

September 2026

American Lutheran Church

"For the Beauty of the Earth, ...Christ, our God, to thee we raise this sacrifice of praise."

ELW #879

1512 Avenue G Gothtsburg, NC 69138 308-537-3433 office@alec.org

WORD OF LIFE

Sunday Lessons in August for your devotions



September 6

Creation in Christ Sunday

Genesis 1:1--2:4a

Psalms 148

Acts 17:22a, 24-28

John 1:1-5

September 13

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 50:15-21

Psalms 103:1-13

Romans 14:1-12

Matthew 18:21-35

September 20

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Jonah 3:10--4:11

Psalms 145:1-8

Philippians 1:21-30

Matthew 20:1-16

September 27

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Psalms 25:1-9

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-

32

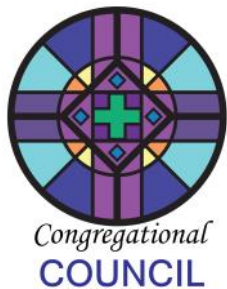


«Route »

«Last Name», «First Name»

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Congregation Council
Meeting
August 11, 2026, 7:00 pm

Present: **Pastor:** Doug
Hjelmstad, **President:**
Amanda Rossell, **Vice-**

President/Memorial: Kevin Boyd, **Secretary:**
Tammy McMichael, **Treasurer:** Maddie
Rosse, **Hospitality & Outreach:** Macy Finke,
Youth & Family: Stacy Anderson, **Music &**
Worship: Ernie Blecha, **Property:** Glenn
Finke, **Parish Education:** Erica Johnson

Maddie opened the meeting with a devotion about how God wants us to quiet our hearts and minds and come to Him. She reminded us that God wants us to know the height and depth of His love for us.

Congregational Open Comments:

Pastor Doug introduced Reverend Breen Sipes to the council. Reverend Sipes assists Zion Lutheran Church in Gothenburg and Zion Lutheran Church in Haigler with Sunday worship services and confirmation services. Pastor Sipes lives in North Platte. See Discussion Items for further information.

Minutes:

The July 21, 2026, minutes were reviewed. A correction was made to the minutes regarding the 2026 quarterly report to read, "The April through June 2026 quarterly report was reviewed." Macy made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected, and Erica seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report:

The July monthly report was reviewed.

All routine bills have been paid.
Special offering funds will go to the Lutheran Campus Ministry.

Pastor's Report:

Pastor performed the funeral service for Jim Gonzales.

Pastor will visit Haigler Zion Lutheran Church on Sunday, August 16, 2026. Kara Kreis will lead the church service during Pastor Doug's absence.

A church service will be held at the Park Pavilion on Sunday, August 30, 2026, followed by a potluck dinner. Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided. Everyone is welcome to attend and is asked to bring a side dish and lawn chairs.

A motion was made by Ernie and seconded by Macy to approve the purchase of a new office chair for Pastor. The motion carried.

Hospitality & Outreach:

Everything seems to be in place for the August 30th church service at the Park Pavilion.

Youth & Family:

The pool party was well attended and enjoyed by all who attended.

Music & Worship:

Nothing new to report.

Property:

The two flagpoles located outside the church will remain in their current locations. Congregation members have volunteered to provide replacement flags and assist with hanging them as needed.

Continued on next page

Dying trees have been identified at both the north and south parsonages and will be removed.

Stewardship:

Nothing new to report.

Parish Education:

The average Sunday School attendance from January 1 through May 10, 2026, was 10 children.

Lessons for the 2026–2027 Sunday School year have been planned. Volunteers are currently being sought to serve as Sunday School teachers.

Memorial:

The Cover Fund CD has reached maturity and was reviewed. Of the funds, \$30,000.00 will be transferred to the general account to pay for the sound system upgrades. The remaining \$120,000.00 will be renewed at an interest rate of 3.9% for an additional three months. The CD will be reviewed again at its next maturity date.

The Memorial Fund CD has reached maturity and was reviewed. The CD will be renewed at an interest rate of 3.9% for an additional three months and will be reviewed again at its next maturity date.

Any interest accrued from these two CDs will be given to the Good Samaritan Fund.

Discussion Items/Continuing Business:

Plan for Reverend Sipes to assist Pastor Doug with Wednesday evening duties:

The council reviewed and discussed a Leader Agreement presented by Reverend Sipes regarding her assistance with Pastor Doug's Wednesday evening duties. The agreement outlined Reverend Sipes' responsibilities, including leading Wednesday chapel services

and assisting with confirmation duties.

The council also reviewed and discussed ALC's responsibilities related to Wednesday chapel services and confirmation, as well as the financial compensation for Reverend Sipes for providing these services.

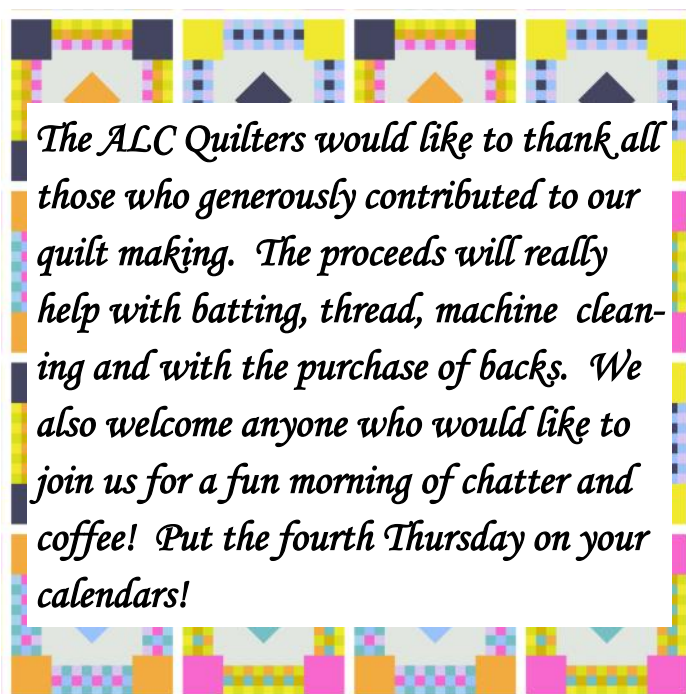
It was motioned by Kevin and seconded by Maddie to agree to the Leader Agreement presented by Reverend Sipes for confirmation and chapel services September 16, 2026, through April 28, 2027. Expenses will come out of Parish Education and Support Staff accounts. Motion carried.

Pastor Doug will reach out to Reverend Sipes for further actions.

The meeting closed at 8:58 pm with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, September 8, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

Tammy McMichael, Secretary



Starting September 20th

Purpose:

- Engage
- Be Informed
- Experience other perspectives
- Be in Community

**issYOUs and
issMEs:
Conversations
About the
World and Our
Place In It**

**3rd Sunday from 3-5 pm
@ALC-Cozad**

**New Topic Every Month
Led by Kristin Bartlett**

Ephesians 3:20 “To God- whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

Free-Will Donation for 2027 National Gathering

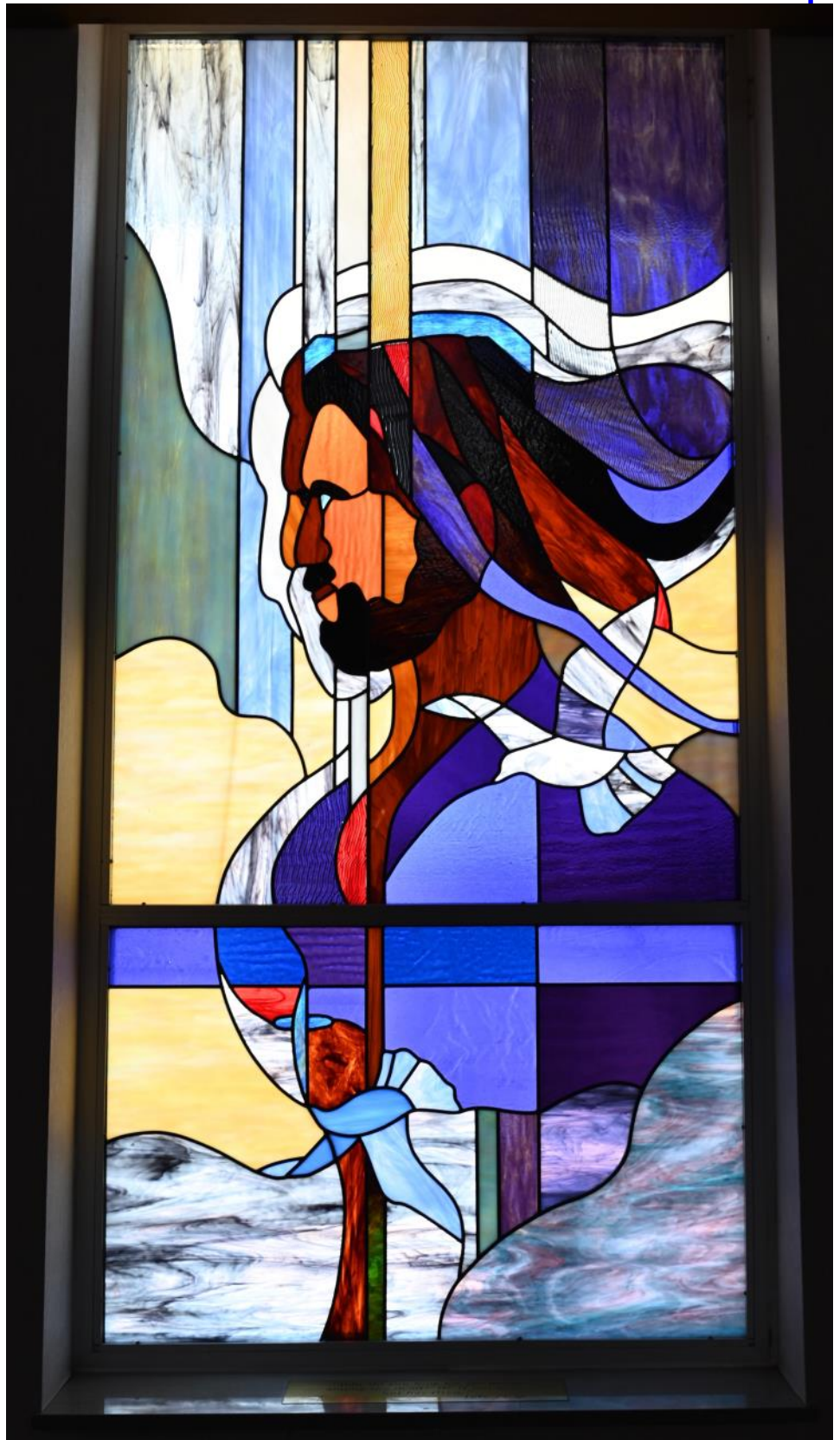
Refreshments Provided

Did You Know?

The fifth window on the east aisle of American Lutheran Church is for the season of Easter. In the church's calendar, Easter is not just one special day, Easter Sunday (The Resurrection of Our Lord), but "a week of weeks," spanning across seven Sundays. Here a little math is helpful: $7 \times 7 = 49$, so the 50th day is "Pentecost," which is a new season, but also the culmination of the seven weeks of Easter.

The Easter window gives a hint of this connection between Easter and Pentecost, because the window includes a dove, a representation of the Holy Spirit, whose pivotal arrival is celebrated on that 50th day. Perhaps there are even two doves suggested in this image, the one mirroring or reflecting the other, as one may see in the lower portion of the stained glass window.

I believe that in the series of our six windows, this Easter window was perhaps the greatest artistic challenge. The four gospels do not directly describe the resurrection of Jesus as a discrete event. In the scriptural texts there is a reticence and respect for the mystery of God's action in the resurrection of Christ, and so artistic endeavors often seek to emulate that sense of humble respect.



As I reflect upon this portrayal of the Risen One, certain key Bible verses and themes come to mind. One I have already alluded to is the dynamic action of God's Spirit of life in the resurrection of the dead. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." Notice how there are auras or reflections around the outlined figure of the risen Jesus, a reminder of the transformative power of God. In this window we see the "face" of Jesus, but at the same time it is our faces and our very existence that are being transformed in the glory of God.

Another theme we may consider is that of the "new humanity." Jesus here represents all humankind and lifts us up in the newness of resurrection life. Our distinctions of ethnicity or gender or societal status no longer matter, for we are one humankind in Christ. As Paul writes in Colossians 3:11, in the new humanity we are "located" in the risen Christ, "where there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!"

Earlier in the book of Colossians, there is a section which is very poetic, and it may have been derived from an early Christian hymn (1:15-20). In this hymn there seem to be two stanzas, one praising Christ Jesus as "the firstborn of all creation" and a second portion in which he is "the firstborn from the dead." This poetic lyric reminds us that resurrection is not a "flying away" or abandonment of creation, but rather a celebration of God's re-creation of the universe in the risen Christ. Speaking personally, this passage helps me to be grateful for a window that honors God's creation in Christ as a foundational aspect of our faith. As Colossians declares, Jesus is the image of the invisible God and "all things have been created through Christ and for Christ." In other words, resurrection is not simply about individual salvation, it is the restoration and reconciliation of God's created universe: through Christ, the fullness of God, "God was pleased to reconcile to Godself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

Steve Berke



*Women's Bible Study in September will
be on Sunday, the 13th at 7 p.m.*

ALC Policy on Children in Church



If your children seem loud to you, please still come to church.

If you're running late because getting everyone dressed and out the door and into the car is a battle (especially during the winter), please still come to church.

If your toddler can't sit still and won't use their 'inside voice' and asks (again) 'How much longer?' please still come to church.

If your infant is crying to be fed, please still come to church.

If a toy gets dropped for the umpteenth time, or someone needs another snack, or has to make a third trip to the bathroom and you feel like you spend the entire service doing crowd control, please still come to church.

If you're worried your children are a disruption to people around you, you should know that those people are actually not bothered at all because most of them have been where you are. And they love your children. So please, just come to church.

At ALC we believe that children learn how to be part of church life by being present in the assembly.

They learn the hymns by hearing them sung.

They learn to pray by listening to prayers.

They learn the rituals and rhythms of Sunday morning by being in worship.

They learn they are part of the church family when they are not merely tolerated, but welcomed and embraced.

So just come and bring your children. Sit where you like. Step out if you need to, and then come right back. Children are not only the future of the church, they are part of the body of Christ right now. And there is a place for them at ALC. So please, just come to church.

(Adapted with gratitude from St. John Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, IN)

Prayer Requests

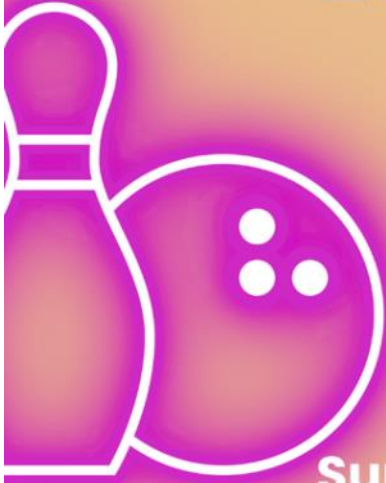
Remember in Prayer: Members: Gail Block, Elsie Cyriacks, Pam Gage, Judy Hicken, Dennis McCain, Lavonne Werkmeister, family of Wayne Janssen;

Family & Friends of Members: Lori Edwards, Chad Fuller, Abbie Hall, Jim Haver, Kristy Henn, Rich Hillan, Darcy Lenz, Shirley Stombaugh, Sabrina T., Chuck Taylor, Reese Tucker;

Service Members: Johanna Keiser, Brandon Reinke, Maggie Trenkle.

If you or a family member are ill or in the hospital, let us know so Pastor Doug can visit you and include you in our prayers or if a family member is on the prayer list and you feel that they no longer need to be included in them, please call the office at 537-3433.

CALLING ALL 6TH -12TH GRADERS



Illumin8 is back!
Come join us at Strike
and Spare Bowling!

Sunday, September 13th
2-4 p.m.

1408 N Adams in Lexington

2 games and drinks
will be paid for

Food is on your own

If you plan to attend the
Minneapolis trip, please plan to
stay for a meeting from 4-6 at
Grace Lutheran Church



Illumin8 was started last year as a way of getting together with other churches: ALC Cozad, St. Johns Cozad, Grace Lutheran Lexington & St. Johns Eustis. We usually meet the second Sunday of the month. We have opened it up to 6th - 12th graders. We do carpool when they are out of town at the other churches.

Beloved People of ALC,

After nearly six years of life together (how did that happen so fast?) the time has arrived for me to begin the transition into retirement. I will be turning 70 next year and I'm aware that the day is surely coming when it will be time for me to move on. At this point, I have set no time frame for this, but I believe we need to be intentional and proactive while we have some time and flexibility to respond, rather than continue blithely along until we are forced to react out of necessity or crisis. I want to leave well and make the transition as smooth and stress-free as possible and the council and I have already engaged in some discussion about this. Changes in pastoral leadership are a part of congregational life, but we are also moving in some uncharted waters...

ALC is a spiritually healthy, financially solid congregation and would be an excellent call, as it has been for me. However, a considerable challenge to be faced is that the process for calling a new pastor could be – and likely will be – longer and more drawn out, mainly because of a lack of available candidates throughout the ELCA. In addition, there are very few pastors available for interim work or even pulpit supply. With this in mind, council has discussed the implications of this including entering the call process sooner rather than later in order to be as proactive as possible.

The Council and I have also discussed some activities / duties I could hand off or give up in order to prolong my “battery life,” enable me to work a little longer under a lighter work load and eventually move to part-time status (1/2 or 3/4 time). In that spirit, Council approved a proposal from Rev. Breen Sipes to teach Confirmation and lead the Wednesday evening chapel service, beginning September 16th. Pastor Breen will bring some good energy and enthusiasm to the ALC community. More information about this will be forthcoming from the Youth & Family Committee.

I will also be making some adjustments to my housing arrangements. In anticipation of calling your next pastor, the parsonage is in need of some improvements / upgrades, especially in the kitchen and bathroom. The plan is to fund the work with proceeds from the sale of the ‘south parsonage’. In order to better facilitate the work, I will be looking into some new housing arrangements in the next couple of months that will also serve as a bridge to a retirement house or apartment.

Part of the quandary for me in all of this is that I love where I am and what I am doing. These past six years have been the most fulfilling and rewarding of my working life. I wish I had another 15 years. But it is also clear to me that my energy is waning; and I would like to have some time to ‘be retired’ while I am still in reasonably good health. I have often described ALC as “a church that knows how to show up” and I am confident that this will continue to be true; that we will face this time of transition together with a spirit of perseverance, grace, and trust in knowing that whatever the future holds, God is already there.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Doug Hjelmstad

Special Offering for September is Bishop Maas Leadership Fund

During his 10 years of service, Bishop Maas was passionate about raising up and equipping leaders to serve the church. Under Bishop Maas' guidance many new leadership initiatives were launched and existing programs were invigorated. His work has strengthened the Nebraska Synod and will sustain the Synod well into the future. Some examples of these programs are:

The Parish Ministry Associate (PMA) program is a training for lay leaders to serve within their congregation when they are in transition and without a pastor.

How, Then, Will I Lead offers training which helps rostered ministers, PMAs, and other lay leaders learn how to be fearless and insightful leaders in an ever-changing church. Much of the cost is underwritten by the Synod.

Emmaus: Lifelong Learning Academy is a new initiative which provides lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages who want to engage in further theological learning, or learning about how to be a leader in the church.

Reducing Seminary Student Debt was a focus of Bishop Maas' advocacy during his tenure and he led the efforts to greatly expand funds for this.

Fall Bible Study will be led by Pastor Steve Berke and Pastor Doug Hjelmstad on Thursday evenings, 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., in the chapel room at ALC. The dates are September 17 and 24, October 1, 8, and 15.

On these five evenings we will look at the time "between" the Old Testament and the New Testament, and then the stories of the gospels. [In a later winter session we will deal with Jesus' resurrection and key New Testament writings such as Acts, Paul's letters, and the church in the latter part of the first century.]

That may be the "proper" way to describe our topics, but perhaps it sounds a little boring or predictable. So let me list some of the themes for the five weeks this September and October:

1. Finding the way in the topsy-turvy world after the exile: insiders and outsiders
2. The great empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome, and God's people in the mix
3. Who are those Bandits, and Pharisees, and Sadducees, and what are they up to?
4. Jesus and the kingdom message of Manna and Mercy for All
5. Jerusalem and Jesus' death at the hands of the Big Deals

Whether or not you attended the Old Testament portion of Manna and Mercy last school year, you are welcome! Hope to see beginning Thursday, September 17, 7:00 p.m.

Preparing the Way

Every September, Nebraska seems to take a deep breath.

The first day of school arrives with new backpacks, sharpened pencils, and classrooms filled with anticipation. Friday night football returns, bringing communities together under bright lights and cool evening skies. Sunday school classrooms come alive once again as children, youth, and adults gather around God's Word. Across the countryside, farmers spend long hours in machine sheds changing oil, replacing worn belts, checking bearings, and making certain combines and grain trucks are ready. The fields have begun to turn, but the harvest has not yet arrived.

September is a month of preparation.

Much of life is like that. Before there is a harvest, there is preparation. Before there is a game, there are countless practices. Before knowledge grows, there are lessons to be learned. Before faith bears visible fruit, God quietly forms His people through worship, prayer, His Word, and the encouragement of fellow believers.

Preparation rarely receives applause. Few people notice the teacher planning tomorrow's lesson after the school day ends. No one cheers the farmer spending another evening in the shop replacing worn parts before the first acre is cut. Even in the church, much of the most important work happens quietly—volunteers preparing Sunday school classrooms, musicians rehearsing, altar guild members caring for the sanctuary, committee members planning ministries, and faithful servants doing countless acts of kindness that may never be seen by anyone but God.

Yet this is often how the Lord chooses to work.

Throughout Scripture, God prepares His people long before they understand what He is doing. Noah built an ark before the rain fell. Joseph stored grain before the famine came. The prophets prepared God's people to receive His promises. And before Jesus began His public ministry, God sent John the Baptist with a simple but profound calling: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

Preparation is not wasted time. It is an act of faith.

Martin Luther reminded us that God works through our ordinary vocations. Teachers, parents, farmers, students, coaches, mechanics, musicians, and neighbors each serve God through the everyday work He has placed before them. As we faithfully carry out those callings, God is often accomplishing far more than we can see. He is shaping character, strengthening faith, blessing our neighbors, and preparing us for the work He has yet to place before us.

Perhaps that is why September feels so hopeful. It reminds us that God's work is not measured only by visible results. Long before the combines enter the fields, long before report cards are printed, long before victories are celebrated, faithful preparation is already bearing fruit in ways known only to Him.

As another autumn begins, may we embrace this season with gratitude. Let us pray for our students and teachers, encourage our young people, support our farmers, and faithfully gather around God's Word. The Lord who prepares the harvest is also preparing His people. And because He is faithful, we can enter every new season with confidence, trusting that He is already at work, even when we cannot yet see the harvest He has in store.

~ Tom Gosinski

September Birthdays & Anniversaries



Happy Birthday

- 1 Jim Long
- 2 Jill (Alger) Franzen
Corey Roth
- 4 Deann Steuben
Adam Grabenstein
Steve Berke
- 6 Shelby Miller
- 7 Beth Ostendorf
- 8 Jedrick Warner
Aaron Franzen
- 9 David Jobman
Jolene Olson
- 13 Troy D. Franzen
- 14 Kayla Aden
- 15 Alec Wagner
Hayden Grabenstein
- 16 Angie Mannel
Aaron Boyd
Fletcher Grabenstein
Ali Parker
- 17 Connie Stevens
Clay Terrell
- 21 Lisa (Todd) Geiken
Kristin Harm

- 22 Libby Franzen
Mary Lou Dishman
- 23 Helena Dorn
Penny Thorman
Josh Franzen
Kooper Koehn
Makenzie Rossell

- 24 Julie Good
- 25 Jeff Jobman
John Schmeeckle
- 26 Derek Rodine
- 27 Kurt Stevens
- 28 Jane Franzen
Karter McNally
- 29 Alexis Boyd
- 30 Oaklynn Headley
Sue Rossell

Anniversaries

- 1 Troy & Jill Franzen
- 3 Travis & Jacy Ostergard
Wade & Tracy Geiken
Willard & Laura Keiser
Scott & Jackie France
- 4 Corey & Keri Roth
- 8 Eldon & Linda Rodine
- 10 Justin & Cari Geiken
- 15 Shane & Kelly Terrell
- 17 Adam & Kelsey Grabenstein
- 19 Derek & Jessa Thompson
- 21 Jacob & Madison Rosse
- 23 Dan & Sharise Scherer
- 26 Mark & Tracy Lichtenwalter

Sunday Volunteers

Acolytes -

September 6 - Gretta McKim
September 13 - Eli Erb, Dax Hengen
September 20 - Lathan Johnson,
Alec Wagner
September 27 - Fletcher Grabenstein,
Rowdy Grabenstein
October 4 - Cooper Roth

Ushers -

September 6 - Noel & Joni Jacobsen
September 13 - Joyce Hudson, Pat Jobman
September 20 - Roger Koehler,
LaMonte Schlake
September 27 - Connie & Kurt Stevens
October 4 - Glenn & Sue Finke

Communion Assistants -

September 6 - Randy & Cressy Rossell,
Tammy McMichael
September 13 - Craig & Mary Finke,
Rick Zarek
September 20 - Noel & Rebecca Jacobsen
Lisa Wagner
September 27 - Carolyn Hicken,
TJ & Ashleigh Brown
October 4 - Macy Finke,
Scott & Jackie France

Reader -

September 6 - Kendra Boyd
September 13 - Lori Johnson-Berke
September 20 - Kara Kreis

September 27 - Will Rahjes
October 4 - Kevin Boyd

Welcome Center Host -

September 6 - Jena Rahjes
September 13 - Lisa Bihlmaier
September 20 - Jan Blecha
September 27 - Barb Hicken
October 4 - Elaine Keiser

Greeters -

September 6 - Jonie Birnie, Larry Franzen
September 13 - Corey & Keri Roth
September 20 - Dave & Wenda Keiser
September 27 - Larry & Sue Schledewitz
October 4 - Joe & Carol Keiser

Sound -

September 6 - Eldon Rodine
September 13 - Cressy Rossell
September 20 - Kurt Stevens
September 27 - Scott Aden
October 4 - Eldon Rodine

Offering Counters -

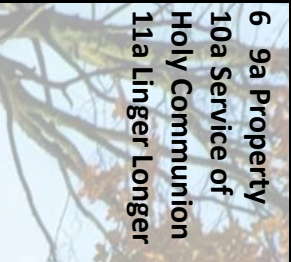
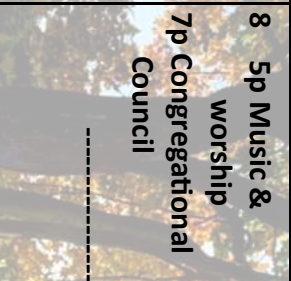
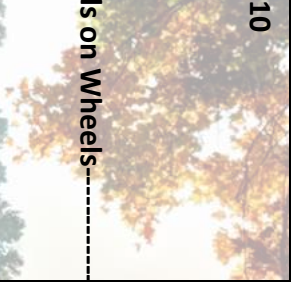
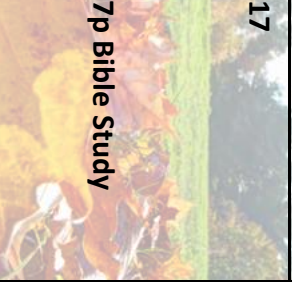
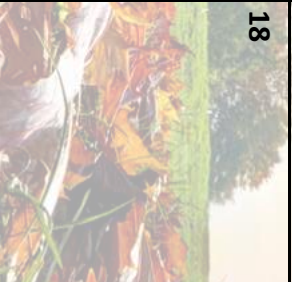
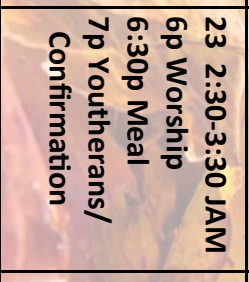
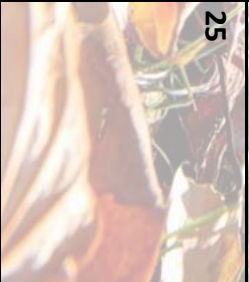
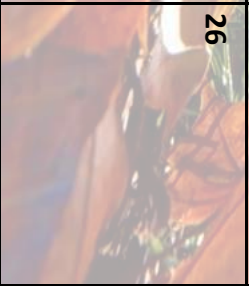
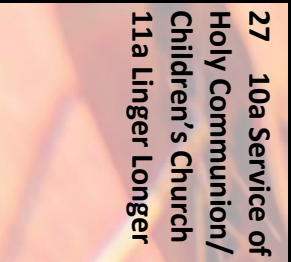
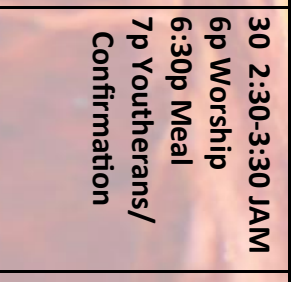
September - Linda Rodine

Communion Bread -

September 6 - Joni Jacobsen
September 13 - Jan Blecha
September 20 - Lisa Wagner
September 27 - Carol Keiser
October 4 - Lori Johnson-Berke

Communion Support Person-

September 6 - Linda Rodine
September 13 - Natalie Hengen
September 20 - Macy Finke
September 27 - Scout Bell
October 4 - Kendra Boyd

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 6 9a Property 10a Service of Holy Communion 11a Linger Longer	 7 Labor Day	 1 8 5p Music & worship 7p Congregational Council	 2 9 2:30-3:30 JAM 6:30p Youtherans & Confirmation	 3 10	 4 11	 5 12
 13 10a Service of Holy Communion 11a Linger Longer 7p Women's Bible Study	 14 1:15p Communion at Stone Hearth	 15	 16 2:30-3:30 JAM 6p Worship 6:30p Meal 7p Youtherans/ Confirmation	 17 7p Bible Study	 18	 19
 20 10a Service of Holy Communion 11a Linger Longer	 21	 22	 23 2:30-3:30 JAM 6p Worship 6:30p Meal 7p Youtherans/ Confirmation	 24 8:30a Quilters 7p Bible Study	 25	 26
 27 10a Service of Holy Communion/ Children's Church 11a Linger Longer	 28 1:15p Communion at Stone Hearth	 29	 30 2:30-3:30 JAM 6p Worship 6:30p Meal 7p Youtherans/ Confirmation	 September 2026		