**Guest Article…**

**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- November 2019

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“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

***The following is reprinted from Surburg’s blogs (July 22, 2015)***

**Jesus didn't say homosexuality and same sex marriage are wrong?**

In discussions about homosexuality and same sex marriage, you will often encounter people who deliver this as if it is a clear proof that homosexuality and same sex marriage are morally acceptable: “Well Jesus didn't say that homosexuality and same sex marriage are wrong.” Because Jesus didn’t condemn homosexuality, the conclusion is drawn that it therefore must have been acceptable to him. It is certainly true that the Lord never directly mentions homosexuality. Yet just a little knowledge about Judaism at the time of the first century A.D. explains why he did not and reveals what an absurd argument this is.

 The first three chapters of Genesis lay the foundation for understanding everything that follows in the Bible. The Jews of Jesus' day knew that God had created man in his own image, and had created them *as male and female* (Genesis 2:16-17). They knew that man and woman had been created as a corresponding pair. God said in Genesis 2:18 “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him” where the Hebrew translated as “fit for him” means literally, “corresponding to him.” God had instituted marriage as the union of man and woman in the Garden of Eden for we read in Genesis chapter 2:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall

upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:21-24 ESV).

 Things were very clear. God created man and woman for one another, and sexual union was shared by husband and wife in marriage. To take part in sexual union outside of marriage violated God’s will (Sixth Commandment). Yet to engage in a sexual union of any kind besides between a man and a women also violated God’s will since it rejected the way God had ordered His creation. A Jew of Jesus’ day read in Leviticus 18:22-23, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion (ESV) (see also Leviticus 20:13). Notice how a man having sex with a man is described as an abomination, and how it is set in parallel with a person having sex with an animal. Both actions violate the way God has ordered His creation.

 A Jew in the first century A.D. also knew what had happened at Sodom as reported in Genesis 19:

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” (Genesis 19:4-8 ESV)

 The language of “to know” someone is used to indicate sexual intercourse in the Old Testament (for example, Gen 4:1), and the fact that Lot offers his daughters to the men of Sodom indicates that their desire for the male visitors was sexual. It is true that the Sodomites’ desire to assault the guests was wrong because it was an act of violence that violated near-eastern expectations about hospitality provided to guests. People today use this fact to try to say that the events at Sodom had nothing to do with homosexuality. But this does not eliminate the fact that the homosexual act intended was itself *also wrong* based on what the Old Testament tells us.

 More importantly for our topic, we know that when Jews around the time of Jesus talked about the events at Sodom, *they focused on homosexuality as being the main issue*. This is not surprising based on what they knew from Leviticus 18:22 about homosexuality. So when the Jewish writer Josephus (first century A.D.) provided an account of these events he wrote:

Now when the Sodomites saw the young men to be of beautiful countenances, and this to an extraordinary degree, and that they took up lodgings with Lot, they resolved themselves to enjoy these beautiful boys by force and violence; and when Lot exhorted them to sobriety, and not to offer anything immodest to the strangers, but to have regard to their lodging in his house; and promised, that if their inclinations could not be governed, he would expose his daughters to their lust, instead of these strangers – neither thus were they ashamed. (Antiquities 1.11.3)

 Likewise *Jubilees* (second century B.C.) focused on the sexual aspect of the event: “And he told them the judgment of the giants and the judgments of the Sodomites just as they have been judged on account of their evil. And on account of their fornication and impurity and the corruption among themselves with fornication they died”(19.5).

 Judaism knew about the existence of homosexuality among the pagans around them, and also in the Greco-Roman world. Because of what was in the Torah, in response to this they categorically rejected it as immoral and contrary to God’s ordering of creation. In fact in his classic work *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Disaspora*, the scholar John J. Collins writes: “No sin is denounced more frequently in Jewish writings than homosexuality” (pg. 159). So the Jewish writer of the *Sibylline Oracle* Book 3 (second century B.C.) says of the Gentile kingdoms:

They will also oppress mortals. But those men will have a great fall when they launch upon a course of unjust haughtiness. Immediately compulsion to impiety will come upon these men. Male will have intercourse with male and they will set up boys in houses of ill-fame and in those days there will be a great affliction among men and it will throw everything into confusion. (3.182-187)

 He sets the Jews in contrast to the Gentiles when he writes:

Greatly, surpassing all men, they are mindful of holy wedlock, and they do not engage in impious intercourse with male children as do Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Romans, spacious Greece and many nations of others, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of immortal God, which they transgressed. (3.595-600)

 *Sybilline Oracle* Book 3 refers to pederasty which was the form of homosexual behavior in the Greek world. In this practice which was associated with the wealthy, the older man took a younger man as a lover. Yet in this relationship the older man always sodomized the younger man, and the younger man was usually looked down upon.

 However, it was not the difference in age, status or power between the two partners that offended Judaism. Instead it was the fact that the homosexual act itself violated the way God had ordered creation. Probably writing in the first century A.D. the Jewish writer identified as Pseudo-Phocylides stated: “Do not transgress with unlawful sex the limits of nature. For even animals are not pleased by intercourse of male with male. And let women not imitate the sexual role of men” (190-192).

 The first century A.D. Josephus wrote in *Against Apion:*

But then, what are our laws about marriage? That law owns no other mixture of sexes but that which nature hath appointed, of a man with his wife, and that this be used only for the procreation of children. But it abhors the mixture of male with male; and if anyone do that, death is his punishment. (2.25)

 Likewise Philo (late first century BC to early first century AD) wrote:

And let the man who is devoted to the love of boys submit to the same punishment [death], since he pursues that pleasure which is contrary to nature, and since, as far as depends upon him, he would make the cities desolate, and void, and empty of all inhabitants, wasting his power of propagating his species, and moreover, being a guide and teacher of those greatest of all evils, unmanliness and effeminate lust, stripping young men of the flower of their beauty, and wasting their prime of life in effeminacy, which he ought rather on the other hand to train to vigour and acts of courage; and last of all, because, like a worthless husbandman, he allows fertile and productive lands to lie fallow, contriving that they will continue barren, and labours night and day at cultivating that soil from which he never expects any produce at all. (Special Laws 3.39).

 In taking this position Hellenistic Jewish writers were not only reflecting what the Torah said, but also could [align themselves with the significant parts of the Greek philosophical tradition that rejected homosexuality, including Plato](https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/what-would-the-greeks-have-thought-of-gay-marriage), Antisthenes and the Cynics and the Epircureans (see Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, pg. 159).

 A look at the Old Testament and the Jewish attitude toward homosexuality at the time of Jesus makes it perfectly clear why he did not say anything about homosexuality: There was no need. The Jewish setting of first century A.D. Palestine was *not* a place where homosexuality was found practiced out in the open. The statements of Scripture about marriage and homosexuality were clear, and the beliefs of Jews about homosexuality at the time of Jesus were firmly fixed against it.

 When Jesus *did talk about marriage*, he returned to what Genesis 2 said:

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:3-6 ESV)

 In doing so Jesus provides the one God pleasing understanding of sex, namely that it is between a man and woman in marriage. And he provides the one God pleasing understanding of marriage: that is a one flesh union of *a man and a woman* for life.

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**LIKE & FOLLOW both our Church and Preschool Facebook pages.**

Remember to like, comment, and share to help us reach as many people as possible.

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**“Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”**

**is November 10th!**

***Let us remember those in need!***

Please consider making a financial donation to this important function of our church. Let’s try to bring some joy into the lives of others and help them feel God’s blessings and love.

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

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**Thank You for Serving in November:**

**Assisting Elders:** John Dyll & Bob Sulek. **Ushers:**  Ralph Dorman, Jonathan Baisch, Matt Berent, Mark Gabriel, and John Dyll (alternate). **Altarware:** Viola Sakony & Ruth Meszaros.

**November Greeters:**

3 ~ Gary & Eileen Burns

10 ~ Jeff & Stacy Brandes

17 ~ Ralph Dorman & Diane Riefstahl

24 ~ John Dyll & Mark Gabriel

***New Greeters are ALWAYS needed!***

 ***If you would like to be added to the Greeters’ schedule, please speak with Diane. Thank you!***

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**CHOIR REHEARSALS!** The Church Choir practices Thursdays from 5:30-6:30 PM. New members are always welcomed!

 Please speak with Chris Nelson, choir director, if you have questions.

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Collection boxes for the Thrivent **“Pop Tab Challenge”** to benefit the Ronald McDonald House are located in the narthex, main hallway, and Fellowship Hall.

 Tabs from pet food cans, beverage containers, soup, etc. are being collected. Many thanks to Marie Flaugher for spearheading this effort!

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**Sunday,**

**November 3**

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**November 11th**

To those members of our congregation who have served: “We salute you and we thank you!”

**CELEBRATING IN NOVEMBER!**

**Birthdays**

Maria Marks 11- 2

Jerome Thomas 11- 3

Martin Weisenborn 11- 3

Autumn Matijevic 11- 8

Daniel Davis 11-15

Patricia Voytik 11-23

Edward Zachar 11-25

Elizabeth Shreffler 11-26

Paul Adolina 11-29

**Anniversaries**

Jeff & Stacy Brandes 11- 2

Martin & Marilyn Weisenborn 11- 6

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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Have you submitted your **2020 Budget Worksheet** to Jonathan Baisch yet? If not, please do so or speak with Jonathan if you should have questions.

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SCRIP/GIFT CARD FUNDRAISING PROGRAM: Sts. Peter & Paul launched a **Scrip/Gift Card Fundraising Program** last month. Through this program, you are able to purchase a variety of gift cards for the face value of the card. A percentage of the gift card value is given to the church at no additional cost to you.

 Plans are to order gift card orders following the first Sunday of each month. You should receive your gift card the following Sunday. The first orders and payments (make checks out to Sts. Peter & Paul) are due Sunday, November 3rd and should be given directly to Matt Berent.

 Information and order forms may be picked up on the table in the narthex. If you have questions concerning the program, please contact Matt Berent.

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**Our Home Bound Members:**

***Please keep the following people in your prayers:***

Helen Bender

920 Pleasantview Dr.

New Castle, PA 16101

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Mary Chmielewski

87 S. Neshannock Rd.

Hermitage, PA 16148

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Dan Davis, Avalon Springs

745 Greenville Road

Mercer, PA 16137

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Edna Krajci, **Vista Center at The Ridge**
3379 Main St
Mineral Ridge, Ohio 44440
330-652-9901

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Mary Ann Krajci, John XXIII

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Marion Roberts

The Lakes at Jefferson, Room 221

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Mercer, PA 16137

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Barbara Vasconi

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**Join us Sunday, November 10th**

 **following worship for**

**Coffee & Donuts Fellowship!**

Many thanks go out to Anson & Hank Holcroft, this month’s sponsors.

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**Bible Memory Verses**

Have you ever wondered about the origin of the beautiful words which make up our liturgy? What about the basis of our hymns found in our worship hymnal? The source is the same for both: The Holy Bible.

 It is to The Bible we should turn, not only to find words of comfort, but for God’s plan as to how our lives should be led. Arm yourselves with these words, and you will see God’s plan for you!

 The following are the Bible verses from the month of **October:**

**FOR CHILDREN:**

***Oct. 6:*** *Our Savior Christ Jesus…abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. 2 Tim. 1:10*

***Oct. 13:*** *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8*

***Oct. 20:*** *This commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:21*

***Oct. 27:*** *Know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Matthew 9:6*

**FOR ADULTS:**

***Oct. 6:*** *In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. John 16:33*

***Oct. 13:*** *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:12-13*

***Oct. 20:*** *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13*

***Oct. 27:*** *You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Matthew 10:22*

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**Be certain to check out our website:** [**www.saintspeterandpaul.net**](http://www.saintspeterandpaul.net)**.**

Current service bulletins and newsletters may be accessed under the Publications page and there is an audio link to Pastor Deal’s sermons.

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**Members of the Audit Committee are reminded of the brief auditing session to take place following worship Sunday, November 2nd in the library.**

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Did you remember to turn in your **FUNERAL PLANNING FOLDER**? If not, please submit it to the church office ASAP so that a copy can be put on file.

**ALL SAINTS SUNDAY TO BE CELEBRATED NOVEMBER 3RD**

Join us as we fondly remember those from our church family who passed into everlasting life this past year.

**Gene Roberts**

May 30, 2019

**Sophia Mihm**

May 31, 2019

**Joanne Wolfe**

September 2, 2019

**Don Voytik**

September 10, 2019

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The next meeting of

CHURCH COUNCIL

will take place Monday, Nov. 18th at 7 pm.

Council members are asked to have a brief, written report prepared. If possible, please email your report prior to the meeting to Matt Berent (matt@mattberent.com).

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During the month of November, the **Secretary’s Office** will be open as follows:

* Each Monday: 8:30 am – 4:45 pm.
* Thurs., Nov. 7: 8:30 am – 5:30 pm.
* Wed., Nov. 13: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.
* Wed., Nov. 20: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.
* Tues., Nov. 26: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.

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How to Grow Old GRACEfully

*-a “blast from the past” from Anson Holcroft*

The human body was never designed to live forever, and we all will advance through these stages as we travel toward the end of our lives. Along with all the other changes, even our hair changes—if it doesn’t turn white, it turns loose! Like it or not, all of us grow older...all of us age. Some enjoy joking about aging....but deep down inside growing old is something many dread...and fear.., and are willing to do anything to avoid.

 All of these factors and more mean that**,** in order to age with grace and dignity, we need to have realistic expectations of ourselves. We will need to gradually curtail heavy physical activities and will have to be more careful driving after dark—or perhaps give up driving altogether. While our expectations must change, this does not mean we cannot live satisfying and beneficial lives!

 We have aging heroes of faith. The Bible contains many stories of righteous people who continued serving God even in old age. Several patriarchs grew old gracefully. Moses, at the age of 120, still had perfect eyesight and still had his strength ([Deuteronomy 34:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2034:7)). A good example for us to follow is the graceful manner in which Paul faced death and welcomed afflictions (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

###  It is important to keep a positive, even humorous, perspective on aging because God designed our bodies to age. It’s not the act of a vengeful God, but of a loving God. And God wants us to continue to bear fruit.

 With aging affecting our once youthful bodies and minds, how can we grow old gracefully? Scripture is encouraging in declaring, “They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing” (Psalm 92:14). One of the biggest benefits of living many years is one that so many in our culture today overlook or dismiss: It’s the wisdom that comes from so much experience in life!

 Growing old gracefully has its challenges. With age comes the realization of how physically close we might be to the Kingdom of God. In a very real sense, we stand on the brink of eternity. But we should also understand that the final heartbeat is not an end—but a grand beginning. “But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

 This is the way God planned our lives. It may be hard to realize this when our old body aches, our eyes dim, and our legs refuse to work the way they used to work. But God has a brand new body for us through the life we have received from Christ: eternal life, beginning *now*. Through this, we are now able to see all of life in a new perspective. So forget the pain, the stiffness, etc., and be grateful for what lies ahead.

**LITTLE PEOPLE PRESCHOOL FALL FUNDRAISER**

Sts. Peter & Paul’s Little People Preschool is selling Stromboli and pies through Jane’s Stromboli.

 A variety of Stromboli can be purchased at $3.50/each or 3 for $10. All pies (including pumpkin rolls) are $10 each.

 Orders and payment are due Sunday, November 3 and may be given to Diane Riefstahl.

 Items will be delivered Monday, November 11 and must be picked up between 11:30 am – 12:30 pm.

 Profits from this fundraiser will go towards class t-shirts and field trip expenses.

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Join usfor worship this **Thanksgiving Eve**, Wednesday, November 27th at 7 pm to give special thanks to the Lord! Let’s join together to sing His praises, hear His word, and be reminded of all He has done for us.

 **Note**: Beginning Nov. 30th, there will be no Saturday evening Divine Services until 2020.

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The next meeting of the **Board of Elders** will take place Saturday, November 16th at 10 am in the library.

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Order forms for **2019 CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS** will be available beginning Sunday, November 10th. Orders and payments will be due back to the church office no later than Sunday, December 1st. This year there will be a $1.00 delivery charge per order to help offset the new local delivery fee. Please speak with Diane if you should have any questions.

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

Our **4th Quarter Local Mission is Beds for Little Heads.** This non-profit local organization looks out for children in our community and surrounding areas who simply need their very own beds on which to lay down their heads at night.

 Located at 1967 Mercer West Middlesex Rd., in Mercer, PA, Beds for Little Heads’ mission is to make a difference in the lives of children by giving them beds of their own. By making life better one child at a time, the organization believes it can build and sustain a healthy environment and enrich the lives of children, giving them a sense of love, by teaching that “we can do all things through Christ who is our strength”.

 For more information, check out [www.beds4littleheads.com](http://www.beds4littleheads.com), Beds for Little Heads on Facebook, or phone 724-979-4868.

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**It’s time to renew or sign up for your subscription to “The Lutheran Witness”**! Subscriptions run from February 2020 through January 2021 and cost $10.90 (same as last year). If ordering a subscription, place your payment in an offering envelope. Please specify “Lutheran Witness” and be sure to note your name *and* address (on backside of envelope). The deadline for signing up is Sunday, November 10th. Checks should be made out to Sts. Peter & Paul Ev. Lutheran Church.

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**Many thanks go out to those who helped support our first annual “Trunk or Treat” October 26th with donations of candy or who participated in the activities.**

 **We give special thanks to Marie Flaugher for spearheading this effort.**

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**November’s Hymn of the Month:**

**“Herald, Sound the Note of Judgment”**

**(LSB #511)**

1. Herald, sound the note of judgment,
 Warning us of right and wrong,
Turning us from sin and sadness
 Till once more we sing the song.

 **Refrain:** Sound the trumpet!
 Tell the message:
 Christ, the Savior king, is come!

1. Herald, sound the note of gladness;
 Tell the news that Christ is here;
Make a pathway through the desert
 For the one who brings God near. **Refrain**
2. Herald, sound the note of pardon—
 Those repenting are forgiv’n;
God receives His wayward children,
 And to them new life is giv’n.

**Refrain**

1. Herald, sound the note of triumph;
 Christ has come to share our life,
Bringing God’s own love and power,
 Granting vict’ry in our strife.

**Refrain**

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**It’s that time of the year again!**

**Please remember to keep doors to the Sanctuary and stairwells closed when not in use to conserve heat and help save on heating costs.**

**Thank you!**

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**Mission Outreach Project…**

**International Christian Literature Distributors, Inc.** focuses on getting the Bible and study materials to learn the Bible into the hands of Christian leaders in the least-fortunate places of the world. They supply churches and schools of Bible learning throughout the English speaking world. Your old Portals of Prayer, Lenten devotions, and other materials are greatly appreciated. For more information about ICLD, check out their website: [www.icld.org](http://www.icld.org/). **Please recycle these items by dropping them in the basket in the hallway by the offices. Thank you!**

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**Sun., Nov. 3** Funeral planning folders due

 Preschool Fundraiser orders due

**Tues., Nov. 5** Election Day: VOTE!

**Sun., Nov. 10** “Lutheran Witness” orders due

**Mon., Nov. 11** Preschool Fundraiser pick up

 between 11:30 am -12:30 pm

 Veterans’ Day

**Sat., Nov. 16** Elders’ Meeting 10 am

**Mon., Nov. 18** Preschool Board Mtg 12:15 pm

**Sat., Nov. 23** Last Saturday Divine Service until 2020

**Wed., Nov. 27** Thanksgiving Eve Service 7 pm

**Coming in December:**

**Sun., Dec. 1** Poinsettia orders and pymts due

**Wednesdays (noon and 7 pm)**

Mid-week Advent Services

(Evening service will include the Lord’s Supper.)