



CROSS-WORD



**Outdoor Service
& Church Picnic
September 24, 2023**

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A Longer Season

Recently, we had two days that felt like the start of fall. Highs were in the mid 70's, and lows for our area got down into the 50's. It was a welcome relief from the heat of summer. Of course, being August, that didn't last. Immediately after those two days, we went through an incredible stretch of intense heat and humidity. Even walking outside shortly after dawn or after sunset was borderline miserable. It became clear that fall is still a while away, and waves of heat will be here for a while yet. Summer isn't over.

Despite this, have you noticed what's been put up in stores? Halloween decorations! Every year it seems like different seasons are extended longer and longer, at least for retailers, and Halloween is no exception. There is a certain fascination with this holiday. Some people claim that they like being scared. Others like dressing up in scary costumes or going to haunted houses. They have an intrigue for the supernatural, whether its ghosts, demons, or the like.

While this season keeps getting extended back into the heat of summer, I saw a recent poll that showed some significant numbers related to the supernatural. In 2001, 90% of Americans claimed to believe in God. Now, in 2023, that number is 74%. In 2001, 68% of people believed in the devil, while only 58% believe in him now. Similar trends followed for the belief in heaven and hell, falling from 83% to 67% and 71% to 59% respectively.

The Lutheran question, of course, is: "What does this mean?" The devil is certainly pleased with these numbers, though I doubt he's satisfied. Just as God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, so does the devil want all people to be damned and to believe in his lies. The devil is all about himself, but he's also all about spiting God. That people believe in God and heaven, the devil and hell less is a "battle" won for the devil. He is quite content for people to have the imagination of him in the red tights and pitchfork, or that God is "out there somewhere" but not really caring for them.

Does this mean that we are resigned to sighing, frowning our brows, and wringing our hands in sadness and despair. NO! Matthew 16:13-18: Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son

of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father, who is in heaven. And I tell you—you are Peter, and on this rock, **I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**”

Jesus is the Son of Man, who leads His Church into war against the spiritual powers of darkness, including the devil himself! The rock that Jesus speaks of that the church builds on is the confession that Jesus is the Son of God (not Peter as some would claim). What good news we have to share! During this life, there will be waves of heat and apparent battles that are won by the devil, but we can take comfort knowing that Jesus and His Church will win the war. Through Jesus’ cross and empty tomb, through His ascension and promise to return, the outcome is secure—sins forgiven, life eternal, death and the devil defeated!

Yes, the devil will have his season, and he will try to extend it. But praise God, who gives us an endless, eternal season of victory through Jesus Christ!

Pastor Craig



**Plan to attend our
OUTDOOR WORSHIP
SERVICE &
CHURCH PICNIC**

**on Sunday, September 24, 2023,
in the parking lot
of our Outreach Center.**

The service begins at 10:30 a.m. followed by the church picnic. If you are planning to attend, sign up on the narthex bulletin board! Main dishes: grilled burgers and brats! Bring side dishes and desserts to share, a non-perishable item for the local food bank, and your own lawn chairs! Tabitha the comfort dog will be visiting!





Are you musical? Can you carry a tune? Whether yes or no, handbells are for you! Pastor and Christa Reiter have purchased a set of handbells and are surveying members of Holy Cross and Immanuel, Festus, to form a joint handbell choir. If you are interested, please sign up on the sheet on the table in the back of the sanctuary, or contact Pastor or Christa with any questions.





Watering the Flowers

We have started a new sign-up procedure to water the outside flowers in the front of the church.

Instead of one volunteer watering for the entire week, we now have a schedule in which a volunteer can choose just one day of the week throughout the month he/she can water.

We have an opening on Fridays in September for a volunteer to water the flowers.

Sign up on the sheet on the table in the back of the sanctuary.



Election for Church Officers in 2024

Consider serving on one of the leadership teams at Holy Cross! The Nominating Committee is seeking nominees for elected officers for 2024. Church Council positions include president, vice president, treasurer, financial secretary, and recording secretary. Nominees are also requested for the Board of Elders, Board of Trustees, and Board of Evangelism. If you are interested in serving on the Church Council or on one of the Boards listed, please talk to Randy Ruzicka, Dan Sullivan, Cathy Dew, or Pastor by September 17.



Upcoming available dates for flowers on the altar:

- September 3
- September 24 (church picnic)
- October 1
- November 12
- November 19
- November 26

Please clearly print your name and occasion on the flower chart on the wall by the narthex above the water fountain. On an envelope, write: "Flower Fund"; put \$20 inside; and place it in the offering plate.

SEARCH-A-WORD PUZZLE

GOD'S CREATION

K K F O Y S T E N A L P Z
Y G L L U S E S A E N A U
W B O P O R N N U S R N N
N X S L E W H A G A Y A F
Z O K E Y O E C E V S T F
J U I O E E P R J C J U F
P O N T A Q H L S E O R Y
O R H H A N S Q E Y O E X
Y H B D Y E I E Q P S B J
G N O O M Q R M E C P W A
E F S D U O L C A R Y U T
H E A V E N L D R L T D O
R P U Y P Y W P Q F S N B

CREATION

PEOPLE

NATURE

TREES

FLOWERS

OCEANS

SUN

MOON

PLANETS

CLOUDS

ANIMALS

HEAVEN

LCMS STEWARDSHIP ARTICLE FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

Stewardship in the First Commandment

The greatest gift that Martin Luther gave to us was his Small Catechism. The word “enchiridion” is part of the original title of this work. This is the Greek word for “handbook.” The Small Catechism is a handbook of the Bible. All the basic knowledge that a Christian needs to understand the faith and live a godly life has been taken from the Bible and distilled into this beautiful little book of Christian piety.

Luther starts with the Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment:

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. (SC I)

We have a God above us. He is the Lord God, and we are not. He is Almighty and in control. He is righteous and good. And, therefore, we should fear Him.

This God is also our heavenly Father. He wants us to be saved. He does not want us to suffer His just wrath. He has provided salvation for us in His Son, Jesus Christ. And, therefore, we should love Him.

Our heavenly Father will never leave us nor forsake us. He has promised as much—and the Bible shows us that He always keeps His promises. So we should trust Him.

In the Large Catechism, Luther explains how money and possessions form one of the greatest temptations against the First Commandment:

This I must unfold somewhat more plainly, that it may be understood and perceived by ordinary examples of the contrary. Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e., money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure and is joyful and undismayed, as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few are to be found who are of good cheer and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon. This [care and desire for money] sticks and clings to our nature, even to the grave. (LC I 5–9)

These words of Dr. Luther should call us to repentance; sometimes we live and act like we don't have a Father in heaven. We seek our comfort and peace outside of His gracious promises. But we **do** have a Father in heaven. He **does** love us. All His promises are true. And the Lord will surely provide. If that is our belief, then our outward lives will reflect our belief in our acts of generosity and mercy. We will see money and possessions not as gods but rather as tools for doing God's work.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry
lcms.org/stewardship



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