

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Happy and blessed New Year!

First of all, sorry for the late letter. I'm always playing catch-up in the days after Christmas, but this year it was exacerbated by the Hacker wedding on January 2nd. That was a great occasion and we pray for continued blessings on Ethan and Olivia in their new life together as husband and wife.

Second, I need to say a sincere thank you for all your kind generosity. The Christmas bonuses received by me and all the staff, are greatly appreciated. It is simply a privilege to work at a church and to have employment serving the Lord and His people; extra bonuses and gifts on top are truly a delight.

Now on to 2026... One of the things I am looking forward to is the opportunity to travel to Israel in October. I hope some of you will join me. Having gone once before (in 2008,) I can tell you that visiting Israel is different from simply taking another vacation. It's not just getting out of town, or seeing something historical; rather traveling to the Holy Land is both of these things as well as a pilgrimage.

For centuries Christians from all over the world have traveled to see the places where Christ lived and moved throughout His earthly ministry. Many of them wanted to thank God for what He had done and see for themselves the places where Christ lived and worked. Unfortunately, many others made pilgrimages in order to do acts of penance for some sin. That is, people would think: "If I travel to Israel and pray at the tomb of Christ, God will recognize my sincerity and forgive my sins" – or some such thing. These ideas were the result of widespread legalism and the works-righteousness so prevalent before the Reformation. These misguided notions abound among people who still travel to Israel. They go expecting to have an emotional experience or thinking that in being there, they will come closer to God. They buy all kinds of religious trinkets and expect miracles, and some, I'm sure, come home disappointed, while others claim to have found what they were looking for.

As Lutherans, we do not go along with this kind of pilgrimage. Our theology is Biblical and nowhere does Scripture command followers of Jesus to travel to the Holy Land. Rocks and old buildings are not a means of grace. God does not promise to increase our faith by means of a pilgrimage. [Incidentally, this is in stark contrast to Islam, which has as one of its 5 pillars, making the Haj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.] But we confess what the Bible teaches, that God reaches us by means of His Holy Word and Sacraments. There, in the means He has given, He is present to bless. Of course, God may work outside of these things as He is not bound. He may at times send angels to convey specific messages as we just celebrated on Christmas Eve [Luke 2:10-13] and the weeks leading up to it [Matthew 1:20 ff.] But this isn't the way God normally functions and we shouldn't expect Him to work in this way. These things are recorded for us precisely because they are extraordinary examples of God's direct intervention with His people, but His ordinary means of dealing with us are the Word and Sacraments.

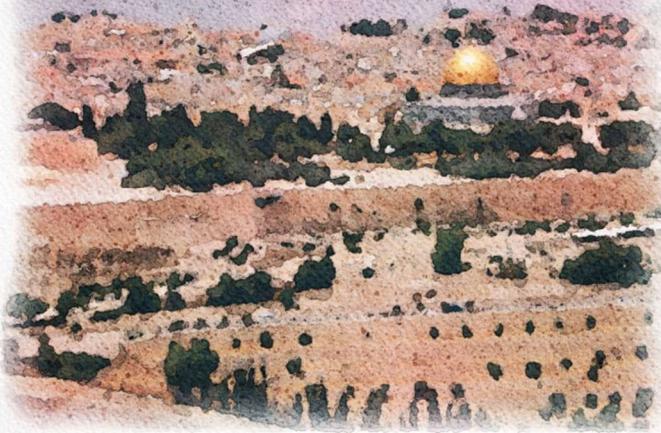
That being said, and all superstitions aside, one can make a pilgrimage to Israel and truly have a blessed experience. Standing in the places where Christ once lived and worked and seeing them with your own eyes can cause the words of the Bible to come alive. Places like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Capernaum are no longer just words on a page and ideas in your mind, but after the trip they are places you have seen and have memories of. This, in turn, can help you to picture all of the people and events of the Bible not with dreamlike images you have seen in art, but with the real places you have visited.

Of course, one doesn't have to travel to Jerusalem to trust that Christ was sacrificed there for our sins and three days later rose from the dead for our justification. A trip isn't necessary for faith or salvation, but it sure can be a blessing. So, if you would like to experience the Holy Land in October of this year, please pick up one of the brochures available in the narthex and get in touch with me or Doug Hite for more info about the trip and Israel in general. The trip is open to anyone and you can invite friends or family members to join you. I'm sure it will be a good time and great blessing to all who are able to attend.

Blessings to you this New Year.

PrS

OCTOBER
2026



Lord of Life Small Groups

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth
BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meets one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or speters@planolutheran.com
- † Will meet Sat., January 16 at 6:00 PM for Bible study

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Will meet Sat., January 10 at 6:30 PM for Bible study

YOUNG ADULTS

- † For those in their 20's and 30's
- † For info contact Lauren Moudy at laurenemoudy@gmail.com or (214) 415-8939
- † Will meet Sun, January 18 at 6 PM for Bible study and dinner



So we do not lose heart.
Though our outer self is
wasting away, our
inner self is being
renewed day by day.
2 Corinthians 4:16



A Letter from Our Deaconess Intern

New Year's Rest

Happy New Year! You made it! The bustle of Christmastide is over; parties have been attended, kids have come down from their Christmas cookie-induced sugar highs, and 2026 has begun. Now, there's a whole new year to fill with all of the things that you didn't get done last year AND the new things that you resolved to do for this year. It seems like the busyness never ends. More and more seems to pile on. Even though the holidays are over, there's still no time for rest. Now you have to make good on that gym membership you signed up for, or that Bible in a year reading plan that you're already behind on. Maybe the guilt and anxiety of not being active enough this year have already started to creep in. You can't rest and relax! You have to work off all of the holiday food you ate! There are goals to achieve! Look at all the stuff you have to get done!

I'm sure you've heard the saying "you can't pour from an empty cup." It is good to prioritize your health and well-being so that you can be a support to those around you without burning out. Unfortunately, sometimes it feels like filling your own cup is an impossibility because of everything you have to do. So you push on, weary, but determined to squeeze every last drop from your cup because that's what is expected of you... right?

Let's slow down and take a moment to think about this a bit by turning to the Scriptures. God has a lot to say about cups in the Bible. It's funny to think about, but it's true. Let's start with Psalm 23. David begins with the famous line, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want," (v.1) and then proceeds to recount how God gives him rest in the midst of trouble. He even says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." (v.5) Just like David, even in the midst of trouble and turmoil in our lives, we can rest in the presence of the LORD, who fills our cups to overflowing, giving us His Gifts and filling us with good things. Rest in God leads to restoration for us.

How about another cup in Scripture? This one is pretty famous, so much so that we talk about it almost every Sunday. "And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:27-28) With this cup, we don't just get the promise of rest like with David's cup in Psalm 23; we get the promise of life and salvation. This cup that we drink is in stark comparison to the cup that Christ drinks for our sake. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus "fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'" (Matthew 26:39) A mere few verses after Christ gives us the cup of life and salvation, He drinks the cup of wrath so that we may not perish but have eternal life. Through all of these cups, our souls are restored. Rest is won; we are free in the Gospel promise of Christ, the Lamb of God who shed His blood, suffered, died, and rose for you. The cup of life and salvation overflows for you.

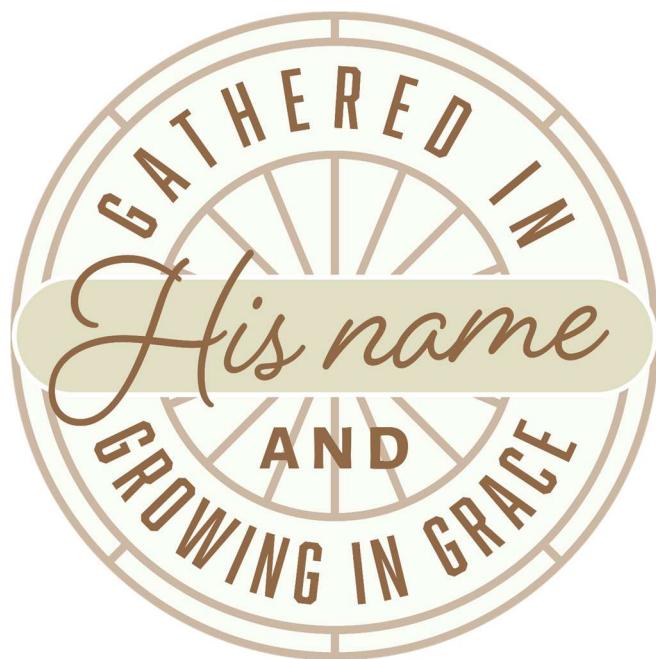
So what does this mean for your cup that is woefully low? It means that there is a place to find restoration. I encourage you to take a break, even if it feels like you can't. Find your support systems and allow them to fill your cup. Go to church and fill your cup with Word and

Sacrament. When everything feels out of control, and you just have to keep going, take a breath. Go to Scripture. Fill your cup. Rest in Christ. I know it is a lot easier said than done; even reading the Bible may start to feel like one of those things on your endless list of to-dos that are already draining your cup and making you feel weary. Don't turn the Gospel into Law. What I mean by that is don't take a good Gift given for your restoration become something that you resent because every time you see your Bible untouched on the coffee table, you feel guilty that you haven't read it. The discipline of being in Scripture is something you can build up to. Maybe read a verse or two before bed. Give yourself grace to be inconsistent. Habits take a while to form, so keep at it! Let the Gospel and its promises do what they're meant to do: fill your cup and give you rest.

Breathe. Rest. Happy New Year!



2 Kristof Nuschler
 2 Stu & Sandy Ehrett (38)
 8 Lauren Moudy
 8 Linda Tischler
 10 Sandy Paradise
 19 Glenn Huebel
 19 Elizabeth Wilde
 22 Lora Frinsko
 22 Linda Hixson
 22 Cecy Solano
 23 Curtis & Sydney Peters (4)
 24 Jason Rempert
 30 Karl Olsen



Thanks from the staff!

*We appreciate your
 generosity. Thank you for
 contributing to our bonuses!*

PREPARE FOR WORSHIP

In January

January 4: Second S. a. Christmas

Texts: 1 Ki. 3:4-15; Eph. 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52
 HotD: "Within the Father's House," 410

January 11: The Baptism of Our Lord

Texts: Is. 42:1-9; Rom. 6:1-11; Matt. 3:13-17
 HotD: "To Jordan Came the Christ, Out Lord," 406

January 18: Second S. a. the Epiphany

Texts: Is. 49:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42a
 HotD: "The Only Son from Heaven," 402

January 25: Third S. a. the Epiphany

Texts: Is. 9:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:10-18; Matt. 4:12-25
 HotD: "O Christ, Our True and Only Light," 839