

MISSION FRONTIERS

Mission Lutheran Church, Las Cruces, NM

Pastor's Pen

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

There are times when someone may ask if there's anything in particular that distinguishes the Lutheran tradition from other denominations. There are certain outward distinctives that bear the brunt of self-deprecating jokes, such as the Lutherans' affinity for green Jello, Wiener schnitzel, lutefisk, and let's not forget beer! And perhaps we joke about such things because there are many aspects of our theology that don't seem much different between the Lutherans and other Christians. We believe in the Triune God: one God who exists in three distinct Persons. We believe that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully Man. We believe that He died on the cross and rose again on the third day in order to save us from our sins and grant us eternal life. These are fundamental aspects of our faith, and yet when we discuss these things with other Christians, we're not going to find any disagreement. Much of what we believe as Lutheran Christians is common amongst all of Christianity.

Nevertheless, Lutheran theology has some clear distinctives that aren't found elsewhere, and one of those is that our theology makes a clear distinction between Law and Gospel. Many of us are familiar with this teaching, but it's helpful to consistently review this because natural human reason is constantly confusing Law and Gospel in our lives.

Fundamentally, God's Law is His good and gracious will. God's Law is the way in which He has designed and ordained this world to function. Thus, God's Law is not bad or evil. Nor is God's Law a response to sin entering the world. God's Law was present in creation prior to the fall into sin. He created the world, and He bid the animals to be fruitful and multiply. He likewise told the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, and they were to have dominion over creation and tend the Garden of Eden. They were permitted to eat of any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So God had an order to His creation from the very beginning.

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Important Dates:

- September 1-8: Carol Moore is on vacation
- September 3: Labor Day Holiday
- September 9: WINGS/LWML fellowship and Bible study
- September 11: Patriot Day
- September 12: JULIETs lunch
- September 22: Voters' Assembly
- September 30: MLS Fall break begins



But then sin entered the world. Sin is a thorough corruption of the nature of mankind so that our nature is in constant rebellion against God. Thus, God's Law has become something that sinful mankind no longer takes delight in. Instead, we find it oppressive, we question its wisdom and goodness, and we fight against it. But the problem lies not within the Law, which is still good, right, and holy. The problem lies within sinful humanity.

Since the fall into sin, God's Law serves three purposes. The first use of the Law is what Lutheran theology calls a "curb." Even though mankind is corrupted by sin, we still retain an inherent albeit imperfect knowledge of the Law written upon our hearts. This is why people have a general sense of right and wrong, even if we don't always follow through. This general sense of right and wrong is shared across cultures and across time periods. The Law written on our hearts teaches us that sins such as murder, adultery, and theft are wrong. The first use of the Law is called a "curb" because it curbs gross manifestations of sin and keeps mankind from utterly destroying one another.

The second use of the Law is its primary use, and this is called the "mirror." It's called the mirror because the perfection of God's Law shows us how far we fall short of His holiness and glory. The Law always accuses. And the more we understand God's Law, the more we feel its accusation. For example, we might look at the 5th Commandment, "You shall not murder," and think that we're basically following that part of God's Law. But Jesus famously said in the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21-22). When we understand that God's Law requires perfection in outward actions, in our speech, in our will, and in our inner thoughts, then we see how thoroughly corrupted we are.

As was said above, the Law is good. But when accused by the good Law's righteous condemnation, we have good news, which is the Gospel. In distinguishing Law and Gospel, the Gospel should not be seen as the antidote to the problematic Law. Rather, the Gospel is the answer to the Law's righteous accusation of the sinner. The Gospel is the good news of the free forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the declaration to the sinner that the blood of Jesus Christ, spilled on the cross, is the payment for all sins. The Gospel is the declaration that the sinner who is dead in their trespasses has been raised to new life. The Gospel is the promise that all who believe in Jesus will be raised from the dead to eternal life on the Last Day.

The word of Law and the word of Gospel are both from God. But they are distinguished in that the Law is God's will for us. The Law demands perfection, promising life for those who follow it, but unable to deliver on that promise because no one can keep it. The Gospel is a pure gift, requiring absolutely nothing from us. We hear both Law and Gospel from the Scriptures, we hold them both as sacred, but we dare not mix them. We cannot add to the Gospel by telling someone that they must do something to earn salvation or to remain in the state of grace. Living our lives for Jesus, striving to keep God's Law, is still Law. The Gospel is nothing more and nothing less than the free gift of God in Christ Jesus.

There is still a purpose for the Law of God in the life of the Christian in addition to making us aware of our sin and our need for a Savior. For those who have received the Gospel, the Law has a third use, a use we call a "guide." This is how the Law instructs us to live our lives according to God's good and gracious design. For the Christian, the Law remains something that is good. And yet, we also must keep in mind that the third use of the Law is still not salvific. We did not earn grace before we became a Christian, and we do not earn grace afterwards. And the instruction the Law gives to the Christian in its third use will simultaneously by its second use accuse us of our sin, which is why we consistently need to hear the word of Gospel in our day to day lives.

There is much more that can be said concerning Law and Gospel. Many theologians much wiser than I have written volumes of books on this subject. But I pray that this brief article serves as a reminder of how we hear and receive God's word. We hear the word of Law, and its primary use is to show us our sin and our need for a Savior. And we then hear the word of Gospel, the free forgiveness of sins in Christ. Both words are necessary, but they must be properly distinguished. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is truly a hallmark of the Lutheran tradition. Amen.

Pastor Andrew Cave



Mission Lutheran Church & School Prayer Ministry

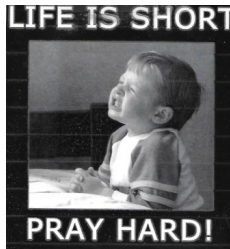
*Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love,
for in you I trust.
Make me know the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.* —Psalm 143:8

Ah, September! Our break—the time of refreshment and rest—is over and it's time to get back into a routine! Will your fall routine be a familiar one or one that is new and exciting and perhaps even a little intimidating? Will it include times of service here at Mission, in our community or beyond? Will we join together to use the gifts Jesus left us with when He ascended? God established Adam's (and our) work in Genesis 2:15: *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

Let's grab a little time to pray and seek God's guidance, wisdom and His assurance as our fall routine gets underway! As we pray, let's again use God's Word as our prayer guide:

- ◆ *O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you^{and} and watch—Psalm 5:3*
- ◆ *But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. — 1 Samuel 12:24*
- ◆ *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.—Ephesians 4:11-16*
- ◆ *But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.—1 Samuel 12:24*
- ◆ *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^{and} they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.—Matthew 5:16*
- ◆ *“But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”
—2 Chronicles 15:7*

- ◆ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.* —
- Romans 12:10
- ◆ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* —Colossians 3:23-24
- ◆ *Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!—Psalm 90:17*
- ◆ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* —1 Peter 4:10-11



***“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”***

1 Thessalonians: 16-18

Stewardship

Stewards, Called to Forgiveness

Human beings were created and redeemed to be stewards. Bearing the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), the steward was created to reflect the Creator within creation. In a way, stewards are simply mirrors. Mirrors cannot do anything to the image that is placed in front of them.

A mirror was the first item in creation that embodied the computer term GIGO. “Garbage in, Garbage out.” In a computer, if you enter good data, you get a good result. You enter bad data; you will get a garbage result.

In photography, you can run an image through a filter, which can remove imperfections. Myriad apps allow for the option to cut people out, add people in and change backgrounds all in an attempt to make the perfect image. Mirrors cannot do that. They do not provide anything new. Mirrors are created to reflect, not process, an image. They simply reflect the person standing in front of them.

Stewards are like this. Created to reflect, a steward will reflect the God in front of them. The steward will either reflect a godly stewardship that holds that God is the owner of all things (Ps. 24:1) and is the One to whom they are accountable, or they will reflect the god of self and see the created order as something to be possessed, used, and in far too many cases, abused. It is not a question of IF the steward reflects, it is really a question of WHO is being reflected.

For this reason, the *Lutheran Service Book* has included a necessary hymn worthy of meditation: “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788). Its first verse reads:

Forgive us, Lord, for shallow thankfulness,
For dull content with warmth and sheltered care,
For songs of praise for food and harvest press,
While of Your richer gifts we’re unaware.

This is a fitting call to repentance for every steward. Our thankfulness is so often shallow. We get comfortable with the overflowing blessings we have entrusted to us by the Lord. These trusts are so many that the steward often forgets the One who entrusts them. Worse, with so many physical trusts evident, the steward loses sight of the greatest trust: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The failed steward sees so much plenty that they lose sight of the treasure: Jesus!

So, we confess our shallow thankfulness. In absolution, the imperfections of the failed steward are wiped away and a new image is sent into the world. We release our hold on stuff. We rethink our relationship with the created order and recall that it is all to be used FOR JESUS! This keeps the richer gifts in view, for us and for those we know and love who need Jesus.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship





Birthdays of the Month

September Birthdays

		Date
Holly	Poppy	3
Pastor Glenn	Weber	3
Amy	Krohn	5
Sheila	Vakselis	5
Nova	Wood	5
Austin	Nathaniel	11
Carol	Cooper	12
Susanna	Melton	12
Codie	Wolf	12
Michele	Allison	13
Ray	Grothman	13
Ruth	Jakcsy	14
Rev. Warren	Graff	15
Amie	Springer	25
Hannah	McCurley	26

*Happy
Anniversary*

September Anniversaries

		Date	# of years
Wade & Debra	Echtenkamp	21	45
Irv & Marcelle	Skelton	21	56

Happy Anniversary to all those couples married in September.

May God continue to bless you.

If your birth and/or anniversary date is missing or incorrect, please notify Carol Moore
in the church office.

MUSIC News

A graphic of a musical staff with a treble clef and several colorful notes (red, green, orange, blue) floating above it.

I am excited to announce that choir will begin soon. I would like to invite those of you who like to sing to come join the Mission Lutheran Church Choir. We are an open group of people who enjoy lifting our voices to enhance and guide the worship services.

Come join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary for rehearsals. Practices begin on Wednesday, September 11th.

Any questions, please contact Jacki McCurley, (575) 202-5955.

Quilters:

The quilters will begin meeting every Wednesday at 9:30 am in Luther Hall starting September 11th.

All ladies of the congregation are invited to join us. We need ladies who can sew, thread needles and tie knots. Even if you don't quilt, you can join us for conversation.



JULIETs Lunch

All women in the church are invited. And bring a friend!

Thursday, September 12 — Outback Steakhouse
940 N. Telshor Blvd.

We meet at 11:30 am.

So that the restaurant can be prepared, please notify Debra Echtenkamp at least 2 days in advance if you plan to attend.

Call or text Debra at (901) 830-7216



WINGS/LWML

The next gathering of WINGS (Women in God's Service) will be on Monday, **September 9**, at 6:30 PM in Luther Hall. All women are invited for fellowship and Bible study. Dessert will be provided.

MISSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

JULY 16, 2024

President Doug Lorenz called the Mission Lutheran Church Council meeting to order at 6:38 PM. Other Council members present were: Pastor Cave, Wade Echtenkamp-Vice President, Carol Cooper Secretary, Brad Mueller-Treasurer, Carol Moore-Financial Secretary, Richard Turk-Board of Elders, Karen Springer-ML School Board Chairman, Brad Springer-Outreach/Fellowship/Stewardship, and Brad Springer, Sr.-Board of Trustees.

1. Opening Prayer - Pastor Cave opened the meeting with prayer.
2. Approval of Minutes - The minutes of the May 21, 2024 Council Meeting are attached and were approved as presented.
3. Before reports were given, Carol Cooper requested permission to report on the state of the Sunday School.
 - a. Pastor — Pastor Cave's report is attached.
 - b. Vice President-Wade Echtenkamp had no report.
 - c. Secretary-Carol Cooper reiterated that written board reports are extremely helpful to the secretary as well as the rest of the board.
 - d. Treasurer-Brad Mueller-report is attached.
 - e. Financial Secretary-Carol Moore had no report.
 - f. Elders-Richard Turk had no report.
 - g. Trustees-Brad Springer-report is attached.
 - h. Outreach/Fellowship/Stewardship-Brad Springer, Jr. reported that Amy is maintaining the "Bible Box" and our sign, and people have expressed interest in a 'Tuesday Evening Pizza Gathering.'
 - i. School Board — Karen Springer updated the Board on the preparations for the beginning of school and expressed great appreciation for Megan Wood, our new administrator and our new teachers, Tracy Krause and Susan Joanis.
 - j. Sunday School - Carol Cooper reported that (possibly) in response to the video, Emma and Nova Wood have led Sunday School and are helping evaluate curriculum.
4. President — Doug gave us an update on 1) the videos he and Pastor Cave have planned to acquaint the congregation with opportunities to serve and 2) phone system details need to be worked out with Telstar, requiring a new set of quotes.

Doug also posed the question, "how do we handle situations of 'great need' in our congregation, and how do we know who in our congregation has the talents and abilities that could help; how does the info/help get accomplished in a discreet manner?"

Our next meeting will be August 20 at 6:30 PM in Luther Hall. Pastor Cave led the Council in the Lord's Prayer before adjourning.

Doug asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Carol Moore and seconded by Karen Springer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Cooper, Secretary

MISSION LUTHERAN CHURCH and SCHOOL

Treasurer's Report for the August '24 Council/Voters Meeting

Report Preparation Date: July 1, 2024

<u>Budget Status:</u>	<u>Month of July '24</u>		<u>FY25 thru July '24</u>	
	<u>Actual</u>		<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
<u>Income:</u>				
MLC General	\$30,778 *		\$30,778 *	\$31,468 *
MLS Total	\$32,015 *		\$32,015 *	\$10,000 *
Designated / Other	\$60 *		\$60 *	\$175 *
	\$62,852 *		\$62,852 *	\$41,643 *
<u>Expenses:</u>				
MLC Total	\$15,395 *		\$15,395 *	\$16,463 *
MLS Total	\$41,332 *		\$41,332 *	\$43,382 *
	\$56,727 *		\$56,727 *	\$59,845 *
Net Difference	\$6,125 *		\$6,125 *	-\$18,202 *

MLC General Fund Contributions – FY25 (Thru July 31, 2024)

Average Weekly Contributions Needed:	\$7,867 *
Average Weekly Contributions Received (FYTD) :	<u>\$7,758</u> *
Average Weekly Surplus/ <u>Shortfall</u> :	-\$109 *
General Fund Contributions Year-to-Date:	\$31,033 *
General Funds Budgeted Year-to-Date:	<u>\$31,468</u> *
Fiscal Year-to-Date Surplus/ <u>Shortfall</u> :	-\$435 *

Investments & Assets / Liabilities

<u>Investments:</u>	Morgan Stanley/E*Trade (as of July 31, '24)	\$116,410
	Strasser Endowment (as of Jun 30, '24)	\$79,519 *
	Thrivent (as of July 31, '24)	\$463,420 *
	LCEF MLC Youth Development CD Account	\$13,019 *
	LCEF General Funds CD Account #1	\$52,077 *
	LCEF General Funds CD Account #2	\$51,613 *
	LCEF General Funds CD Account #3	\$51,207 *
	TOTAL	\$827,265
<u>Current Assets:</u>	Shepherd's Staff Checking (as of July 31, '24)	\$37,062 *
	LCEF Checking (as of July 31, '24)	\$48,298 *
		Youth Activity Fund \$3,766 *
		Youth Christian Development \$12,500 *
	minus	MLS Reg/Tuition Holding \$0 *
		Angel Scholarship Program \$16,029 *
	Dedicated	COVID Grant \$28,042 *
	Funds	Apple Tree Donations \$848 *
		Emergency Tuition Assistance \$5,850 *
		School Security Grant \$8,774 *
		Staffeldt Scholarship Fund \$7,877 *
	Total Checking Available After	\$1,674
	Dedicated Funds	
<u>Liabilities:</u>	None	

Comments:



Autum begins on September 22nd

*Mission Lutheran Church and School
 2752 N. Roadrunner Parkway
 Las Cruces, NM 88011-8081
 Church Office: (575) 522-0465
 School: (575) 532-5489
 Emails: pastor@missionlutheran.net
 secretary@missionlutheran.net
 office@mlschool.net*

Elder on Call: Michael Kaiser (915) 525-6794

We're on the web!
<http://missionlutheran.net>
<http://mlschool.net>

Officers and Board Chairpersons for 2024

President	Doug Lorenz	Elders, Chairman	Richard Turk
Vice President	Wade Echtenkamp	Elders, Vice-chairman	Nathan Graff
Treasurer	Brad Mueller	Trustees	Brad Springer, Sr.
Secretary	Carol Cooper	Outreach	Brad Springer
Financial Secretary	Carol Moore	Day School Education	Karen Springer