the changes made at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly
- Recognition of Rev. David Larson for his 35+ years with Lutheran Social Services
- Heard more about the Synod Bold Generosity campaign
- Heard a report of ELCA Churchwide ministries and a thank you for our support
- Challenged to increase support of World Hunger ministries – our synod is currently #62 of 65 synods in support. ELCA World Hunger has an A+ rating with less than 8% going to administration.
- Heard about Campus ministry and the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering
- Mark your calendar and plan to attend **Walking Together 2018 March 17 at UWEC**
- Future Synod Assemblies - April 28, 2018 at Trinity in Eau Claire - June 7-8, 2019 at UWEC (will include election of our next Bishop)

If you would be interested in participating in the Synod Assembly next year talk to Pastor Rebekah or submit your name as a nomination to Cindy Weiler to be placed on the ballot at Spencer.

Synod

From two Greek words
syn + *hodos*
that literally means
"a way together"



Congregations that "walk together" to accomplish God's mission in a bigger way by working together.

Worship

Spencerama Days



Worship at Spencerama
Join together with your friends and neighbors for the ecumenical worship service during the Spencerama Revival on **June 11 at 8:30 am**. Worship will be in the large tent in the Spencer Park. This will be the only worship service on that Sunday.

Interested in helping to set up chairs or serve as Greeter/Ushers [click here](http://www.stjohnsspencer.com/volunteer_sign_ups_30.html) or go to www.stjohnsspencer.com/volunteer_sign_ups_30.html.

Summer Worship at Spencer

There is only one Sunday worship time— **9 am** until after Labor Day.



Communion Schedule Change for Riplinger:

Due to the Ecumenical Service on June 11 and Pastor being gone on July 9 for her stepson's wedding, communion in June and July will on the 3rd Sunday of the month. (June 18 & July 16).



Don't Miss this Event at Spencer on June 4

Larry & Suzanne Makeef will be sharing their music in worship on Sunday, June 4 during the 9 am

service at Spencer. Invite your friends for this special event.

Sunday Readings

June 4

Sent
Matthew 28:16-20
Acts 2:1-4
At Spencer: Special music by Suzanne & Larry Makeef

June 11

Isaiah 6:1-8
Psalm 29
John 3:1-17
Spencerama Revival Ecumenical Worship service in the Big Tent, Spencer Village Park **8:30 am** (this is the only worship time on this date)

June 18

Turning Point: 180 Degrees Part 1
Acts 1:1-14

June 25

Turning Point: 180 Degree Part 2
Acts 2:37-47

July 2

Turning Point: 180 Degree Part 3
Luke 10:25-37

Spencer Attendance

8:00 am

| | |
|----------|----|
| March 26 | 49 |
| April 2 | 41 |
| April 9 | 51 |
| April 16 | 71 |
| April 23 | 31 |
| April 30 | 43 |

10:00 am

| | |
|----------|-----|
| March 26 | 64 |
| April 2 | 148 |
| April 9 | 75 |
| April 16 | 153 |
| April 23 | 62 |
| April 30 | 75 |

Maundy Thursday
at Riplinger 60

Good Friday 79

Faith Development

Sunday School

A HUGE thank you to all the Sunday school teachers: Amanda Gronski, Josie Tremelling, Tracey Ackman, Pam Herman, Lori Cook, Pam Hardrath, Leah Nieman and Daniel Wilke. Parents and congregation, be sure to say “thank you” to these folks for the time and dedication that they give as an extension of their faith journey and for their commitment to help our congregation live out the promises that we make to each child and family that is baptized at St. John’s; “to help support you in raising your child in the faith”.

Vacation Bible School Dates

VBS is June 18-22; optional supper at 5:30 pm; VBS begins at 6pm ends at 8:15 pm. There is still room for more kids if you haven’t had time to sign your kids up.



Bible Camp

Hang up the school backpacks and put away the books, because summer is here! It is time to make sure that you have your children and youth signed up for the program of their choice at Luther Park. There is so much fun to be had, and you don’t want to miss out on the valuable experiences that Luther Park has to offer. Camp programs provide a variety of activities and adventures including swimming, hiking, canoeing, archery, games, arts and crafts, cookouts, and meeting new friends. These activities are all centered on daily Bible study and worship that focuses on our summer theme entitled, “The Jesus Way.” There is still time to sign up for an experience that your son or daughter will always remembers. Camp brochures are at church or register online: www.lutherpark.org.



Jenny will head to camp with kids on the following dates:

- Discovery Camp for 1st-3rd gr June 28-30
- Day Camp July 17, 18 or 19

St. John’s, Spencer strongly encourages participation in Bible Camp because we know that through holy play and intentional time with God Bible Camp makes a huge impact in the faith journey of those who attend. That’s why St. John’s pays a portion of the cost. We don’t want cost to be a barrier to Bible Camp. Questions talk with Jenny Nieman.



Coins From Kids

Coins Clinking for a Cause at Spencer

During the months of June and July we will be collecting coins during the offering with the proceeds to be split between our mission focus of World Hunger and Transitions Recovery Home in Clark County. The children will be collecting the coin offerings in metal buckets. Let the “clinking” begin!



Don’t get bored this summer! Take a look at all of the resources that are available on Right Now Media. Don’t forget you can access it on your phones, ipads, computers, etc. Check it out!

Youth

Cross Training

We tried something new this year with Middle school and the feedback that we received was that it went really well. We plan to make some tweaks and use the same format again next year. One tweak will be separating middle school and high school. A second will be adjusting the time to 6:30-7:45pm on Wednesdays.

So what did we do? We changed our format to include both large group and small group time. We invested in a program called XP3 by Orange that is specifically designed for middle school aged students. XP3 Middle School exists to help middle schoolers experience three things: **wonder** for who God is, **discovery** of who God created them to be, and **passion** for loving others. Everything is designed to help middle schoolers begin to take ownership of their faith through these three basic truths:

- **I will love God because He will never stop loving me.**
- **I will follow Jesus because He knows me better than I know myself.**
- **I will live out God's story so others can know who Jesus is.**

XP3 Middle School is about more than just teaching and games (although we've got plenty of those). It's a strategy designed to speak directly to a middle schooler – and the people who invest in them, too.

Students who wish to affirm their baptism will be given the opportunity after they are freshman to participate in the 13 session mentor program. This is the only requirement for affirmation of baptism.

Students will be invited and encouraged to serve as helpers in Vacation Bible School, Sunday school, serve as acolytes in worship, attend Bible Camp and participate in other middle school youth activities.



How You Can Help Transitions Recovery Home

If you would like to help the girls at Transitions with their recovery, you could donate the following items:

Exercise Equipment

12 yoga mats, exercise balls
Bikes and helmets
Workout videos
Recreation items– board games, musical instruments,
sports equipment such as Frisbees, disc golf, jump ropes

Clothing

New clothing/shoes for girls age range 10-17

Craft Supplies

Craft kits
Paints
Drawing pencils
Sketchbooks
Sewing materials and supplies
Para cord and clips
Oil pastels

Yarn and plastic knitting and crocheting needles
Plaster of Paris
Dream catcher kits
Friendship Bracelet string
Scrapbook and stamping supplies
Journals

Units

Alarm clocks with radios-22
Water bottles
Comfort items (lotion, blankets)
Books for teens and book cases

Sensory Room

Book shelf
Adult coloring books
Colored pencils
Bean bags



Adults

Save the Date– September 15



Golden Agers Rally is a day event for seniors at Forest Springs, Westboro, featuring uplifting music, wonderful food, and excellent Bible teaching. It's a refreshing day of fun and Christian fellowship in the Northwoods you won't want to miss!

Guest speaker: Doug Anderson

Doug's vivacious personality and understanding of the Word is simply inspiring. Following college, he and his wife, Dawn, spent several years in business followed by missionary years in rural Haiti and missions leadership. The past 22 years have been spent as Sr. Pastor and wife in three evangelical

churches. He is currently Associate Director of Pastor for Missionaries & Retired Missionaries.

Cost: \$20 per person. Register online: www.forestsprings.us or call 715-427-5241.

Christmas Branson Style– November 8-13

Consider the Wonders of Christmas....

Join Forest Springs as we get a jump start on celebrating the wonderful Christmas season in Branson, MO. The city prepares for the season like no other– with plenty of festive events aimed at turning our attention toward celebrating the birth of Jesus.

It's a unique and unforgettable opportunity for us to “Consider God's Wonders” - with a specific focus on the miracle of Christmas.

On this year's bus tour, you can enjoy some of the finest musical and artistic creativity on the planet! You will be given a devotional book that we will use during our devotional times each day. It is our desire that these times will be an inspiration and a time where you will be drawn closer to our Lord and Savior.



Tour hosts: John & Diane Windle and Dick & Viv Angelo.

Cost: \$890/person double occupancy; \$1141/person single occupancy Registration deadline: Sept. 25. Register online: <https://www.forestsprings.us/events/specialty-retreats/fall-bus-tour> or call 715-427-5241.



Lawn Mowing Sign Up

It's time to start mowing the lawn at church. If you would be willing to mow, sign up online: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a094eacac22aa8-lawn1>. Paper copy is also on the bulletin board.

St. Grubby's Day

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, June 4, 10 am-noon** for the annual St. Grubby's Day (church work day) at Spencer. This is a time to do some spring cleaning inside and outside of the building, projects that are above and beyond the weekly cleaning duties of the janitors. Folks of all ages can help out. Many hands make light work.

Riplinger

Riplinger WELCA

Four members met May 4. All participated in the lesson from Gather magazine.

Secretary and treasurer's reports read and approved.

Transitions Home at Neillsville was discussed and a motion was made and seconded to send them a \$100 donation.

Food pantry donations will go to Unity church.

Potluck dinner will be on May 21 for the end of Sunday school year and to honor Deana Parker for her many excellent years of teaching.

Pentecost Sunday will be June 4, wear red.

Potluck enjoyed.

Ila Meacham, secretary

June & July

Communion Sundays

Due to Ecumenical Service on June 11 and Pastor being gone on July 9 for her stepson's wedding, communion in June and July will on the 3rd Sunday of the month. (June 18 & July 16).

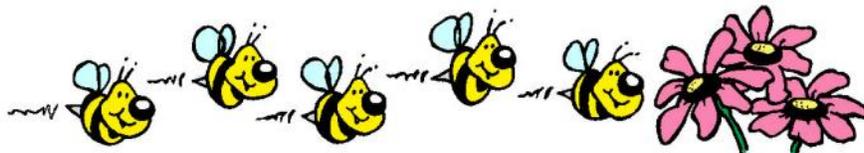
Serving Schedule

| Date | Reader | Acolyte | Communion | Counters |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Sun, June 4 | Joy Miller | Trevor Ertl | | John Meacham Tom Dommer |
| Sun, June 11 | Worship at Spencerama 8:30 am | | | |
| Sun, June 18 | Dave Newman | Iva Schuette | Gail Burns | Sue Wallace Bob Burns |
| Sun, June 25 | Dallas Dommer | Dallas Dommer | | Dave Newman Dawn Pagenkopf |

Riplinger Attendance

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| April 2 | 24 |
| April 5 | 32 |
| April 9 | 37 |
| Maundy Thursday | 60 |
| Good Friday | |
| (at Spencer) | 79 |
| April 16 | 48 |
| April 23 | 29 |
| April 30 | 34 |

to everything
there is a SEASON



Spencer Council Meeting Minutes

April 23, 2017

Present: Cindy Weiler, Nadine Willett, Jenny Nieman, Teri Schorer, Pastor Rebekah Tarras, Heather Vogel, Janell Kopp, Jody Scidmore, Glenda Fellenz

Absent: David Knecht and Roxie Wetterau.

Call to Order : At 6:01 pm by chair Jody Scidmore

Prayer: Led by Pastor Rebekah

Secretary Report: MSA by Teri Schorer and Cindy Weiler to approve March 12, 2017 corrections.

Treasurer Report: reviewed March 2-17 treasurer's report.

Worship:

1. Worship committee will meet May 8, 5:30 pm

Faith Development:

1. Sunday school: Last day of Sunday school is May 21.
2. Cross Training: Last night of Cross Training is May 10 or 17.
3. Vacation Bible School theme: Maker Fun Factory: Created by God; built for a purpose will be held June 18-22. Online registration is open and on our website. \$10 per child.
4. Mission trip to Charlotte, NY: Basket Raffle raised \$1338; French Toast Breakfast raised \$1244 (\$622 each for Transitions Shelter and the mission trip); Rummage Sale raised \$1552.11

Stewardship Financial Peace University is being scheduled for this fall. Working on Capital Campaign Thank you.

Social Concerns

1. French Toast Breakfast was well attended. Rich & Kelly Wilke and crew did a tremendous job. Proceeds were split between Transitions Recovery Home in Clark County and the mission trip.
2. Coins Clinking for a Cause: May, June, and July we will be collecting coins during the offering, with the proceeds to be split between our mission focus of World Hunger and Transitions Recovery Home in Clark County. The children will be collecting the coin offerings in metal buckets. Let the "clinking" begin.

Fellowship & Care

1. Soup suppers were set up by Karen & Gary Grieser and others for fill in. Approximately \$30-\$48 was collected per week for Bible Camp scholarships.
2. Committee is working on the Pork Dinner for Spencerama Days.
3. Sewing group will be taking the summer off.
4. Working with Pastor to put a Care Team together.

Building & Grounds

1. Travis Hardrath is getting lawnmower ready for summer. He also got estimates for new tires, will be meeting with Dave on this. Lawn mowing schedule can be found on Sign up Genius, if interested please sign up.
2. St. Grubby's clean up day will be June 4 after worship until noon.

Pastor Shared March 2017 report with us. Pastor will be on vacation April 30-May 5 to spend some time with her mom and sister. She's also planning on taking vacation July 5-11 for a family wedding.

Chair: No report.

Unfinished Business

1. Council members will be meeting at church April 30 at 8:30 am to travel to Chippewa Falls to visit Central Lutheran Church.

Old Business: Joint services with Riplinger will be held on Reformation Sunday at Spencer. Spencer and Riplinger will share in the Turkey Dinner preparation and serving the dinner will be held at St. John's, Spencer. Planning team meeting with Riplinger will be held May 22 at 7 pm.

Book Study: Discussed chapters 3 & 4 of For a New Generation. Reviewed council retreat.

Next Meeting: Sunday, May 21, 6 pm.

Adjourn: at 8:20 pm.

June Birthdays & Anniversaries



- 1 Nick Viergutz
- 2 Kelly Wilke
- 3 Eleanor Bruger
Deitrik Ellis
Amanda Lehman
- 4 Alaina Knecht
Brad Suckow
- 5 Sam Nikolay
- 6 Judy Weber
- 8 Sage Pederson
- 10 DeAnn Griepentrog
- 11 Tonya Dommer
Kyle Herman
Davis Vinnedge
- 13 Viola Dommer
- 14 Holly Weyer

- 15 Ryssa Sebold
- 17 Ethan Cloud
Pam Herman
Roxie Wetterau
- 19 Paul Christopherson
Dallas Dommer
Alyssa Lawrence
- 22 Kelly Lawrence
- 24 Lisa Kettleborough
Parker Manicke
- 25 Grace Maines
Betty Muehlbauer
- 26 Tyson Klement
- 27 Carson Kilty
Dave Newman
Billy Otero
Ryan Schauer
- 29 Wade Hebert

Anniversaries
to
Celebrate



Anniversaries

- 1 Gwen & Ron Schmidt 43 yrs
- 2 Bruce & Janine Luepke 44 yrs
Milt & Kay Viergutz 11 yrs
- 5 Ray & Blanche Toltzman 74 yrs
Roxie & Paul Wetterau 25 yrs
- 10 Shawn & Kristy Kieffer 17 yrs
- 12 John & Jane Meacham 35 yrs
- 15 Jeremy & Jenni Oelrich 4 yrs
- 16 Jake & Shinae Reynolds 5 yrs
- 18 Justin & Mindy Burns 1 yr
- 19 Larry & Pam Herman 24 yrs
- 24 Lisa & Rick Delis 23 yrs
- 25 Cheryl & Steve Bruesewitz 29 yrs
- 28 Josh & Jenny Reynolds 14 yrs
Courtney & Zach Fleischman 3 yrs

If your birthday or anniversary is missing, please contact the church office.



Spencerama Pulled Pork Dinner

During Spencerama on June 10 St. John's will have a Pulled Pork Dinner stand. Volunteers are needed to help throughout the day to serve the community a delicious meal while folks are coming together for fun.

Youth are welcome to help. However if the youth is under the age of 14 years a parent is required to work with them.

You will be provided a t-shirt to wear for the shift, dress according to the weather and bring a cap to wear.

Any questions call Janell Kopp 715-659-3997.

[Sign up here](http://www.stjohnsspencer.com/volunteer_sign_ups_30.html) or http://www.stjohnsspencer.com/volunteer_sign_ups_30.html



**COME
AND GET
IT!!!**

2017

June

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| 28 9:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Worship at Riplinger | 29 | 30 7:30 AM Fitness Class | 31 10:00 AM Bible Study | 1 1:00 PM Riplinger WELCA | 2 | 3 |
| 4 9:00 AM Worship 10:00 AM St. Grubby's Day 11:00 AM Worship at Riplinger | 5 | 6 Pastor & Jenny at workshop 7:30 AM Fitness Class | 7 10:00 AM Bible Study 6:30 PM Mom's Connect Campfire | 8 | 9 Spencerama the Revival | 10 Spencerama the Revival 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM Pulled Pork Dinner at Spencerama |
| 11 Spencerama the Revival 8:30 AM Worship at Spencerama | 12 5:30 PM Worship Planning Team Meeting | 13 7:30 AM Fitness Class | 14 10:00 AM Bible Study 6:30 PM Council meeting 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Painting Class | 15 | 16 Church Camping Weekend at Dexter Park | 17 Church Camping Weekend at Dexter Park 3:00 PM Potluck at Dexterville w/ worship following |
| 18 Church Camping Weekend at Dexter Park 9:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Worship at Riplinger 5:30 PM VBS Supper 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Vacation Bible School | 19 5:30 PM VBS Supper 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Vacation Bible School | 20 7:30 AM Fitness Class 5:30 PM VBS Supper 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Vacation Bible School | 21 10:00 AM Bible Study 5:30 PM VBS Supper 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Vacation Bible School | 22 5:30 PM VBS Supper 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM Vacation Bible School | 23 | 24 |
| 25 9:00 AM Worship w/ Baptism 11:00 AM Worship at Riplinger | 26 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Yoga | 27 7:30 AM Fitness Class 5:00 PM COME | 28 10:00 AM Bible Study | 29 | 30 | 1 |



Spencer Serving Schedule

If you cannot serve when you are scheduled please find a replacement and then contact the church office with the change so it can be noted and printed correctly in the bulletin. Thanks!

June Schedule

| 9:00 am | Sunday, June 4 | Sunday, June 11 | Sunday, June 18 | Sunday, June 25 | |
|----------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Greeter | Jesse Klement | Worship at Spencerama 8:30 am | Judi Andrew | Holly Bauer | |
| Technology | Nadine Willett | | Pam Kilty | Tracey Ackman | |
| Sound | Dennis Kopp | | Jody Scidmore | Randi Thompson | |
| Ushers | Travis Hardrath Jace Zahn | | Bill Martens Jan Ammons | Jim Christopherson Bob Helsten | |
| Reader | Amy Schmidt | | Bill Martens | Teri Schorer | |
| Communion Assistants | Penni Cloud Janell Kopp Brandon Kopp | | Cindy Weiler Jenny Nieman Amy Weber | Jan Ammons Inez Fosberg | |
| Assisting Minister | Jenny Nieman | | Brandon Kopp | Janell Kopp | |
| Acolyte | Elisha Blanchard | | Bristol Engevold | Carter Griepentrog | |
| Basket bearer | Bridget Cloud | | Nathan Gronski | Davis Vinnedge | |
| Hospitality | Amy Schmidt | | Luanne Schwarze | Penny Vinnedge | |
| Healing Prayers | | | | Kelly Lawrence Jenny Nieman | |
| Communion Set up: | Amanda Gronski | | | | |

July Schedule

| 9:00 am | Sunday, July 2 | Sunday, July 9 | Sunday, July 16 | Sunday, July 23 | Sunday, July 30 |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Greeter | Bob & Glenda Fellenz | Betty Muehlbauer | Ashley Schalow | Kristy Kieffer | Larry & Julie VanArk |
| Technology | Roxie Wetterau | Nadine Willett | Pam Kilty | Tyler Klement | Tanika Reckner |
| Sound | Bruce Luepke | Brandon Kopp | Jody Scidmore | Jody Scidmore | Randi Thomsson |
| Ushers | Gail Jicinsky Gavid Kilty | Travis Hardrath Josie Tremelling | Alec Cook Dennis Kopp | Jesse Klement Tyson Klement | Bruce Luepke Janine Luepke |
| Reader | Cindy Weiler | Janell Kopp | Jim Christopherson | Wayne Hagen | Jerry Marden |
| Communion Assistants | Amanda Gronski Janine Luepke Kelly Lawrence | | David Knecht Amy Weber Teri Schorer | Cindy Weiler Penni Cloud Jan Ammons | Jody Scidmore Inez Fosberg Dennis Kopp |
| Assisting Minister | Janell Kopp | Penni Cloud | Jenny Nieman | Brandon Kopp | Cindy Weiler |
| Acolyte | Carson Kilty | Sam Soback | Aidan Griepentrog | Blake Engevold | Brooke Suckow |
| Basket bearer | Abby Wilke | | Dani Soback | Braden Kieffer | Savana Weyer |
| Hospitality | Aliyah Anderson | Jesse Klement | Lori Cook | Kristy Kieffer | Jenny Nieman |
| Communion Set up: Teri Schorer Bread baker: Janell Kopp | | | | | |

Understanding the Sacraments

Paul has some important things to say about communion in I Corinthians 11:17-33. The eleventh chapter of I Corinthians is important here because theologians have used it both to justify including infants and young children in the celebration of holy communion and to exclude them from it. While Paul deals with adults in these verses, his use of the term “the body of the Lord” can legitimately be interpreted to include children as well as adults. When children are baptized, they become part of the church, part of the body of the Lord.

Paul’s use of “the body of the Lord” is generally understood to mean either the body of believers, that is, the church, or the bread in holy communion. Chapter 12 of I Corinthians contains Paul’s most developed use of the word *body* in reference to the gathered believers. In verse 27 of that chapter he states: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” Clearly “the body of Christ,” as Paul uses it here, can only mean the church, the people gathered around word and sacrament. In this instance it cannot mean simply the bread of holy communion.

According to Jesus’ words about children and our understanding of holy baptism as the entrance into the body of Christ, children are certainly part of that body Paul is telling us to consider as we celebrate holy communion. When we receive the body of Christ, we are to be attentive to all the members of the body-- young and old.

Faith Given and Strengthened

Don’t children need to be old enough to understand what holy communion is all about before they receive it? This question has been used by those who argue to exclude infants and young children from the sacrament. However, it does not suggest a very Lutheran understanding of what takes place in the sacraments. In a sermon Luther preached in 1528 on the sacrament of holy baptism he made a key comparison between the two sacraments. He insisted that neither is dependent on the faith of the recipient; both are based on the word of God. In baptism it is the word with water; in communion it is bread and wine with the word. What we know and believe has no bearing on this gift of God’s grace.

What God requires of us (faith) for receiving the sacrament, God also gives to us. In holy communion God not only strengthens faith, but God awakens faith. That is, the faith God gives to us by grace, God brings to our awareness as well. Faith is listed as one of the gifts of

God in Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 12. Our faith is initiated and strengthened in the sacraments. Worthy reception of the sacrament of holy communion does not depend on our faith, rather our faith grows by receiving the sacrament.

Clearly Christ invites all to his feast, his table. We come as beggars, not as persons who in any way deserve this marvelous gift from God. We come as persons who are tainted and unworthy. And even as adults we come without a clear understanding of how this grace of God is given to us in and through the sacraments.

God Comes to Us

Lutheran theology affirms that there are no prerequisites for the reception of the sacraments. They are not dependent upon one’s age or faith. Nothing of one’s own makes anyone a worthy recipient of either holy baptism or holy communion. In the sacraments God comes to the recipient. The one being baptized or communed receives the benefits of forgiveness, life, salvation, and faith through God’s grace in the sacraments. We receive these benefits passively and respond to them actively through service to others. As the baptismal liturgy says, “Let your light so shine before others” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 231). *This takes place through acts of love on the part of children as well as adults.*

The Word of God made flesh in Jesus, the Word of God proclaimed in the Bible, brings faith to believers. The sacraments are truly dependent upon the word of God. Without the word, the elements of the sacraments are only elements of the earth--water, bread, and wine. With the word attached to them they become the life-giving water that washes the baptized clean and the body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the forms of bread and wine. Word and sacrament together shape the lives of believers, creating faithful individuals called to loving service for others.

In the final analysis, the sacraments are events of the whole church. They are events in which the complete body of Christ is to be present and acknowledged. The body of the Lord is the church, all the baptized, adults and children. This needs to be recognized, acknowledged, and celebrated. Holy communion is the meal for all the baptized. This needs to be recognized, acknowledged, and celebrated as well.

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Don’t children need to be old enough to understand what holy communion is all about before they receive it?