

TO BRING GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE TO EACH OTHER
AND TO THE WORLD

THE LIGHT



Pastor's Notes

July 2024

Lebanon Evangelical Lutheran Church

*A Congregation of the North/West Lower
Michigan Synod, of the ELCA
Craig Satterlee, Bishop
Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop*

1101 S. Mears Avenue
Whitehall, MI 49461
(231) 893-5745

Rev. Douglas M. Ogden

**Sunday Morning Worship
10:15 am in person
YouTube Worship on the Web**

Office Hours
Please contact the church office for
current hours

**Newsletter Editor &
Bulletin Announcements**
Margaret Everling

Church Council
Meg Eaton Cheri Crouch
Laura Hollister Brian Jaekel
Sarah Schmalz Wietse Schaafsma
Al Wheeler

**"We are baptized members of God's
Church, forgiven and set free by grace
through faith.**

www.lebanonlutheranchurch.com

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(ELCA)**

Instagram—Twitter : #llcsignsofgrace

The straight-line wind that hit our community June 24 changed a lot of peoples' lives. Some of our members and neighbors lost their homes, some couldn't get out due to fallen trees, and some got out, but couldn't get back in to retrieve clothes, prescriptions, or other necessities, due to downed power lines and possible broken gas lines.

I want us Lutherans to be clear on this one thing – God does not send winds, fires, floods, fallen trees or sicknesses. God did not destroy homes – winds did. And contrary to the Gospel of John we do know where the winds come from – the Weather Channel can even predict them. God pulls us together as a caring community.

It is true that some voices in the Bible inherited the idea that God was the power of nature for cracking trees and tempestuous winds. But in the person of Jesus Christ, we shed those images for a stronger, better vision – God is in the response. We saw the response after the winds when expert tree removers, poured into the neighborhood; electricity linemen replaced the poles and restored the power; neighbors with chainsaws cleared paths to rescue, police and fire provided security, people shared clothes, food, transportation, cell phones, whatever was needed, and didn't ask questions about political party or denomination. God is the voice of stillness after the "earthquake, wind and fire" (1 Kings 19), when people picked up and went to work for each other. We saw Jesus Christ, and still do, in both the person in need and the ones who offered themselves in help.

Somehow in the midst of it all, food pantry clients were served. Somehow in the midst of it all, the Smorgasbord meal occurred, one of the largest in recent years! Some of our neighbors who lost their homes or belongings were there, some still without power were there. As Flo said, "Because that's what we do."

Continued on Page 4

July 2024
Fund of the Month
VBS



Websites of Interest

www.lebanonlutheranchurch.com

www.mittensynod.org

www.elca.org

www.whitelakescouting.com

www.whitelakechorale.com

www.hopescarves.org

LivingLutheran.org

www.samaritas.org

Suicide Hotline 1-800-273TALK.org
www.co.muskegon.mi.us/cmh/suicide_prevention

Every Woman's Place 231-722-3333 or
www.everywomansplace.org

The Trevor Project 1-866-488-7386

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people.



Greetings from Marci Bentz-Thrivent Whitehall Office

Freedom. As Americans, we celebrate freedom each July, as we should. As Christians, though, we get the incredible opportunity to celebrate and live our freedom in Christ every single day. Galatians 5:1 says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

So many ideas come to mind when I think of this verse. As a Financial Advisor, I think of financial freedom and the ability to live freely within my means now and plan confidently for my family's financial future. As a busy mom, I think of those (sometimes rare) moments when I have freedom or margin in my schedule for rest and play. **But most importantly, as a believer, I think of how God created each of us for a unique purpose and the freedom that truth can bring into our lives.**

You are free to be exactly who you were created to be. With all of your life experience, gifts, and talents. **You are a beautiful miracle – a gift to the world!** But as the last part of that verse warns, it can be easy to be burdened by our setbacks, our chaos, and the parts of our stories that we wish weren't ours.

I'd like to remind you, though, that God created you for freedom. That no matter what you're going through or what you've been through. Whether you're clear on your purpose or just praying for the next right baby step to take, you matter. **Your story matters.** And those you matter most to would love nothing more than for you to show up in freedom.

I'm here to help you with your financial freedom, if that is an area that burdens you. But if you're craving some direction for your purpose, I'd like to invite you to **explore the resources** that one of my partner non-profit organizations, Roots & Wings, has created for you. They have an online Legacy Library full of videos and guidebooks that can help you discover or rediscover your purpose.

If you're asking the questions, "What now?" or "Why am I here?," the Roots & Wings Purpose video series can help you deeply understand that your story is uniquely important, that your pain will not be wasted, and that your greatest adventures are yet to come.

You can find the Purpose video series, and more, online at www.rootsandwingslegacy.org/purpose.

For any financial questions, needs or concerns, please call Marci Bentz, Financial Advisor, Whitehall Thrivent Office at 231-894-8886, text 231-760-8246 or email whitehalloffice@thrivent.com.



Pastor's Notes (continued from Page 1)

The Church may not be an expert in tree-removal or power lines or even chainsaws, but we are in friendship, and the shared still, small voices that come after the devastating winds. That is where God is found and profoundly present.

*"Oh may this bounteous God through all our life be near us
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed
And free us from all harm in this world and the next." (ELW 840)*

Our trees will stay on the ground until the tree clearers have restored people to their homes; we can wait. I'll see you Sunday.

Pastor Douglas Ogden

**Congratulations to Steve and Ariel Ogden
on their marriage, June 21, 2024 !**

Prayer Concerns

It is an important part of our ministry to be praying constantly for one another. We add names to the prayer list with consent in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality. This month in your prayers, please remember:



Prayers for those who are homebound:

Our Minister

Helen Bartlett, at daughter Carol Roods' home now.
Mary Bernhardt, at Robinswood Assisted Living #115 (Kay Snell)
Marlene Holmstrom, at home
Ken Kolb, with health issues
Elaine Liska, at White Lake Assisted Living - Whitehall
Phyllis Monte, at Legacy of Caring - Whitehall
Ruth Nurmi, with health concerns
Barb Smith, at Legacy of Caring - Whitehall
Marty Windbacher, At Poppin House

Special Prayer Concerns:

Brianne Beekman, (Terry & Mary Beekman's granddaughter) diagnosed with multiple brain tumors.
Cody, (Sharon Webb-Ziske's grandson) underwent heart transplant
Lucas Carlson, (Terry and Mary Beekmans grandson) for new treatment.
Cheri Crouch, with health concerns.
Sheila Fretty, re-occurring cancer.
Elin Frietsch, diagnosed with Lymphoma
Margaret Fountain, (Mary Koenen's sister) diagnosed with multiple myeloma
Karl Glass, with health concerns
John Lewallen, (Mary Lewallen's brother-in-law) liver cancer
Mary Lewallen, with home & pet issues
Dwight Mead (Paula Moreau's brother-in-law), non-hodgkin lymphoma mantel type (stage four).
Tom Munn, (Frank Hollister's friend), health issues.
Lois Szczerbinski, with health issues
Pastor Sarah Samuelson, recently diagnosed with colorectal cancer
Paul Vof, (Ken and Sandy Kolb's son-in-law) hearing issues
Darlene Willbrandt, with bone infection (leg)
Our neighbors in the White Lake Area, after devastating losses from the recent storms.
For families dealing with dementia

For our partners in faith, our companion synods in Salud para la Vida in San Pedro Sula, Honduras for their mission and ministry in their place as we fulfill our mission in our place; for all the churches of the Lutheran World Federation, for people of the gospel throughout the world



Worship Notes

Sunday, July 7—Pentecost 7
Worship - 10:15am

Color: Green

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Readings

Today we pray for:
Rob & Lorey Montgomery

Ezekiel 2:1-5
Psalm 123
2 Corinthians 12:2-10
Mark 6:1-13

Baptisms
Ellis Gaiser
Nora Gaiser

Prayer of the Day

God of the covenant, in our baptism you call us to proclaim the coming of your kingdom. Give us the courage you gave the apostles, that we may faithfully witness to your love and peace in every circumstance of life, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Sunday, July 14 - Pentecost 8
Worship - 10:15am

Color: Green

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Readings

Today we pray for:
Greg & Molly Mooren

Amos 7:7-15
Psalm 85:8-13
Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:14-29

Prayer of the Day

O God, from you come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Sunday, July 19 - Pentecost 9
Worship - 10:15am

Color: Green

Readings

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Psalm 23
Ephesians 2:11-22
mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Today we pray for:
Taylor & Jonah Ogles

Prayer of the Day

O God, powerful and compassionate, you shepherd your people, faithfully feeding and protecting us. Heal each of us, and make us a whole people, that we may embody the justice and peace of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Sunday, July 28—Pentecost 10
Worship - 10:15 am

Color: Green

Readings

Musician:
Monica Ogden

2 Kings 4:42-44
Psalm 145:10-18
Ephesians 3:14-21
John 6:1-21

Today we pray for:
Christie Phillips

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, you have placed within the hearts of all your children a longing for your word and a hunger for your truth. Grant that we may know your Son to be the true bread of heaven and share this bread with all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**



July 2024



7/1 Molly Crouch	7/13 Mitchell Foster
7/1 Kareece Johnson	7/13 Emily Snell Glass
7/2 Zoe Fretty	7/16 Cindy Frale
7/2 Frank Lundell Jr.	7/16 Morgan Hughes
7/3 Raegan Murphy	7/16 Judy Kurtz
7/3 Reilly Murphy	7/17 Joel Fretty
7/3 Rhonda Sweet	7/18 Brooke Otto
7/4 David Civis	7/19 Barb Reece
7/5 Michelle Wheeler	7/22 Terry Beekman
7/6 Diane Eastman	7/23 Jennifer Fretty
7/8 Donna Frietsch	7/26 Matthew Everitt
7/9 Michael Palmer	7/27 Mackenzie Fretty
7/10 Robert Ackerman	7/28 Bob Ferrentino
7/10 Mark Brooks	7/29 Sophia Walters
7/10 Caryn Koster	7/31 Patricia DeNicolo
7/11 Lindsey Schenten	
7/12 Rick Hughes	



7/6/74	Al & Michelle Wheeler
7/11/78	Jim & Stephanie Emms
7/19/69	Brian & Juanita Holmblade
7/21/79	Lori & Jim Will
7/22/78	Mike & Lois Szczerbinski
7/30/11	Charles & Sally Jackson

Baptism Anniversaries



7/2 Eric Nelson
7/2 Drake Otto
7/2 Jay R. Otto
7/5 Jeff Griswold
7/8 Monica Ogden
7/12 Arin Snell Bowen
7/14 Carla Nessa

7/18 Blake Swenson
7/19 Kelsey Fretty
7/23 Brianna Clark
7/27 Verne Jensen, Jr.
7/28 Mark Brooks
7/28 Stephanie Emms
7/29 Marlene Holmstrom

7/30 Gina Holmblade

Celebrate your baptism anniversary with a candle a meal or this prayer:

“Stir up within me the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and joy, on this day when I give thanks for my baptism in to Christ.”

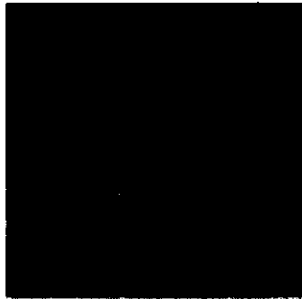
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2. Find our Church by searching for our Church name:
Lebanon Lutheran Church
3. Donate: to the General Fund

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This is the new version of the GivePlus app, and must be downloaded again from your App Store.



North/West Lower Michigan Synod
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In this Issue:
 Hateful Words and Untamed Tongues
 Sharing Health Resources and Jesus in Honduras
 Living Water Ministries: Moving Forward
 Creation Care Right in Our Own Backyard
 Upcoming Events
 Congregations in Transition

Hateful Words and Untamed Tongues

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." So many of us were taught this phrase as children. Then we learned how much words hurt us. In fact, Scripture's description of the human tongue is much more accurate than the saying about sticks and stones:

How great a forest is set ablaze by a such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of life, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth comes a blessing and a curse. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water (James 3:5-12).

I've been thinking and praying about hurtful words and untamed tongues, especially those at synod assemblies, for years. As I often do in the weeks after a synod assembly, I spend time reflecting on how we interact with each other in the weeks leading up to a synod assembly, during a synod assembly, and after a synod assembly. As we look back on our recent assembly and towards our next one, I share my reflections, the reasons I'm sharing them now, and how we might respond to hurtful words and untamed tongues.

Synod Assembly

For several years, untamed tongues and hurtful words have attended our synod assemblies. Untamed tongues speak and whisper hurtful words that are heard and overheard at our in-person assemblies. Hurtful words are expressed in emails before, during, and after assemblies. Hurtful words are inputted into the post-assembly survey. Untamed tongues and hurtful words are most often aimed at the bishop, the bishop's family, and the staff. *But the targets are expanding.*

Some among us report that our hurtful words and untamed tongues cause them to experience in-person assemblies as traumatic events. The CDC defines trauma as "a physical, cognitive, and emotional response caused by a traumatic event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced as harmful or life-threatening. Trauma can have lasting effects, particularly if untreated."¹ This definition of trauma rings true of my experience (and that of my family and much of the staff) of the 2019 Synod Assembly and Bishop Election; in response, the staff was advised to engage a therapist and process our shared experience, which we did. The trauma of in-person assemblies is not limited to the staff, my family, and me. If it were, I would not mention it five years later. *But like the targets of our hurtful words and untamed tongues, the trauma is expanding.*

Well-intentioned church folk offer the advice many church leaders receive—develop a thick skin, don't let things bother you, understand that hurtful words and untamed tongues come with public leadership in the church. People downplay the reality by asserting that this is just how *insert name* behaves, that this is who we are as a synod, that synod assembly always brings out the worst in us, and that naming any of this will negatively impact my ministry.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

My experience of the 2019 Synod Assembly and perceived threats to my call caused me to be afraid and my fear caused me to try even harder to develop a thick skin, not let things bother me, and accept hurtful words and untamed tongues as who we are as a synod. I told myself, since I am often the topic of untamed tongues and the target of hurtful words, to call them out would be self-serving. I know pastors and deacons who tell themselves this same thing about the hurtful words uttered about them in the congregations they serve.

"Well, That Ends Right Now."

For several reasons, I determined it's time to name the reality of hurtful words and untamed tongues, especially after reading some comments in this year's post-assembly survey.^[1] First, I am inspired by a scene in Aaron Sorkin's *The American President* (1995).^[2] At a press conference, President Andrew Shepherd (Michael Douglas) says, "I was so busy keeping my job, I forgot to do my job. Well, that ends right now." I got caught up in keeping my job at the 2019 Synod Assembly. "Well, that ends right now." As bishop, I made promises in the presence of God and you. I'd rather explain to God why I was slow in addressing hurtful words and untamed tongues than try to explain why I never addressed them at all.

Second, not doing something because of fear is its own kind of exhaustion. "Well, that ends right now." First John declares, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love" (4:18). Fear can be very imposing. God's love in Jesus Christ is empowering. So, when we ordain people, we charge them, "Be of good courage, for God has called you, and your labor in the Lord is not in vain." It's time I muster my courage and do the work to which God has called me. If calling us to live more fully into our identity as Christ's body in the world by measuring our words and attending to our tongues "costs"^[3] me this call, so be it. And I am confident the staff stands with me on this one.

Third, I have lingering guilt that I have not done a better job of defending my family and my staff against hurtful words and untamed tongues. "Well, that ends right now." I apologize to Cathy, Chelsea, and to our staff, especially to David, Rosanne, and their families. A word to the wise: Please, don't ever again cross me by deriding my family and my staff. Paraphrasing President Shepherd, "[They have] done nothing to you...You want a character debate? You better stick with me, 'cause [they are] way out of your league."

Fourth, I am exposed by the Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Advocate." The Holy Spirit does not advocate for us. The Holy Spirit does not advocate for the church. The Holy Spirit advocates for Jesus. One way the Holy Spirit advocates for Jesus is by exposing, even laying bare, the way we fall away and fail to follow Jesus and the self-judgment that comes from the Advocate's exposure. In John's Gospel, falling away and failing to follow Jesus is sin. Sin takes many forms, including allowing synod assemblies to become traumatic events by not naming hurtful words and untamed tongues. "Well, that ends right now." During sabbatical, I sought out a confessor who reminded me that forgiveness leads to amendment of life. So I am following Jesus in this regard.

Fifth, on sabbatical, I realized that I am happier and healthier when I don't have to absorb a daily dose of often offensive, frequently unfounded derision. I am also lighter when I don't have to wear either a thick skin or emotional armor. I have a hunch this is equally true for you. I wish we could say of thick skin and emotional armor, "Well, that ends right now." However, I suspect we will need them. Still, rather than passively gearing up to face trauma, we could at least call a halt to hurtful words and untamed tongues.

What Can We Do?

We can ask ourselves if hurtful words and untamed tongues is truly who we are and if this is who we are content to be. If not, perhaps we can take a moment and prayerfully bite our tongues before we speak. Perhaps we can take a moment and prayerfully fold our hands before we hit send. Perhaps we can endeavor to do as Luther directs in his explanation of the Eighth Commandment and put the best construction on our neighbor's actions rather than the worst.^[4]

Perhaps we can each do our own self-examination. Jesus says, "How can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye" (Matthew 7:3-5). We might consider what logs in our eyes might invite untamed tongues to utter hurtful words about us. I find people eager to talk to you about me are just as eager to talk to me about you. In this social media saturated, post-pandemic world, people seem to have lots to say about everyone. Christians who live in glass churches ought not throw stones. We certainly ought to make certain our own house is in order before we do.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

Perhaps we can seek out people who bring out the best in us. If the people we sit with cause us to misbehave, we can try sitting somewhere else. If we see a table misbehaving, we can pull up a chair and gently help them get back on track. If someone with hurtful words and an untamed tongue approaches the table, we can tell them to go away. At the 2019 Synod Assembly, when people went from table to table offering hurtful words about Cathy, Chelsey, and me, Pastor Betsy Kamphuis told them their "vitriol"^[1] was inappropriate, that she didn't want to hear it, and that they needed to go away. Hurtful words need someone to receive them; the best way to tame a tongue is to not listen. I am grateful that some have shared their commitment to call out and quiet hurtful words and untamed tongues at our next assembly.

James is right: "no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison." So, when our words are hurtful and our tongues untamed, we can apologize, repent, and commit to do better. Only apologize if doing so won't cause additional harm. Don't expect forgiveness, restoration, or reconciliation. Sometimes that's just not possible. But you have done all you can to remedy the situation and you may find peace with God and in your own spirit.

We can take trauma seriously. James compares the tongue to the spark that causes a forest fire. In the church, it certainly can be. Some experience an additional level of trauma when hurtful words are undeniably traced to the untamed tongues of rostered ministers. It may not be fair, but people expect more of bishops, pastors, and deacons. Rostered ministers might experience trauma because they know colleagues experience firsthand the pain of hurtful words; nevertheless, they unleash their own untamed tongues. Pastors and deacons are often traumatized by the hurtful words that come from the untamed tongues of parishioners they work faithfully and hard to love and serve.

Our church takes this trauma seriously. In the 2021 revision of "Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,"^[2] the ELCA Church Council includes "hateful speech," whether in person or on any kind of social media, as conduct inconsistent with the ministerial office and grounds for discipline. Moreover, "Willful and repeated harassment, abuse, bullying, libel, or slander of member(s) of the congregation [including rostered ministers or staff] are grounds for discipline of a member." James compares the tongue to the spark that causes a forest fire. The church understands that, sometimes, putting out the fire is the only way to keep the forest from burning down.

The theme of our 2025 Synod Assembly is "Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling." As part of the order for the Opening of a Synod Assembly, we say: "Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." These words are from Ephesians 4:1-3. Perhaps we can begin to live into this theme now by measuring our words and taming our tongues, so our in-person synod assemblies can live up to what many in our synod desire—an occasion of joy for all who gather. This is my prayer.

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

[1] <https://bit.ly/3RnPFbw>

[2] <https://bit.ly/3Xel2KE>

[3] <https://bit.ly/3XkTx78>

[4] Cf. Luke 14:27-33.

[5] <https://bit.ly/48iygNt>



*The Church office will be closed on
Thursday, July 4 and Friday, July 5th.*



Congratulations to Ellis and Nora Gaiser
who were baptized into the faith on Sunday,
July 7, 2024



Smorgasbord 2024 was a HUGE success!

Despite the power outages, our intrepid crew prepared, served and cleaned up after a extremely large crowd gathered to enjoy our annual traditional Swedish Smorgasbord.

They were ready to continue the tradition even if by lantern light!

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped prepare food, set-up and clean-up and to those who donated items.



Lebanon Lutheran Church

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Living in God's Amazing Grace

The Light is published monthly by Lebanon Lutheran Church, 1101 S. Mears Avenue, Whitehall, MI 49461. Submissions are accepted through the 15th of each month. Submissions MUST include your name and a way to contact you in case of questions.

2 ways to submit your information:

- yellow folder in Margaret's office
(*better*)
- office@lebanonlutheranchurch.com
(*best*)

