



FAITH NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 61
ISSUE 1
JANUARY 2026

HOW DOES GOD
"BRING HIS
CHILDREN HOME?"
THROUGH YOU!
WHEN YOU INVITE
THEM TO HEAR
THE WORD OF GOD
WITH YOU!

INVITE
A FAMILY MEMBER,
NEIGHBOR,
CO-WORKER,
FELLOW
STUDENT, OR
FRIEND
TO JOIN YOU ON
SUNDAY
IN ATTENDING.

SUNDAYS 9:00 AM

REV. GENE SMITH
~ PASTOR ~

ANDREW SHAFFER
DAVID JUENGEL
~ DEACONS ~

VIST US AT WWW.FLCRIV.ORG
E-MAIL US AT
FAITHRIVERSIDE@ATT.NET

TRADITION: BLESSING, BURDEN OR BOTH?

"Tradition" can be a tricky word, and one that is often used in very different ways. Sometimes people use the term against Lutherans in a dismissive sense, like when an evangelical tells you that, because there's no Bible passage directly commanding us to bring our little ones to the font, infant Baptism is not a scriptural practice. It doesn't matter to him that virtually no one in church history until the 16th century shared his rejection of this practice. He can just hand-wave it all away by calling infant Baptism "a tradition of men." Tradition, in this sense, is dismissed as something that doesn't need to be considered at all.

In other cases, people speak of "tradition" as something that must be not only considered, but accepted. If you've ever discussed St. Mary, the mother of our Lord, with your Roman Catholic friends, you may have encountered this. They assert that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven. You ask, "How can you know that, since it's not contained in Scripture?" The answer, they tell you, is "tradition." This is what all the pious men have taught throughout the centuries! (Not counting the ones who didn't, of course.) And how could you possibly reject something as sacred and good as tradition?

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This all can feel rather confusing. Is tradition inherently bad, like the evangelical seems to believe, or is it inherently good, like the Roman Catholic asserts? The answer, of course, is “neither.”

To express it with a simple mathematical formula: tradition = teachings and/or practices + time.

In the Christian sense, tradition is what a collection of believers has asserted or done over the course of years or decades or centuries. But while time is an essential part of the formula for making a tradition, time is not a determining factor in whether a tradition is either good or bad. Time can turn new ideas into ancient traditions, but it can't turn an unfaithful practice into a faithful one. Rather, the goodness or badness of a practice is entirely dependent on its faithfulness to the Scriptures.

Our Lord on Tradition

Consider Jesus' response to the Pharisees and the various traditions they held to. Jesus and the Pharisees agreed that the Law of Moses required the Jews to rest from their labor on the Sabbath. But the Pharisees insisted, based on the non-inspired writings of past teachers, that the requirements of the Third Commandment were so severe that Christ's disciples should have gone hungry instead of plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath. In response to this, Jesus reminded them that David and his men entered the house of God and ate the bread of the presence on the Sabbath, then quoted the prophet Hosea, saying, “If you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matt. 12:7).

In this passage, Jesus is ultimately saying to the Pharisees, “God didn't give you the Sabbath so you could impress Him with how much you're willing to suffer for His sake. He gave you the Sabbath so you could rest from your labor and meditate on how much I am willing to suffer for your sake. So it doesn't matter if your approach to the Third Commandment is part of a centuries-long tradition. Condemning others for not following it places you at odds with the Word of God.”

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Likewise, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus over divorce, they approached the issue from the perspective of tradition. They asked Him, essentially, “If divorce is so bad, why did Moses establish this glorious, ancient tradition where we can send our wives away after writing them a certificate of divorce?” (see Matt. 19:3). Jesus responded by referring them back to God’s creation of Adam and Eve, essentially saying, “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses instituted a tradition that allowed the women you wanted to throw out of your homes to be taken in by someone else and not be guilty of adultery. But God didn’t create marriage as something to be torn apart. So if you guys like ancient traditions so much, you should go back to the most ancient one of all, the one where God created man and woman to belong to each other for all their lives” (see Matt. 19:4–10).

In all of this, we see that Jesus is neither reflexively pro-tradition nor reflexively anti-tradition. He favors faithful traditions that accurately reflect what God has promised us in His Word, and He opposes unfaithful traditions that obscure God’s promises, regardless of how long those traditions have been practiced or how many people have accepted them.

Keeping the Baby, Throwing Out the Bathwater

Martin Luther and many of his fellow reformers followed this example during the Reformation era. The Radical Reformers were prone to tear down statues of the saints in churches and jettison any other traditions that smacked of “popish idolatry.” The Lutheran approach, however, was far more measured. To them, it didn’t matter how long unfaithful popes or priests had taken part in a tradition. If the tradition was taught by the Scriptures, like infant Baptism, or in keeping with the Scriptures, they would keep it. If a tradition wasn’t in keeping with the Scriptures, like only allowing the laity to receive communion in one kind, they would get rid of it, no matter how long or how widely it had been practiced. Likewise, the Reformation-era Lutherans also believed they could separate the baby from the bathwater with regard to issues like worship. In Article XV of the Augsburg Confession, they wrote, “Our churches teach that ceremonies ought to be observed that may be observed without sin. Also, ceremonies and other practices that are profitable for tranquility and good order in the Church (in particular, holy days, festivals, and the like) ought to be observed. Yet, the people are taught that consciences are not to be burdened as though observing such things was necessary for salvation.”

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So, for example, we don't need a verse from the Bible commanding us to celebrate the birth of Jesus in order to celebrate His birth. It's helpful to pick a day on which all of us do so. Therefore, it's good for Christians to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Dec. 25, the day ancient Christians selected. But if anyone tells you that you can't be saved unless you celebrate the birth of Jesus specifically on Dec. 25, such a person should be rejected. Once again, traditions are good when they bring unity and clarity to the church, but they are bad when they bring disorder and obscure the promises of our Lord.

Unity and Freedom under God's Word

We should seek the mind of Jesus and follow in the steps of our Lutheran fathers when we consider the traditions of our own day and whatever controversies they might bring. Congregations often face divisions over their forms of music and whether they should be more contemporary or traditional, to use the common terms. Similar divisions sometimes arise when pastors change various worship practices in congregations or when people in the pews start to notice their fellow congregants engaging in unfamiliar forms of piety.

Concerning forms of music, the age of a sacred composition shouldn't matter to us. A piece of music written two years ago that beautifully confesses the saving wounds of Jesus is more beneficial than a 500-year-old hymn that, despite its enduring popularity, fails to proclaim Christ. In the same way, a glorious ninth century hymn that was cast aside by previous generations is more beneficial to the church than a well-known modern composition without much theological substance. We shouldn't value tradition so highly that we rob ourselves of newer treasures, and we shouldn't ignore tradition to the extent that we rob ourselves of the ancient ones.

Concerning our use of the liturgy, we should avoid binding consciences while also aiming toward unity. The Scriptures do not require that we use one of the Divine Service settings in Lutheran Service Book, and anyone who claims that we must do so in order to be faithful Christians is not thinking scripturally. But, at the same time, the purpose of holy worship is to "[teach and admonish] one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16). The Divine Service liturgies in our hymnals do this quite beautifully, conveying for us through a variety of Scripture passages the story of God's love in Christ. It's a great gift for a church body to be able to sing that story in unison throughout our various congregations. We should not give the impression that we must sing that common song in order to be saved, but we should also be very cautious about casting it aside for things that may well not endure.

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Concerning changes in worship services or forms of piety, we should again aim for the comfortable ground between legalism and disunity. Making the sign of the cross has been a tradition within the Lutheran church since our division with Roman Catholicism. But the practice has not endured in all corners of Lutheranism. Those who make the sign of the cross should feel free to continue embracing the tradition. Those who don't shouldn't think they're far from Jesus until they do. A pastor is correct if he asserts that weekly communion was the historic practice expressed in the Lutheran Confessions, though he should be careful not to give his sheep who didn't experience that tradition growing up the impression that the pastors they had were unfaithful, just as the sheep should not assume that receiving communion every other week or once a month is the superior practice simply because it's the one they're used to.

In all things, we shouldn't assume that the ancientness of a tradition makes it great, nor should we think that a tradition is unworthy of rediscovery simply because it didn't endure in our specific time and location. We should examine all traditions in light of Scripture, and prayerfully consider which ones best express both our union with Christ and the unity His blood gives us with our fellow congregation members, with those who share our confession of faith today and with those who have shared it throughout history.

By Hans Fiene

<https://witness.lcms.org/2025/tradition-blessing-burden-or-both/>

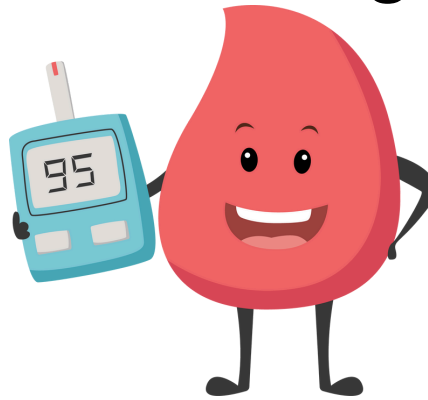


THE NEXT FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH WILL BE
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2026

**Join us for our Sunday Fellowship Brunch and
Visitor Welcome! After Sunday Service**

We hold these on the last Sunday of the month. We want to encourage fellowship for our whole congregation, as well as encouraging you to bring a guest with you that week! Bring them to our 9:00 am service and stay later for Brunch! The church will supply some of the brunch food, but we ask each family to bring a brunch item to share (muffins, egg casseroles, quiche, etc.), so we will have enough for our guests.

DASH-Style Diet Helps Control Blood Sugar



For over 30 years, doctors have recommended the DASH diet to help people reduce high blood pressure. Studies have repeatedly shown that the DASH eating plan can improve heart health. The DASH diet seems to have other health benefits. But its effects on blood glucose, also called blood sugar, in people with type 2 diabetes were unclear.

The DASH diet encourages eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. It favors beans and lean meats for protein. It suggests limiting saturated fats and sugar-sweetened food and drinks.

In a new study, researchers tweaked the DASH diet to help improve glucose control. The adjusted diet for diabetes is called DASH4D. It includes slight changes, such as eating even fewer sweets and starchy foods like potatoes.

Researchers studied 89 people with type 2 diabetes. Participants followed four different diets, in random order, for five weeks each. Two of the diets were variations on DASH4D. The other two were similar to the typical American adult diet.

Compared to a typical diet, the DASH4D eating plan led to more time with blood glucose in the recommended range. The results suggest that a modified DASH diet could help control blood sugar levels in adults with type 2 diabetes.

“The original DASH diet has long been recommended for people with diabetes and other health conditions due to its effectiveness in lowering blood pressure,” says Dr. Elizabeth Selvin at Johns Hopkins University. “But this is the first time a controlled study has shown a significant improvement in glucose control as well.”

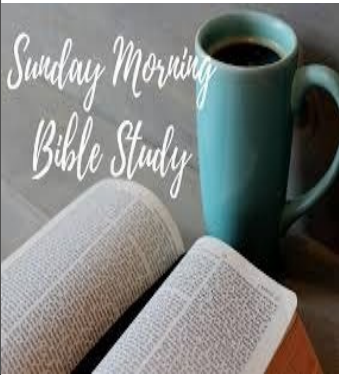




SCRIP Sales Schedule 2026

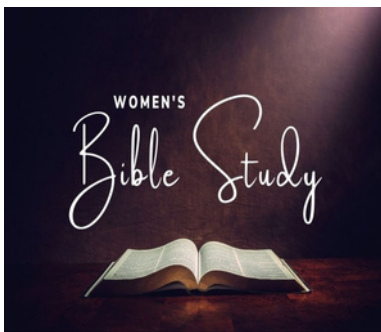
Januray 4, January 18, February 1, February 15, March 1,
March 15, April 5, April 19, May 3, May 17,
June 7, June 21, July 5, July 19, August 2, August 16,
September 6, September 20, October 4, October 18,
November 1, November 15, December 6, December 20

Updated SCRIP List is on the table in the Narthex.



You are all Welcome to Join us for Bible Study in the Fellowship Hall every Sunday after 9:00 a.m. Service except for the last Sunday of the month when we have the Fellowship Brunch.

The topic will be: "A Warrior's Guide To Spiritual Battle" Led by Deacon David Juengel



Join us for Women's Sunday Morning Bible Study from 8:10-8:50am in the Fellowship Hall. We will be studying the "7 Virtues of a Proverb 31 Woman."

December Brunch



Advent Soup Suppers



Fellowship time after services:



If you would like to bring some goodies to share between services, please sign up in the Narthex on the bulletin board. There are a few Sundays open. Thank you to all who have taken a date.



The new Byzantine Service will be held on the first Saturday of every month at 5:00 pm. Please join us for a new worship service.



It Takes a Village

"FOOD FOR FAITH"

Faith wants to take care of our families! Whether it is to celebrate the birth of a baby, help during chemo- therapy months for our brothers and sisters, or provide meals when a family member is sick or has passed away, Food for Faith wants to help our families.

But we cannot do it without the help of all of you. Food for Faith needs volunteers who would be willing to provide a meal for our families that are in need. If you are interested in helping, there is a sign- up sheet on the bulletin board in the Church Narthex, or you can contact Sherry Llamas at 714-337- 7201.

"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." ~ Hebrews 13:16

Reminder—**LWML** Sunday is on the first Sunday of the Month. Bring in your mites



On Sunday, January 4th!

Next BOD
Meeting
Wed, Jan 21
6 pm



Next Elders
Meeting
NO MEETING THIS
MONTH



On Saturdays, Pastor Gene would like to make home visits to Faith Lutheran Church families. If you would like/ need a Pastoral visit, please see Donna to sign up for a time that works best for you, or call the Church Office at 951-619-2626.

This Month's Anniversaries



Bob & Susan Lamb 01/08

Birthdays of the Month



Marilyn Lukkowen	01/06
Stanley Shatford	01/13
Connie Barhyte	01/17
Dawn Falkenberg	01/19
Charlie Danieleley	01/24
John German	01/24
Donna Lentz	01/27

*If we missed any birthdays or anniversaries,
please contact the Church. Thanks!*

Early Feb BIRTHDAYS

Andrew Shaffer 02/01



MEMBERSHIP CHANGES IN DECEMBER 2025

GAINS IN MEMBERSHIP — 0

LOSSES IN MEMBERSHIP — 0

MEMBERSHIP NOW STANDS AT: 180 Baptized, 139 Confirmed

Come Be A Part Of God's Great Gift!

As an act of Grace — undeserved love for us — God sent Jesus “to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:21b

Jesus took our sin & death and in exchange — week by week — we receive forgiveness,

eternal life and the status of holy children of God. Please join us at Faith each Sunday for:

9:00 AM Traditional Worship Service (inside sanctuary)

1:00 PM Online Worship Service [Upload] on Youtube.

www.youtube.com/@davidtito834/video

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here”

2 Corinthians 5:17



JANUARY

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Church Office Hours are Tuesday thru Thursday 9:30 AM to 2:30PM and Friday 9:30AM to 12:30 PM. Saturday, Pastor available 9:00AM-2:30PM.

						3 5:00 pm Byzantine Service
4 8:10 AM-8:50 AM Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM Worship Service After 9 AM Service Bible Study	5 7:30 pm NA meeting	6	7	8 Bible Study 10 am 5:15-8:15 pm Young Champions	9	10 7:30 - 9:00am Men's Breakfast/Bible Study
11 8:10 AM-8:50 AM Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM Worship Service Voters' Meeting After 9 AM Service	12	13 9:15 am Food Set-up	14 10:00 am Food Distribution	15 Bible Study 10 am 5:15-8:15 pm Young Champions	16	17 7:30 - 9:00am Men's Breakfast/Bible Study
18 8:10 AM-8:50 AM Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM Worship Service After 9 AM Service Bible Study	19  7:30 pm NA meeting	20	21 6:00 pm BOD Meeting	22 Bible Study 10 am 5:15-8:15 pm Young Champions	23	24 7:30 - 9:00am Men's Breakfast/Bible Study
25 8:10 AM-8:50 AM Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM Worship Service Fellowship Brunch after Sunday Service.	26	27 9:15 am Food Set-up	28 10:00 am Food Distribution	29 Bible Study 10 am 5:15-8:15 pm Young Champions	30	31 7:30 - 9:00am Men's Breakfast/Bible Study 