



Faith in Action

August 2024

Confession as Dividing Line—How can we understand division in the Church?

“For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”

Matthew 18:7 (NKJV)

“But in the following instructions I do not commend you... For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.”

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

As Paul and Jesus say, the fact that we have divisions in the Church is an evil thing, and they are unavoidable as long as Christians believe different things. False doctrine “causes offense” to those who have the right doctrine, and it also hurts the faith of the people who believe those doctrines.¹ If we have the “genuine” faith, however, this is a gift God has given to us and worth defending when it is under attack, not for the sake of ‘being right’ but out of love for our neighbors.

Denominations have arisen 1) over important questions of doctrine and 2) in order to keep churches accountable for their beliefs. We are often afraid to make the Church “exclusive” by holding people to a standard of confession, but it is a necessary part of caring for souls! That’s part of the role of pastor/shepherd: to keep people on the Way, the right doctrine that leads to Christ. If they stray, we don’t abandon them; we want bring them back to the path.

From the beginning, the Church has had dividing lines: when Paul gives the first confession “Jesus is Lord” in Romans 10:9, he was addressing the one real unity-breaking division within the Jewish-Christian faith at that time: whether Jesus was recognized as Lord. In time, more divisions would creep in over important questions: Was Jesus a real human being? Is the New Testament God the same as the Old Testament God? Was Jesus always God or was he just a human adopted by God? These and other questions were controversial in the early days of the Church. Having the wrong answer was called heresy. **A heresy is any major false belief about who God is.** These include denying the divinity or humanity of Jesus or denying the Trinity. People with heretical beliefs (Jews, Muslims, Mormons, etc.) are no longer Christian and are not saved by Jesus, because they’ve messed up *who* they trust in.

Since heretics (this term is reserved only for heretical religious *leaders*) are outside of the Church, we can say that the Church was unified until the Great Schism 1054 AD, when the

¹ I met a man recently who was convinced that he would be left behind in the rapture, and he didn’t want to start going to church because “they need people to stay behind and spread the Gospel.”

Message from Pastor, continued

Orthodox Church in the East split from the Roman Catholic Church in the West (A schism—“skih-zuhm”—is what we call it when a church splits). Then, during the Reformation the Western Church split many times over and we ended up with the situation we have today.

As Paul tells us, we are going to have divisions in the Church (big ‘C’) because individual church (little ‘c’) bodies either confess the right doctrine or don’t. When discussing false doctrine, we must remember: **we do not judge people, but we are commanded by scripture to judge doctrine and avoid false teachers (John 7:24; Matthew 7:15; 16:5-12)**. Some doctrines are correct and important for salvation—for example, that faith alone saves us—, while others are false, damnable (the doctrines, not necessarily those who believe them!), and prone to destroying people’s faith—for example, decision theology, which sometimes leads to good Christians wondering if they are really saved. This is really why false doctrines are wicked: not just because they are wrong, but because they destroy people’s faith. **False doctrines like these make a denomination ‘heterodox,’ which means that they ‘worship differently,’ that is, their worship has errors.**

A heterodox church body is still Christian; we still believe people in heterodox churches are saved and part of the Church! But because of their false doctrine we are not in fellowship with them. **As Lutherans, we confess that being ‘orthodox’ (‘right-believing’) means confessing the doctrines found in the six chief parts of the Small Catechism—That is, the 10 Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer; Baptism, the Office of the Keys, and the Lord’s Supper.** It’s honestly a pretty low bar—the Catechism doesn’t even touch important questions like modern-day prophecy, scriptural inerrancy (although this *is* mentioned in membership vows), or worship styles. **And we do not judge hearts; all we judge is the *confession of the person to make sure it is in line with the orthodox faith.***

The differences between churches can be discouraging for us, and we should always be concerned about heresy and heterodoxy as long as we are concerned about people’s souls; but ultimately heterodoxy is temporary. On the last day all divisions will cease, and the Church will be united in blessed unity. Then (and only then!) we will see God’s kingdom truly come, as all that has kept us apart is burned up as the new heavens and the new earth herald a new life for us with God and one another. Then we shall all see God rightly, face to face, and know him perfectly as we have been fully known; and we shall know one another in love as He has known and loved us.

Though with a scornful wonder, / The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, / By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping, / Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping / Shall be the morn of song!

(LSB 644 - The Church’s One Foundation, stanza 3)

In the Peace ✠ of Christ,
Pastor Lefort

News and Notes

Caregivers meeting schedule for August is different. They will meet this Monday, August 5, at 1:00pm instead of this Thursday. The second meeting of the month will be on August 22 at 11:30 instead of 1:00pm. If you are a caregiver or think you may soon be one, consider coming and learning the joys, trials and coping strategies that go with this vital vocation.

Pastor Lefort's **book study on Wednesdays**, at 6:00pm features C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*.

If you would like to learn more about archaeology in the Holy Land, join us on **Thursday evenings on Zoom**. Just send an email to Pastor Smith at ascpastor@faithlutheranoakridge.org

This week we will conclude our series on **the Lord's Prayer**. You don't want to miss reviewing the prayer above all prayers.

Do you have visual impairment? We have a catalog of **free** resources from Lutheran Braille Workers. They have large print Bibles, devotionals, and study materials available at no cost. Come by the office and check it out.

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is currently **offering 5% interest** on an 18-month CD, 4.5% for 6 months, or 4% for one year. For more information, see the flyers beside the Sunday bulletins or go to Lcef.org/offer5 or call 800-843-5233.

Mark these dates

Saturday, September 28 (10:00am to 4:00pm): Circuit convocation at Praise in Maryville. All members are invited – especially church workers - for worship, classes, and inspirational speakers.

Saturday, October 5 (2:00 to 7:00pm): Faith's Fall Festival. Food, fun, and fellowship. Bring the whole family.

Bill and Debbie Koch have a new home at 329 Sunset Rd Clinton, TN 37716. Please update your address book.

Free Stuff:

As a result of downsizing, they have the following items to give away in the next 2-3 weeks (you pick them up) before they put their current house on the market:

Piano, mechanic’s tool set, tool bench, miscellaneous tools, miscellaneous garage stuff, Windows 10 computer (Dell). Call Bill Koch **865-919-3864**

Statistical Report

ATTENDANCE: July 28 – Aug 3

Sunday Worship 66

Sunday School 26

Mid-Week Studies

• **Wednesday morning Bible Class 19**

• **Wednesday evening Bible Class 10**

• **Thursday am Zoom 9**

• **Thursday pm Zoom.....**

BUDGET Status: As of July 31

Weekly Budget Receipts\$4,931.00

Total Budget Receipts to date: \$185,903.27

Actual Budget Expenses:..... \$161,290.90

Over/ (Short) Actual Expense:\$24,612.37

Ratio of Actual to Anticipated: 115.26%

July 28 Noisy Offering (\$51.11) . . Current total \$ 175.28

Noisy Offering recipients: *KARM, Paradox Teen Ctr, Free Medical Clinic , Faith Quilters, FLC LWM, Venezuela Lutheran Mission* in equal shares.

OUR WORK FOR THE LORD – August 2024

August 4
10:30am
Elder of the Week Darrell Bultman Communion Elder..... Darrell Bultman Communion Ushers.....Bertels/Woody A-V Technician.....Bret & Debra Cole Lay Reader.....Bill Ebert Offering Reader.....Charlene Smith Offering Recorder.....Emma Clark

August 11
10:30am
Elder of the Week Jane Miniard Communion Elder..... N/A Communion Usher N/A A-V Technician Ken Kaiser Lay Reader Shirley Levenhagen Offering Reader Charlene Smith Offering Recorder..... Emma Clark

August 18
10:30am
Elder of the WeekJohn Canik Communion Elder.....John Canik Communion Ushers Aperans/Downes A-V Technician.....Ken Kaiser Lay Reader Carol Noe Offering Reader.....Charlene Smith Offering Recorder.....Emma Clark

August 25
10:30am
Elder of the Week Carol Noe Communion Elder..... N/A Communion Usher N/A A-V Technician Ruben Popa Lay Reader Aaron Wilson Offering Reader Charlene Smith Offering Recorder Emma Clark

Fifth Sunday
10:30am
Elder of the Week Communion Elder..... Communion Usher A-V Technician..... Lay Reader..... Offering Reader.....Charlene Smith Offering Recorder.....Emma Clark

Special Service(s)
Elder of the Week Communion Elder..... Communion Usher A-V Technician Lay Reader Offering Reader Charlene Smith Offering Recorder..... Emma Clark



BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Aug 1 - Jim Evers | Aug 20 - Natalie Paret |
| Aug 3 - John Aperans | Aug 20 - Bonnie Smith |
| Aug 5 - Karen Stevenson | Aug 25 - Jill Wilson |
| Aug 5 - Russel Langley | Aug 25 - Leon Cochran |
| Aug 6 - Rachelle Nelson | Aug 29 - George Smith |
| Aug 8 - L.G. Noe | Aug 31 - Linda Kerekes |
| Aug 10 - Brigitte Hall | Aug 31 - Bonnie Saupp |
| Aug 11 - Cynthia Kangas | |
| Aug 15 - Curt Goff | |



- ♥ Aug 6 - Ron and Jill Wilson
- ♥ Aug 19 - Tom and Joan Vicary 52 yrs
- ♥ Aug 27 - George and Charlene Smith 58 yrs



Prayer List

August 1, 2024

Thanksgiving

- Jill Wilson's friend, **Charlotte**, is recovering from heart surgery.

Grief

- Linda Debner's neighbor, **Susan Story**, died July 18.
- The Johnsons' friend, **Stephanie Lee**, died July 27 (age 51).
- Sharon Downes' friend, **Susan Reamer**, died August 1.

Cancer

- Mairzy Truex's friend **Cullen Humphrey**, prostate cancer and chemo side effects.
- **Karen Stevenson**, has late-stage cancer.
- Emma Clark's friend, **Betty Richardson**, has recurrent colon cancer.
- The Coles' friend, **Tom Tait**, has melanoma.
- Kelli Evans' 10 mo old niece, **Swayze**, undergoing chemo for a brain tumor.
- Lloyd Hinkle's friend, **Steve Brooks**, has throat cancer.
- Bill Ebert's friends **Jean & Peter Manning**. Jean has leukemia and Peter is her caregiver.
- Shane Passmore's cousin, **Kim**, needs cancer surgery.
- Ira Kaplan's wife, **Janet**, is having repeat surgery for cancer.

Health and other concerns

- **Mairzy Truex**, severe chronic back pain.
- **Bill Koch** has back pain and nerve damage that keeps him from walking.
- The Cole's friend, **Sarah Buchan**, needs guidance and discernment in her life.
- **Nicole Debner**, Linda's daughter in law, has a high-risk pregnancy due in Oct-Nov.
- Lloyd Hinkle's friend, **Jake Childs**, difficult recovery from brain surgery on May 16.
- Linda Debner's grandson, **David**, is distressed by family strife.
- Bill Koch's great-nephew, **Atticus**, may need removal of both kidneys.
- Mollie Krehnke's friend, **Fred Thorpe**, has fluid around his heart and can't breathe well.
- Mairzy Truex's friend, **Larry Muñoz**, has macular degeneration.
- **John Kuehl**, recovering from back surgery.
- Linda Debner's niece, **Olivia**, has just started treatment for life-altering OCD.
- Amber Braden's aunt, **Sandy**, has a painful broken wrist that required surgery July 11.

- Mairzy Truex's brother, **Richmond Barbour**, was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.
- Linda Debner's daughter, **Amy**, having evaluation of a mystery illness.
- Jill Wilson's sister, **Joy**, has a sprained and fractured leg complicated by medical problems.
- Gabe Passmore's friend **Evan**, recovering from open heart surgery
- **Bill Kucenski's** mother is in hospice care.

Shut-Ins

Marti Aperans

Joyce Gaylor

Shirley Lee

Virginia Miller

Marvin Owens

Karen Stevenson

Bob and Natalie Paret

Bill Koch