

Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup> 2024

Reformation Sunday (Observed)



**Mailing Address:**

**Epiphany Lutheran Church  
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Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Physical Address:**

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(on the SDA campus)  
3300 TX-21  
Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Rev. E. B. Holschuh – Pastor  
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[facebook.com/epiphanybastrop](https://facebook.com/epiphanybastrop)**

## **WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!**

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!” (Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.

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### **OUR COMMUNION POLICY:**

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod believes the biblical teaching that in communion we receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. If you are a baptized Christian who has been instructed in the biblical teaching of communion, and if you agree with our confession of faith, please feel free to commune with us. If you have any questions, please speak with our pastor.

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### **SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:**

Pastor – Rev. E. B. Holschuh  
Musician – Leann McClain  
Lay Reader – Deb Layland  
Assisting Elder – Tom Rosser

*Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.*

## AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

### *The Lord, Jesus Christ, Opens Our Eyes to God and Brings Us into His Presence*

As He did for blind Bartimaeus, so does the Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon you. With His Word of the Gospel, “*he is calling you*” to Himself, to “*take heart,*” to rise up and live by faith in His forgiveness. He opens your heart and mind to see and know God rightly in Him and to follow Him “*on the way*” of the cross and into life everlasting (Mark 10:49–52). “*He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him,*” because He is the great High Priest, who offered Himself “*once for all*” as a sacrifice for sins. Since He is risen from the dead and “*exalted above the heavens,*” He “*holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever,*” and “*he always lives to make intercession*” for His people (Heb. 7:24–27). Along with that, He gathers the children of God to Himself by the proclamation of His Gospel, even “*from the farthest parts of the earth.*” In mercy He calls them, by the waters of Holy Baptism, “*in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,*” unto life everlasting (Jer. 31:8–9).

## DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR

**Prelude**

Selected Music

**Welcome and Greeting**

Pastor

**Announcements**

**Opening Hymn**

“*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*”

LSB 656

*(stand)*

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

*Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]*

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth.

*Psalms 124:8*

**P** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

**C** **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.** *Ps. 130:3-4*

**P** Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

*[Luke 18:13]*

**C** **Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** **Amen.**

*[John 20:19-23]*

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **Introit**

Psalm 131

**P** O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

**C** **But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.**

**P** O Israel, hope in the Lord  
from this time forth and forevermore.

**C** ***Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

# Kyrie

Mark 10:47



☐ Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

# Gloria in Excelsis

Luke 2:14; John 1:29



☐ 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;  
2 To You, O sole - be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;  
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good-will from God in heav - en Pro - claimed at Je - sus' birth!  
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.  
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor - shipped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—  
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,  
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,



Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n - ly King.  
Where You in pow'r are seat - ed At God's right hand on high—  
In God the Fa - ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

## Salutation and Collect of the Day

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*(sit)*

## Old Testament Reading

Jeremiah 31:7-9

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the Lord:

“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,  
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;  
proclaim, give praise, and say,  
‘O Lord, save your people,  
the remnant of Israel.’

<sup>8</sup> Behold, I will bring them from the north country  
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,  
among them the blind and the lame,  
the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together;  
a great company, they shall return here.

<sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come,  
and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back,  
I will make them walk by brooks of water,  
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,  
for I am a father to Israel,  
and Ephraim is my firstborn.”

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

<sup>23</sup>The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, <sup>24</sup>but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. <sup>25</sup>Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

<sup>26</sup>For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*(stand)*

### Alleluia and Verse



**C** Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



**C** These things are writ - ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

*John 20:31*



**C** Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

## Holy Gospel Reading

Mark 10:46-52

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the tenth chapter.

**C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>46</sup>They came to Jericho. And as [Jesus] was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup>And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup>And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>49</sup>And Jesus stopped and said, “**Call him.**” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” <sup>50</sup>And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>And Jesus said to him, “**What do you want me to do for you?**” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” <sup>52</sup>And Jesus said to him, “**Go your way; your faith has made you well.**” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

*(sit)*

**Hymn of the Day**

*“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”*

LSB 655

**Sermon**

*Rachel can dry her tears...*

Jeremiah 31:7-9

*(stand)*

**Apostles’ Creed**

**C** **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,**



**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life † everlasting. Amen.**

### **Passing of the Peace**

*When Jesus himself appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, he greeted them by saying, “Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26) – and so we do likewise.*

*(sit)*

### **Prayer of the Church**

**P** Lord, in Your mercy  
**C** hear our prayer.

### **Offering**

Usher

*Please sign the attendance books as they are passed.*

*If you would like to transition to making your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home>*



## SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

*For those unfamiliar with our congregation's practice regarding the Lord's Supper, please refer to "Our Communion Policy" located at the beginning of the bulletin.*

*(stand)*

### **Preface**

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** **And also with you.**

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**C** **We lift them to the Lord.**

*[Colossians 3:1]*

**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C** **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

*[Psalm 136]*

**P** It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:



## Sanctus

*Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9*



**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san-na in the high-est, sing ho-san - na to the Lord;



Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

**P** Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

**C** Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.

**The Words of Our Lord**

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24  
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

- P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
- P** In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

**Pax Domini**

*John 20:19*

- P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**C** Amen.

# Agnus Dei

John 1:29



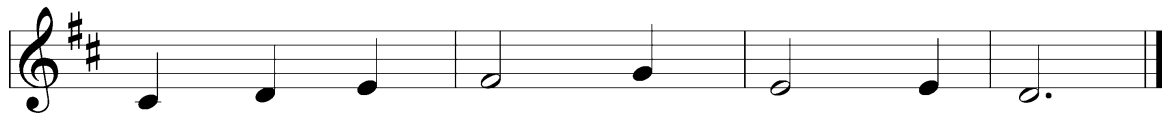
1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



You take the sin of the world a - way;  
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,



Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.  
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

*(sit)*

**Distribution Hymn**

*"Built on the Rock"*

LSB 645

*(stand)*

# Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32

**C** 1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -  
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All  
part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the  
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the  
glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:  
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;  
A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -  
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is  
to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your  
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -  
peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.  
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

## Post-Communion Collect

**P** Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

## Benedicamus and Benediction

**P** Let us bless the Lord.

*[Psalm 103:1]*

**C Thanks be to God.**

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

*Numbers 6:24-26*

**C Amen.**

*(sit)*

**Closing Hymn**    *“We Praise You and Acknowledge You, O God”*

LSB 941

**P** Go in Peace!

**C Serve the Lord!**

**Postlude**

Selected Music

## SERMON NOTES

### Jeremiah 31:7-9

#### *Rachel can dry her tears...*

1. The prophet Jeremiah lived \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ the destruction of Jerusalem in 589 BC.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ was arrested and beaten, \_\_\_\_\_ from the Temple, opposed by other religious leaders, and even members of his own family considered him to be a \_\_\_\_\_ prophet.
  3. The basic theme of the book of Jeremiah is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's \_\_\_\_\_ and their subsequent movement toward \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. As \_\_\_\_\_'s "firstborn," \_\_\_\_\_ is the one who receives a \_\_\_\_\_ share of the father's estate and the paternal blessing.
  5. Jeremiah delivered God's message that He would \_\_\_\_\_ his exiles from their dispersion, and \_\_\_\_\_ His people \_\_\_\_\_ again in the Promised Land.
  6. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God calls \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to open the burdens of our \_\_\_\_\_ to His transforming presence.
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## PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

**PRAYER REQUESTS:** Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

Please continue to pray...

- Rev. Ross and Kris Shaver and their 2 children, Easton and Ryan – missionaries in the Dominican Republic



## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless– it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

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Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is still very much a work in progress that we hope will help us reach those in our community and beyond with the Gospel message of hope and salvation in Christ. In the coming days it should be available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at [peacebewithyou.podbean.com](http://peacebewithyou.podbean.com) (or just scan the QR code).



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### THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

#### Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>

- 10:00am – Children's Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion

#### Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>

- 10:00am – Children's Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion

**Advent video study on Zoom coming next month: *Because Of Bethlehem*** (Thursday 6pm 11/21-12/19, no session 11/28).

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***Make Every Day Count*** devotional gathering at Argent Court Assisted Living in Bastrop will meet each Tuesday in November at 3pm on Thursday except November 12.

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**Lutheran Hour:** Next Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> – “Working the System” – Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler. God’s Law – a “system” that keeps the world from flying apart while it also shows us we need the Savior Who came to live, suffer, and rise for us. (Genesis 33:8)

Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to [lhm.org](http://lhm.org) for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBJ (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7:00am on Sunday.

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**KFUO Radio**, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at [kfu.org](http://kfu.org) and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/kfu.org), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/kfu.org), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/kfu.org).

**CHRIST FOR YOU this week on AM850 & KFUE.org:** Join us as we continue our study of the book of Numbers on Sharper Iron (weekdays at 8:00 a.m. CT) taking a look at the account of Balak and Balaam in chapters 22-26. Then, tune into Thy Strong Word (weekdays at 11:00 a.m. CT) for a special series on All Hallows Eve, covering topics such as Hallowe’en, ghosts, angels, demons, and more! Find your favorite programs on demand at [kfu.org](http://kfu.org) or on the KFUE Radio app!

Answers to Sermon Notes:  
1. The prophet Jeremiah lived *before, during, and after* the destruction of Jerusalem in 589 BC.  
2. *Jeremiah* was arrested and beaten, *banned* from the Temple, opposed by other religious leaders, and even members of his own family considered him to be a *false* prophet.  
3. The basic theme of the book of Jeremiah is the *unfaithfulness* of God’s *people* and their subsequent movement toward *exile*.  
4. As *God’s* “firstborn,” *Israel* is the one who receives a *double* share of the father’s estate and the paternal blessing.  
5. Jeremiah delivered God’s message that He would *regather* his exiles from their dispersion, and *rebuild* His people *Israel* again in the Promised Land.  
6. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God calls *Israel* and *us* to open the burdens of our *hearts* to His transforming presence.

**RightNow Media:** We're excited to share that Epiphany Lutheran Church now has unlimited access to **RightNow Media**—the world's largest streaming library of video Bible study resources. This extensive library has **more than 20,000 videos** that can be used as part of a group study or for personal devotions, and many series include **free discussion guides and handouts**. In addition to series on books of the Bible, RightNow Media has videos for everyone in the family on a variety of topics like marriage, parenting, personal finances, mental health, and more. There's even a **library just for kids with over 2,000 safe, entertaining videos**. RightNow Media has a free app that's available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. For FREE access to RightNow Media, visit **[app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb](https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb)** or scan the QR code.

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## **Oktoberfest**

Family friendly event on Saturday, October 26th at the Holy Cross Picnic grounds.

Events for the day include:

- **German meal** - brats, kraut, green beans, noodles, bread and coffee cake will be served Drive Through ONLY from 10:30 to noon.
- Tickets are \$15/plate - pre-sale only.
- **42-Domino Tournament** will begin at 2:00 pm - Registration begins at 1:30 pm
- **Cornhole Tournament** will begin at 2:30 pm - Registration begins at 1:30 pm
- **Battle of the Brew and Battle of the Vine Contest** judging will begin at 3:00 pm. Submissions need to be in by 2:30 pm. Sampling of the brews/wines begin at 4:00 pm.
- **Children's games and activities** will begin at 4:00 pm.
- **Costume contest** judging will begin at 5:00 pm.
- **Live Auction** will begin at 5:30 pm.
- **Concession stand** will also be available for purchase all afternoon and evening with items like chopped bbq on a bun, loaded pulled pork nachos, hot dogs, warm pretzels with beer cheese, as well as other snacks and desserts.

Please visit our website for more information! ([www.flhstx.org](http://www.flhstx.org))

# FAITH LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL



## Oktoberfest

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2024**

**WARDA PICNIC GROUNDS**

**DRIVE THRU MEAL 10:30-NOON (PRE-SALE ONLY)**

**MEAL INCLUDES: BRATS, KRAUT, POTATOES, GREEN BEANS, NOODLES, BREAD AND COFFEE CAKE**

**\$15/PLATE**

**42 & CORNHOLE TOURNAMENTS REGISTRATION STARTS AT  
1:30 PM \$5/PER PERSON ENTRY FEE**

**2:00-DOMINO TOURNAMENT BEGINS**

**2:30-CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT BEGINS**

**3:00-BATTLE OF THE BREWS/BATTLE OF THE VINE  
JUDGING BEGINS**

**4:00-KIDS GAMES & HAYRIDE**

**BATTLE OF THE BREWS/BATTLE OF THE VINE SAMPLING**

**5:00-COSTUME CONTEST**

**5:30-LIVE AUCTION BEGINS**

**CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

3-minute



Seminary

## The Church does not have a mission...

...the Church is a mission.

Acts 1:8 states calling of the church: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In a sense this verse foreshadows everything that follows in Acts, from the pouring out of the Spirit to the witness in Jerusalem, and then beyond Jerusalem, and finally, in Acts 28, to Rome. The task of the members of faith communities is to be "witnesses" to Jesus. This means more than simply telling one's personal story of faith or transformation, as important as that may be. To be Christ's witnesses is to bring forward into our own time and place the truth of the gospel. Just as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each took the words, teachings, deeds, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and brought it to bear in their particular time and their communities, so the church's essential calling and task is to bear witness to what God has done and is doing in Jesus, to this outpouring of grace and healing, to this victory over the myriad powers of death at work in the world and in us—to witness to the power of Jesus to heal all that distorts, disfigures, and diminishes God's dream for life.

All God's people, all baptized Christians, are called to be "my witnesses." This need not mean that one is speaking constantly, and perhaps inappropriately, of Jesus in all settings and at all times. Sometimes that actually hardens hearts and closes ears. The well-chosen word spoken at the right moment is the preferred approach. Furthermore, the witness is in both words and actions: the apostles will not only tell the story and name the name, they will be workers of signs and wonders. Here the point is that the whole church is a missionary outpost, a beachhead in the old world of a new one, a colony of heaven, a foretaste of the fullness of the kingdom. Mission can no longer be relegated or delegated to a committee, to a staff person, or to certain specialized persons called "missionaries." Mission belongs to the whole church. Those of us who are baptized Christians are all missionaries, set down here to be witnesses to God's love and God's dream for a broken and bruised creation.

When Jesus turns to the apostles—that is, to the church—and says, “You will be my witnesses,” he speaks to us all, charges us all. Moreover, he enables us to then celebrate that great cloud of witnesses, spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the long line of saints and martyrs, teachers and prophets, ministers and servants, great and small, ordinary and extraordinary, in which we stand. To become Christian is to “join up,” to be a part of the long line of witnesses, members of Christ’s body on earth, bearing witness to a love and power that moves the planets and heals hearts. This mission, this purpose, belongs to us all.

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