

Grace Notes



2023

Confirmation Is Not Graduation from the Church

"I'm never setting foot in a classroom again!" That's how many high school graduates feel after 13 years of school.

"I'm never going to church again!" After two years of confirmation classes and memory work, some confirmands feel this way. "I've graduated from church!" This is a sad attitude, but more common than you'd think. I've met people who have told me, "I'm a Lutheran," and when asked where they go to church, they respond, "Oh, I haven't gone to church since confirmation, but I was confirmed Lutheran, so I'm a Lutheran." What a strange idea! Consider this analogy: You meet a guy who says, "I'm a medical doctor." You respond, "Oh, really, where do you practice medicine?" The person says, "Oh, I don't practice medicine, I'm a banker. I went to medical school thirty years ago and trained to be a medical doctor, but I decided not to enter the medical field. I've never actually practiced medicine." Would you trust such a person to perform surgery on you? Would you take seriously his claim to be a "medical doctor"?

Similarly, we cannot take seriously a person's claim to be a Christian apart from practicing the faith. What do I mean by practicing the faith? First and foremost, attending the Sunday Divine Service. This is the basic activity for the Christian life. Everything we do as Christians flows out of the Divine Service and leads back to it. Why? Because the Divine Service is where God has located Himself for us to teach us His Word and deliver the forgiveness of sins to us through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. Put another way, the Divine Service is where the Holy Spirit serves us with all the benefits Jesus Christ earned for us through His perfect life, saving death, and victorious resurrection. The world's salvation was achieved on Mt. Calvary, and we receive that salvation through the preaching of God's Word and the giving out of His Sacraments. And God loves to give us these gifts! Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

So you can see why going to church is essential to being a Christian. Now don't get me wrong, I understand that sometimes people are prevented from going to church for legitimate reasons, like work, travel, illness, etc. Most congregations have "shut-ins," people who are homebound and cannot come to church. For them, and for people in the hospital, pastors "bring the church to them" by sending them audio recordings of our Divine Services and visiting to bring the Word of God and the Lord's Supper to them. But these are exceptions rather than the rule. In difficult cases, we do the best we can and trust that the Lord is merciful to us weak sinners. But for those of us who are able to attend church, this statement of Jesus applies: "Everyone to whom much has been given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

Practicing the Christian faith is a lot like eating. Notice all the "food metaphors" Jesus uses in His teaching. If you intentionally stop eating, your body will wither and eventually die. Likewise, if you intentionally exclude yourself from the Divine Service, where Christ's Word and Sacraments nourish us with the Bread of Life, your faith will lose its "lifeline." But the positive side is that God loves to work through the Divine Service to feed and nourish His children with forgiveness and salvation and fill our hearts with joy and steadfast faith in Him!

With this background in mind, let's return to our main topic—that confirmation is not graduation from church. The only real connection between confirmation and graduation is this: a good student will continue to seek out opportunities to learn after graduation; so also will a faithful Christian seek out the opportunity to learn God's Word better and receive God's grace after confirmation.

Confirmation is not graduation, nor is it advancement in the way of salvation. Baptism delivers salvation to us. "Baptism...now saves you" (1 Peter 3:27). "He saved us through the washing of rebirth" (Titus 3:5b). Confirmation doesn't make you "a full member of the church" or "a better Christian." Baptism makes you a member of the one, holy Christian and apostolic church and in it you receive all of Christ's gifts. Confirmation doesn't complete the process on the road to salvation. That was completed in the washing of water with the Word.

So what, then, is confirmation for? Consider this description from the *Lutheran Service Book Altar Book*:

Confirmation is a custom of the Church and not a sacrament. It links the catechumens [confirmands] to their Baptism, celebrates the reception of the Lord's Word among them and, in cases where the candidates have not yet communed, welcomes them to the Lord's Table.

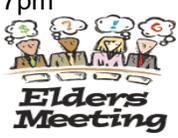
Confirmation declares of a catechumen that he or she is a Christian who has been baptized, confesses the faith, and is in communion with Christ and His Church. The reception of catechumens to the Lord's Table assumes that ongoing catechesis [instruction] is the way of life for the faithful Christian. This rite emphasizes God's work in Baptism, the gift of faith, and the benefits of the Lord's Supper for all who believe in Christ and the words of His testament.

The purpose of confirmation is to guide Christians into a deeper understanding and appreciation of the faith that was given to them in Baptism. Confirmands learn Luther's *Small Catechism*, which is a wonderful guide to Christian faith and life. They study the Bible and memorize key verses. They are taught the great blessings of the Sacrament of the Altar and what proper self-examination is. Then they have an opportunity to make a public confession of their faith. If they have not previously been admitted to the Lord's Supper, they begin to receive this Sacrament, which will nourish their faith throughout their earthly journey as strangers in this foreign land.

Far from being an end in itself, confirmation is a means to help Christians understand their dependence on the Lord's mercy, which is shown to them weekly in the Divine Service and daily in their remembrance of Holy Baptism. We pray that they also will realize the riches of Scripture that can be mined through a lifetime of Bible classes and devotions. And we pray that as they continue to remain faithful to the Lord, they will be motivated to bring their own children into the Lord's arms in Baptism and to His house each week, until they die and receive the Crown of Life.

Pastor Roth

May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 7pm  Elders Meeting	2	3	4	5	6
7 8:45am Sunday School & Bible Class 10am Worship/Communion	8 7pm-  LLL	9	10	11 6pm LWML 	12	13
14 8:45am Sunday School & Bible Class 10am Worship/Communion	15 4pm-Quilting 6pm-GLLC Mtg 7pm-Evangelism	16	17	18	19	20
21 8:45am Sunday School & Bible Class 10am Worship/Communion	22 8am-Braille	23	24	25 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE/NOON 	26	27
28 8:45am Sunday School & Bible Class 10am Worship/Communion	29	30	31			

Grace Lutheran Church

308 Byrne Street
Smithville, TX 78957
Office Phone: (512) 237-2108
Fax Line: (512) 237-2832

Email address: gracelutheransmithville@gmail.com
Web Site: www.glcs.org

Sunday School 8:45 AM
Midweek Classes 8:45 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM

Elders: Tommy Oates
Bert Bunte

Altar Guild: Wendy Rohde
Nelda Rohdel

Organist(s):
June Parker
Esther Wolff
Kim Appel
Ruth Eaton

Grace Lutheran Learning Center

401 Wilkes Street
Smithville, TX 78957
Office Phone: 512-360-2800
Fax Number: 512-237-5990

Email address: gracelutheranlearn@att.net

We now accept CCMS enrollment

Pastoral Care During Vacancy

Pastor Carl Roth of Grace Lutheran Church in Elgin is our vacancy pastor. If you are in need of pastoral care (hospital visit, etc.) please contact him at 512-229-8899.

CHURCH OFFICE

Normal hours are 9 to 2 Tues. – Thurs and 9 to 1 on Friday. If you need any help from the office i.e., copying documents, record information, info to be put in the bulletin and/or newsletter, etc., please feel free to stop by, call, etc. I am here to provide you with whatever you need from the church office. You may also leave a note in the Secretary's box in the Narthex, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions. Lisa Stem



Braille volunteers meet the 4th Monday of each month @ 8am.
We carpool to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Giddings to assemble braille bible study books.



As of April 28, 2023

Name	Balance
Prosperity Checking Acct	62,135.41
CEF-General	2,507.06
CEF-Land/Youth	12,630.30
CEF Scholarship	12,772.47
Legacy Deo	6,028.23
Total Dedicated Funds	48,927.43
General Fund Balance	13,207.98

KFUO Bible Study Resources



Looking for Bible study opportunities during the week? Make use of the fantastic resources for growth in your Christian faith produced by our very own LCMS radio station, KFUO (www.kfu.org). Their variety of

programs will provide something of value to every person who listens.



There is a plastic container in the Narthex for collection of **used bulletins & white printed papers** to be recycled at the Smithville Recycling facility. If there are any questions please ask Katie or John Stelling for info



At the time of this writing, the BAE continues the renovations. The plan is to announce two weeks of donations on Friday and Saturday. No dates have been announced. When store hours resume, they will remain open on Friday and Saturday from 9 to 2. Your donations and support are appreciated.



May 18 Jason & Rebekah Watson
 May 25 Chuck & Lisa Stem
 May 30 Michael & Elizabeth Caldwell



May 4 Rod Langer
 May 7 James Rice
 May 8 Brody Bennight
 Shena Kadlecek
 Ryan Teague
 Adrian Wolff
 May 9 John Stelling
 Issac Schwall
 May 13 Alice Miller
 Jarrett Randle
 May 14 Murrelyn Rice
 Kyleigh Psencik
 May 15 Kayla Herschap
 May 16 Mike Noak
 May 17 Asher Vanegas
 May 18 Nelda Rohde
 May 21 Daniel Davis
 May 25 Cason Herschap
 May 29 Rebekah Watson
 May 30 Madison Hannusch
 Brenda Sanders

Sunday School



Sunday school for all ages has returned to its regular time slot of 8:45 AM. The response from so many members of our congregation has been tremendous. The parish hall has been filled with great joy each Sunday morning as so many children and adults are eager to learn

God's Word—and there's always room for more! Please join us each week in the Parish Hall for a short opening with everyone together before we go to our separate classes. You won't regret making time to read, learn, and rejoice in God's Word!

Adult Bible Study



Adult Bible study at 8:45 AM continues each week, led by the guest pastor for that week. Join us to spend time together in God's Word.

Youth Group

All middle school and high school students and their parents are invited to join us at Youth Group! We normally meet every first Sunday of the month from 6:30-8:00 PM. Each month, we have time for Bible study, games, and snacks! Please join us!

Wishing these Friends a Happy Birthday! from your "Grace" family

If your birthday or anniversary does not appear correctly, please contact the church office so we can correct our files. Thank you.



Dear Member of Grace Lutheran Church,

We are excited to have Sunday School back at 8:45 am every Sunday. Our classes will be in the fellowship hall for all ages. 3yrs old through kindergarten teachers are Kim Appel and Ester Wolff, 1st grade through 4th grade is Kayla Herschap, 5th grade through 8th grade will be Donna Zimmerhanzel and Gene Brown,III and High School will be Gene Brown. We are always in need of volunteers to help teach or to sub when one of the teachers is out, so please feel free to contact a board member and we will gladly assist you in getting set up to volunteer.

DONUTS!!

There is a sign-up sheet on the Board of Education Bulletin Board for anyone who wants to furnish snacks between Sunday School and Church. There is also a donation can in the kitchen by the donuts if you would rather just donate to the cause.

Our current mission project is Missionary Becky Bartelt, There are envelopes on the Board of Ed Bulletin Board for anyone who would like **to contribute to our Mission.**

Our Board members for this year are: Charlie Johannessen, Toni Ann Kadlecek, Kathy Kasper, Mary Lou Oliver, Melissa Brown, June Parker, Barb Johannessen and the Sunday School Superintendent is Donna Zimmerhanzel. Please feel free to contact any of us at any time if you have questions.

May God Bless all of you.

Respectfully,

Barb Johannessen

Board of Education

Upcoming Schedule for Visiting Pastors:

(a copy of this will also be posted above the water fountain in the narthex)

Sunday, May 7, 2023	Mittwede	Easter 5
Sunday, May 14, 2023	Kunkel	Easter 6
Sunday, May 21, 2023	Mittwede	Easter 7 / Ascension
Sunday, May 28, 2023	Keistman	Pentecost
Sunday, June 4, 2023	Keistman	Holy Trinity
Sunday, June 11, 2023	Kunkel	Pentecost 2
Sunday, June 18, 2023	Mittwede	Pentecost 3
Sunday, June 25, 2023	Austin	Pentecost 4



LWML

Lutheran Women in Mission

UPCOMING:

May 11th
6pm-Business Mtg

May 15th
4pm-Quilting

We welcome you to join us in “Serving the Lord with Gladness.” Please contact any LWML member or June Parker at 512-581-1168 to learn more or go to www.lwml.org or www.lwmltxdist.org to read about the mission and great history of LWML.

Mission Project for April -- Confirmation gifts for 8 confirmands and Ingathering for the Spring Rally



LWML TEXAS DISTRICT GRANT BULLETIN BYTES:

The Table of Los Fresnos Mission Outreach- \$25,000

Gracious Lord, in Your earthly ministry You met people in the marketplace and on the hillside where You fed them with Your Word and with loaves and fish. Many people in the Rio Grande Valley are lost and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. We pray Your blessing on the mission efforts of The Table of Los Fresnos as they carry Your Word and Sacraments through meaningful service to the de-churched and unchurched in their community, offering food, clean-ups, and fix-ups. May the step van, tables, and chairs they will purchase with this mission grant multiply their ministry to seek and restore their neighbors to Your kingdom. We pray in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Donations to the large Mite Box in the Narthex are joyfully accepted.

National Mission Grant Bulletin Bytes:

Mercy House Belize Lutheran Campus- \$100,000

The Belize Mission Society (BMS) has a dental clinic in a multipurpose building that is located in the village. This grant money would fund the building of a Mercy House next to the elementary school and Christ Lutheran Church. By bringing the dental clinic and other programs to the Lutheran campus, it will lead people to the Church and connect them with the missionaries. The BMS is intent on “strengthening their cord” (a reference to Ecclesiastes 4:12) with the Belize FORO (forum), the missionaries, and the local residents. By building relationships with children, they also reach their extended family with the Good News of their Savior, Jesus Christ. Mercy House — Belize Mission Campus will further the mercy work and relationship-building of the BMS while providing a tangible connection to Christ Lutheran Church.



The Widow’s Mite --- And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” Mark 12:42-44 ESV



FAITH LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL OF CENTRAL TEXAS

New Student Registration

Registration for the 2023-2024 school year is underway. Five new students have already enrolled. We would love to welcome you into our Falcon family as well. Call us at (979) 242-2889 to schedule a shadow day or visit our website at www.flhstx.org for registration information.

The Spring Thing!

FLHS is proud to present The Spring Thing! This will be a showcase of our students' work in the fine art department, including vocal, instrumental, and handbell pieces. Please join us Wednesday, May 10th, at 7pm.

6th Annual Golf Tournament

Faith Lutheran High School will be holding their annual golf tournament fundraiser on Saturday, May 13th at Frisch Auf Country Club in La Grange Texas. Shotgun start at 8:00 AM. For more information on entering a 4 person team or to sign up as a sponsor, please call (979) 242-2889 or visit our website at www.flhstx.org.

Busy Night? Dinner's On Us

FLHS Booster's Club is selling 9 X 13 Chicken Spaghetti casseroles, available for pick-up on Monday, May 22nd. Pre-order by Monday, May 15th. Cost is \$35 each. Limited amounts available. Call FLHS to order yours today!

Youth Camps

Summer camps are back! We are excited to offer a variety of camps for youth this summer. Ages are for grades NEXT school year.

May 30 to June 1 - Volleyball - Grade 3 to 8 - \$20

June 12-14 - Basketball - Grades K to 8 - \$20

June 19-21 - STEM Camp - Grades K to 6 - \$40

June 26-28 - Art Camp - Grades K to 6 - \$40

July 31 to Aug 1- Archery - Grade 4 to 8 - \$20

Please visit our website or Facebook page for more information! Don't wait --- Sign up today!! Space is limited!

Staff Positions Available

Faith Lutheran High School will have part time openings on its faculty and staff for the 2023-2024 academic year! Interested individuals who have secretarial experience or teach any subject area are encouraged to apply, but science, social studies, English, or electives are sought after skills. Applicants may submit resumes to Faith Lutheran High School, PO Box 138, Warda, TX 78960, call (979) 242-2889, or email them to kueckn@flhstx.org. If you have the time and talents, please consider applying and sharing your gifts with our students. Thank you!

Thrivent Action Team Grants

If you are a Thrivent member willing to submit an application for a \$250 grant to be used on projects at Faith, please contact Nikki Kueck by calling (979) 242-2889. Help us to be able to take advantage of these funds for the good of our school. *We are currently looking to utilize Action Grants to offset expenses associated with our summer camps!

Singing the Church's Song in Asia

NEWS FROM BECKY BARTELT
Serving the Lord in Taiwan/Asia

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

I am giving thanks to God for the International SOS Assistance Service, provided by the LCMS, which located a place in Taiwan where I could get a medication I need. Because of a shortage of the medication, I was told I could not get it without a national health card, which I cannot get until I've lived in Taiwan for six months. I am so thankful to God for the support of my colleagues here in Taiwan and Asia, the help of the Asia regional assistant and International SOS. It was a very emotional time, but God works through the vocations of many people to heal and keep us healthy. Praise God for this!



Praise Him All Creatures Here Below!



Yesterday I went to visit a monkey nature preserve in the mountains with some friends where we observed and fed the monkeys bananas. The owners seek to preserve a sanctuary for the monkeys in an area where their habitat is gradually disappearing, and some try to trap the monkeys. Several of them were missing part of their hands or feet. On the way we passed several cemeteries that seemed to be burned. I found out they were burned on purpose because Tomb Sweeping Day is coming up. They burn the cemeteries, so that people can replant them and honor/worship their ancestors with food and by burning incense and "ghost money". All this is to provide for their ancestors in the afterlife.



Praise Him Above Ye Heavenly Host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

Recently Salvation Lutheran Church, the local Lutheran Church I attend, began a bi-lingual Sunday School with the goal of catechesis for the children and youth of the congregation. I asked and was given permission to spend ten minutes of the time teaching the children a piece to sing for Palm Sunday in English. I found a piece with a very simple 2-part echo section and some adults are even playing some small hand bells with the children. We have had a lot of fun singing together and preparing to share this with the congregation on Palm Sunday. I also found an arrangement of "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" which is already translated into Chinese in the hymnal. Concordia Publishing House gave us permission to do it and a group of adults have been working on this piece to celebrate Easter with the congregation. It has two descants and a choral verse.



Amen!

中文

My main task right now is learning the Chinese language. This has been a big challenge for me for several reasons. One is the tonal nature of the language. The other is that the characters are so difficult to write.

Recently my friends introduced me to two apps which produce online flashcards so I can learn the words without having to be able to write the characters right now. The language is coming, but not as quickly as I would like. I have to remind myself that I am now 48 and not 23 as I

was when I was learning Russian in Kazakhstan as a young LCMS volunteer missionary for 1 1/2 years. The online flashcards have been extremely helpful, though.

PLEASE GIVE THANKS FOR:

- finding a source for medication in Taiwan and good health care
- rain! Today we had rain for the first time since my arrival two months ago!
- supportive friends and colleagues.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- more rain! We are experiencing drought right now.
- opportunities for witness!
- perseverance in learning Chinese.

FYI: Some of you have asked for my Taiwan address. Here it is!

Becky Bartelt

5F-2, #167 Gongyuan Street, East District

Chiayi City, Taiwan 600044



Vacation Bible School
July 23 – 27, 2023
5:30p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

The Key Theme is: God's Living Water. Children aged 3 thru those going into the 6th grade are welcome to join us.

Those of you who do not fall into that age category are welcome to join us to assist the teachers in each department! We would love to have you attend!! It is such a joy to see these kids learning about Jesus!!

Each evening will start with a light meal then we will have an opening devotion and learn the songs associated with this VBS program. We will then rotate in groups to the Bible Stories site, Crafts site, Games site and Snacks site. Our evening ends with another devotion and more singing. The Pre-K kiddos have a separate classroom to learn these lessons instead of rotating with the bigger kids. It really is a great week spent worshipping our Lord.

Reach out to me at rmpietsch@yahoo.com or call or text me at (512) 304-5866. Your help is greatly appreciated!