

First Impressions

First Lutheran Church

April 2023

Rev. Sean Esterline
Pastor

Phone 812-431-1923 or 517-543-4360 ext. 222
sesterline@msn.com

Mark Gawura
Specific Ministries Pastor for Care Ministry
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Daniel Longden
Specific Ministry Pastor for
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First Lutheran Church

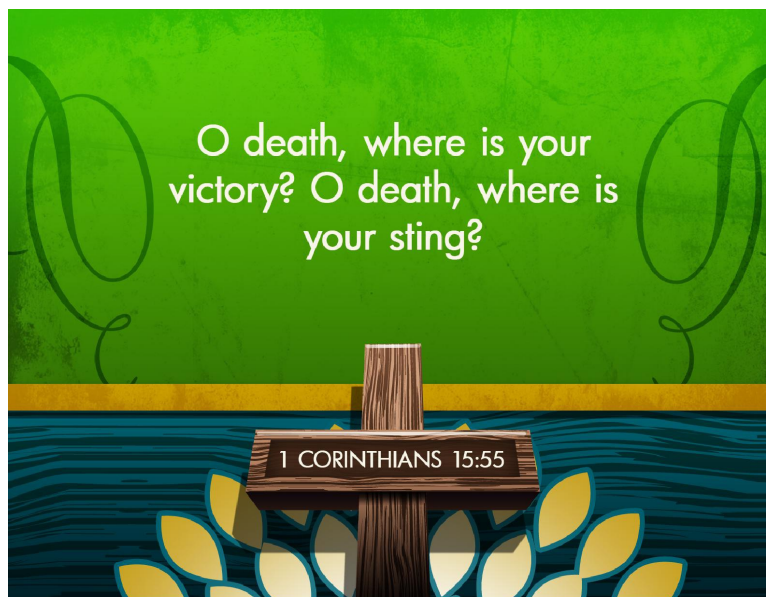
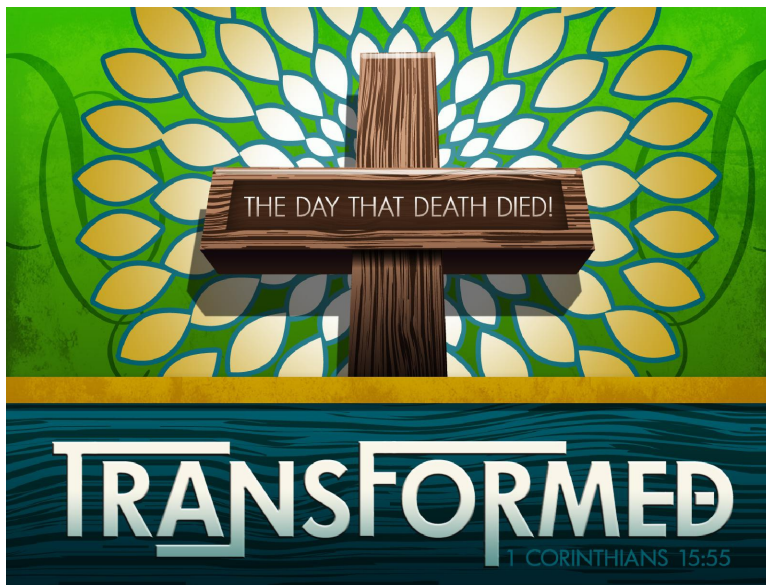
550 E. Shepherd St., Charlotte, MI 48813
Phone 517-543-4360
Email: flcchurchoffice@gmail.com
web: firstlutherancharlotte.org

Amy Garnsay, Office Manager
517-543-4360 ext. 221
flcchurchoffice@gmail.com

Worship Times

Sundays 8:30 & 11:15 a.m.
Contemporary Worship 2nd & 4th Sundays @
11:15 a.m. with live worship team
Communion Every Sunday

Mid-week Worship
Wednesdays 7:00 p.m. during Advent & Lent



“That which we have seen
of Life, we proclaim to you.”



FLC Statistics for MARCH 2023

Confirmed Membership.....	249
Baptized Membership.....	318
Child Baptisms	(0)
Adult Baptisms	(0)
Jr. Confirmands	(0)
New Confirmed Members	(0)
New Baptized Members	(0)
Transfers Out (Confirmed)	(0)
Transfers Out (Baptized)	(0)
Releases (Confirmed)	(0)
Releases (Baptized).....	(0)
Deaths.....	(1) Jessica Larkin ^{nm}
Weddings	(0)

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

Mike & Leslie Dybas	April 4
Larry & Vickie Gingrich.....	April 11
Clyde & Janet Hamilton	April 12
Eric & Christi Whiting	April 12
Dick & Patty Greene.....	April 30



Office Deadlines

- Bulletin announcements are due no later than Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. unless otherwise advertised
- Newsletter articles and information are due no later than the 15th day of the month.

April Birthdays

Tyler Vorce	April 2
Nicholas Stoner	April 8
Sebastian Youngs.....	April 11
Hannah Whiting.....	April 13
Ashton Whiting	April 13
Doug Buck	April 15
Dacey Cook	April 16
Eloise Lea.....	April 16
Adrienne VanLangevelde	April 16
Cameron Youngs	April 16
Kim Longden	April 17
Bryce Locke	April 17
Savannah Beal	April 18
Kathy Geiger	April 18
Mary Heightchew.....	April 18
Bryan Mitchell	April 18
Brooke Lahr	April 19
Aaron VanLangevelde	April 21
Evelyn Carr	April 22
Samantha Bodell	April 24
Randy Knickerbocker.....	April 25
Gary Person	April 26
Ken Trusty	April 26
Paul Creger.....	April 27
Violet Aho	April 28
Mary Jo Huver	April 28
Logan Gingrich	April 28

If you have a birthday or anniversary this month and you do not see your name listed here, please let the church office know so we can update our records.

Thank you.

Church office: 517-543-4360 ext. 221

EMERGENCIES!

If you have a pastoral emergency such as a hospitalization, death in the family, or are in need of urgent Christian counsel, please call Pastor Sean Esterline (812) 431-1923 OR Specific Ministry Pastor for Youth and Family Ministry, Daniel Longden at (248) 802-2392.

First Lutheran Phone Number is 517-543-4360:

Church Office (Amy) - extension 221

Pastor Esterline - extension 222

Pastor Daniel Longden - extension 229

Kitchen - extension 224

**If you call the church and do not get an answer, please leave a message.*

*Please do not leave **emergency** messages on these extensions as we may not access them in a timely manner.*

BIBLE STUDIES AT FIRST LUTHERAN

Please join us for Bible Study . . .

- † Sunday Morning Bible Studies for Adults and Teens - 10:00 a.m.
- † Men's Monday Morning Bible Study - 7:00 a.m., Eaton Place Restaurant, Charlotte
- † Ladies Thursday Morning Bible Study - 9:30 a.m., FLC Library
- † JR Confirmation Classes - 7:00 p.m. Wednesdays

PLEASE JOIN US . . . WEEKLY SUNDAY WORSHIP

at 8:30 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

Traditional worship at 8:30 a.m. every Sunday.

Traditional worship on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays at 11:15 a.m.

Contemporary Worship with Live Band
at 11:15 a.m. on 2nd and 4th Sundays.

All Sunday services now include communion.

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE:

PALM SUNDAY

Sunday, April 2, 10:00 a.m.

One service on this day

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday, April 6, 7:00 p.m.

Seder Meal Presentation 6:00 p.m.

GOOD FRIDAY

Thursday, April 7, 7:00 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 9, 10:00 a.m.

One service on this day

Easter Breakfast 8:30 a.m.

Children's Holy Treasure 9:20 a.m.

STREAMING AND ONLINE WORSHIP

If you are immune compromised and cannot attend in-person worship,
or if you are unable to attend for another reason, please join us for worship online by going to

<https://www.facebook.com/flcharlotte/live>

All worship services will be livestreamed.

The worship services will be available for viewing after the livestream has ended.



** Please note:*

the FLC office will be closed on Friday, April 7, and Monday, April 10

ELECTRONIC GIVING AVAILABLE

First Lutheran has an electronic giving option called Kindrid.

To utilize this option simply go to our website at www.firstlutherancharlotte.org look for the kindrid smart giving logo and click on it or go to the drop down menu on our website (three lines together at the top) and then click on "give."

Thank you for your continued support to First Lutheran and your church family.



FLC COUNCIL MEETING

The next Council Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 13, 7:00 p.m.

FLC ELDERS MEETING

The next Board of Elders' Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 18, 6:30 p.m.



FLC ELISABETH GUILD

The Elisabeth Guild will be meeting to go through the FLC history archives

Thursday, April 6, 1:30 p.m.

For more information please call Marj 517-543-1615.



APRIL SHOWERS (OF THE GOSPEL)

Spring is slowly creeping into Michigan. The welcome warmth of Spring is finally being felt more often. The changing season put me in mind of the old rhyme, "April showers bring May flowers". I don't know that I have ever lived anywhere where it worked just like that, but between the weather and the changes spreading across our society, the poem caused me to think of Luther's comments about the Gospel being like a shower, moving from place to place. To save my describing it more fully, I have included a section (edited slightly for length) from Volume 23 of Luther's Works, starting on page 261. "[T]he Gospel will tarry in your midst but a short time, especially after we who are now proclaiming it have closed our eyes in death. It will not remain after our departure." The Gospel has its day and takes its course from one city to another. Today it is here; tomorrow, there. It is like a heavy shower which passes from place to place, soaking and enriching the soil. Christ says (Matt. 10:23): "If they drive you from one city, go to another. When all the cities have been visited, then I shall come with the Day of Judgment." Even if a certain place accepts the Gospel today, it will not stay there long. People hate it; they view it with envy; they curse it; yes, they starve it out. Therefore Christ declares: "I will not remain with you long. You need not persecute and condemn the Gospel so. I shall soon quit the field and make room for you. As it is, a darkness will soon descend upon you, leaving you in utter ignorance." What will happen then? You will seek Me, and you will not find Me. These are horrible, scary words. . . . When the Gospel vanishes, then the light, the proper understanding and knowledge of faith in Christ, also disappears.

Therefore Paul, quoting from the prophet Isaiah (55:6: "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near"), says very correctly in 2 Cor. 6:1-2: "We entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says: 'At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.' Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." As though he were to say: "Believe, respect the Word, and live in accordance with the Word while you have it. See to it that you do not neglect it; do not sleep your opportunity away. For it will not remain forever; it will not tarry long." Our great ingratitude makes it impossible for the Word to tarry with us long. Our cultural contempt of the Word and our satiety, which God cannot long overlook, drive it away.

To this, Christ says: "I shall be with you a little longer. You will seek Me, and you will not find Me. Where I am you cannot come." This involves two points: "It means, in the first place, that you will burden yourselves with many wearying tasks. For when faith is gone, people will undertake great spiritual endeavors; but these do not achieve forgiveness of sin. Secondly, heaven will be closed to you and your zeal and your holy works and activity."

(Continue on next page . . .)

April Showers (of the Gospel) continued . . .

We are witnessing the moving of the shower in our day and age. This shower, however, does not produce flowers once it is gone. More and more congregations are shrinking dramatically. Many that seem to be holding their own are doing so by allowing names to sit on their rolls of men and women who have stopped worshipping and no longer participate regularly in the fellowship of the saints. We who remain need to recognize what is happening around us and live in the bright light of reality. We are the truly blessed. God has poured out on us His grace and love and taught us to know Him and to believe His will for us is salvation. He has bestowed on us the clear understanding of His Word, and provided us with that light of which Psalm 119 verse 105 spoke, Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

Of course, a light is of absolutely no use if you do not use it. That was Luther's concern. The pressure of the world and the tendencies of our own flesh is to take the Word for granted and dismiss any need to attend to it. Many folks don't feel the need for Bible Study. Life is pressing on them too heavily to take that time. Midweek services don't seem to be all that important, as is often reflected by diminishing attendance. It is too late, and too inconvenient, to attend. Besides, we have Sunday services, most of the time. Anyhow, we know what the pastor is going to say, more or less. We can make up for our absences by watching the sermons on line and maybe doing our daily devotions, right? The problem is that while we might be able to do those things, most people don't.

The reality is that it is not our wisdom, strength, or choosing that makes us Christian. It is God at work in us that accomplishes that, and He works in us through His Word, heard and received in the Sacrament, the absolution, and the fellowship of the Saints - which only occurs around Word and Sacrament in what we call "worship". If we take it, and ourselves, for granted, we can fall away. Jesus said that no one could snatch you out of His hand, but He did not say that you could not jump out on your own. Many have.

The point of all of this is that we are presently still enjoying that "shower" of the Gospel, but you may have noticed that it is getting lighter. The Gospel is harder to find. That shower seems to be moving on. It will prove to be a great blessing for those upon whom it next begins to pour (take a look at the growth the church is seeing on the African continent!), but it will be a great loss for those left behind when it moves. After all, what happens when it stops raining? Things dry out pretty quickly. If it stays dry, we have a drought. When there is a drought, things don't grow and food can become scarce.

The prophets warn of a famine of the Word of God. That famine was what Luther was describing. He predicted it would come to Germany, and his homeland later was formerly part of East Germany, an atheistic communist state. All of Europe is only nominally Christian today, with serious Christian congregations few and far between, and usually very small. That is the famine that Luther foresaw. Our nation is also drying out, in terms of the Gospel. There are lots of churches that teach works and decisions coupled with personal piety. There are some that teach some bizarre form of personal self-approval, but very few who teach the forgiveness of sins by grace alone, through faith alone. We need to fight for the Gospel and cling to it earnestly before it vanishes. We need it for ourselves. We need it for our children and grandchildren. We need it for our friends and neighbors who obviously have very little awareness of their own need. Each and every one of those we know needs the Gospel, and faith in it.

When the Gospel fades away, there may be small outposts of it here and there in America, but I would not want to depend on being able to locate one nearby. Even today, I hear reports of people driving as much as an hour or more, one way, to go to a church where they hear the Word of God clearly and honestly proclaimed. Denominational labels mean very little in this circumstance. As Luther pointed out, you don't find forgiveness in those places that teach that it is by your own works or piety or decisions that you will be saved. They must preach Christ and Him crucified. Only there is that shower still pouring down. My prayer is that, through Word and Sacrament, we here at First Lutheran will always be a welcome shower of God's blessings to our members and our community. I look forward to gathering together with you every week as we join in receiving the gifts our Lord has to shower upon us all... especially the gift of the forgiveness of all our sins leading to eternal life.

In Him,
-Pastor Esterline

WE CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF JESSICA LARKIN

Who was called to her heavenly home on March 8, 2023



FIFTY-TWO WEEK BIBLE READING PROGRAM

It's never too late to join in the 52 Week Bible Reading Program!

Bible readings for April:

Week 14

April 2 1 Samuel 5-8
April 3 1 Samuel 9-10
April 4 1 Samuel 11-13
April 5 1 Samuel 14-15
April 6 1 Samuel 16-17
April 7 1 Samuel 18-19
April 8 1 Samuel 20-22

Week 15

April 9 1 Samuel 23-24
April 10 1 Samuel 25-27
April 11 1 Samuel 28-30
April 12 1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 1-2
April 13 2 Samuel 3-5
April 14 2 Samuel 6-9
April 15 2 Samuel 10-12



Week 16

April 16 2 Samuel 13-14
April 17 2 Samuel 15-16
April 18 2 Samuel 17-18
April 19 2 Samuel 19-20
April 20 2 Samuel 21-23
April 21 2 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 1
April 22 1 Kings 2

Week 17

April 23 1 Kings 3-5
April 24 1 Kings 6-7
April 25 1 Kings 8
April 26 1 Kings 9-10
April 27 1 Kings 11-12
April 28 1 Kings 13-14
April 29 1 Kings 15-17

Week 18

April 30 1 Kings 18-19
May 1 1 Kings 20-21
May 2 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 1
May 3 2 Kings 2-3
May 4 2 Kings 4-5
May 5 2 Kings 6-8
May 6 2 Kings 9-10

FLC COMMUNITY DINNER

Our next Community Dinner will be held on

Monday, April 17, 6:00 p.m.

This dinner is free to all in our community or congregation regardless of need.

Helpers are needed please. Questions?

Please contact George Hatter at 517-213-1939.



FOCUS ON LIFE BENEFIT DINNER

Thursday, April 20, doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner & program at 6:30 p.m.,

First Baptist Church, 1110 Cochran Ave., Charlotte.

Special Guest Speaker: Christen Pollo, Executive Director of Protect Life Michigan.

Deadline to register and pay is April 14.

Please register and pay by calling Carol at 517-652-2667 OR by completing a registration form from the FLC credenza and mailing it in.



PLEASE HELP OUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRY

Please consider donating to Helping Hands Food Bank to help struggling families. You may drop donations directly to the food bank at 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte. or you may leave donations in the collection box located in the FLC narthex. Donations need to be in-date and unopened. Donations of non-perishable food items and personal care items such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, and cleaning supplies, are needed.

You may also send a monetary donation to:

Helping Hands Food Pantry - 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte, MI 48813.

For questions please call the food bank at 517-543-8737. Thank you.



ALTAR FLOWERS

Please consider signing up to provide flowers to beautify our Sunday altar. Cost is currently \$20 per bouquet.. Please make checks payable to FLC Elisabeth Guild and place in Shirley Lea's mailbox. You may take your flowers home with you following the 2nd worship service.

A sign-up sheet is located in the office hallway. When you sign up you may state a reason for your flowers (this will appear in the Sunday announcements) such as celebrating a birthday or anniversary, in loving memory of someone, in thanksgiving for blessings, etc. Thank you for helping make our altar beautiful.



USE OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH BUILDING

The First Lutheran Church fellowship hall, kitchen, and Pastor Olson Memorial Room, are available for use by members and outside groups for their private events, meetings, etc. To make a reservation please contact the church office 517-543-4360 ext. 221. Please do not make plans to use the facilities without making a reservation through the church office as someone may already have the space reserved.

A member of FLC must be present for the duration of any event/meeting held at First by an outside group. FLC is not available for for-profit events (Tupperware, Candlelight, craft sale, etc.). A deposit of \$150 is required for any use of the FLC facilities other than for non-profit or church events. A list of facility use rules and a cleaning check list can be obtained through the church office. Be sure to clean and secure the building after your event. Thank you.



DONATIONS FOR FIRST LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL/DAYCARE

We are collecting paper products and cleaning supplies for FLPD on an ongoing basis. A collection basket is located in the FLC narthex.

Thank you for your donations.



DONATIONS FOR EATON COUNTY PREGNANCY CENTER

The pregnancy center helps women in need and encourages them to choose life.

Donations of diapers (size newborn-4), wipes, sleepers (newborn - 1 year), receiving blankets, and maternity clothes (all sizes) are needed - a box is in the FLC coat room.



LCMS Stewardship Ministry – lcms.org/stewardship Newsletter Article – April 2023

A Better Way

The most common question about stewardship is not whether a Christian should give to their church. Of course Christians should give to their church. Everyone knows this. Rather, the question asked most is, “How much should I give?” But this question really means, “Should Christians give a tenth of their income to their local congregation?”

Here are some common reasons against tithing. Some say tithing isn’t necessary because it isn’t expressly commanded in the New Testament. There is no “Thus saith the Lord,” or “should” concerning tithing. Others say that Christians give to their congregation in ways much broader than money. They give of their time and their talents, and these together with treasures (money) add up to more than a tithe. Still others say that they give of their treasures to other things besides their congregation, and they want to support those things alongside their church. And then there are those who think Christians shouldn’t tithe because of some fear. They are afraid that if they tithe, their gift will be misused, or that after tithing, there won’t be enough left over to get the things that they use, want or need.

Here are some reasons why Christians should tithe. Even though the New Testament doesn’t specifically command Christians to tithe, the Old Testament people were commanded to. And on top of this, St. Paul often describes giving a regular and generous proportion of the first fruits of one’s income — terms similar to a tithe (2 Cor. 8:7–23; 2 Cor. 9:2–7).

But here’s another way to think about it. What was the point of the tithe in the Old Testament? Where did it go? This tithe was intended to support the ministry of the Levites. They were not given any land because they had no time to farm; their full-time job was the ministry. What does it say in the New Testament? “The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). This is the verse that Luther used in the Small Catechism’s Table of Duties to explain what Christians owe to the support of the ministry.

It seems clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that the tithe is the goal of Christians in their giving. But what if we’re not there yet? How should we handle this? What are we to do?

Let’s answer this by asking a different question. What would you say to your adult children who only attended church quarterly or once a month? After all, there is no passage in the New Testament that requires Christians to go to church weekly. Hebrews 10:25 is the closest verse we have, and it states simply that Christians should not neglect gathering together. And even though there is no passage that commands Christians to gather weekly, that is the implicit expectation throughout the Old and New Testaments.

So, what would you say to that son or daughter? The conversation might go something like this. I’m glad you’re still going to church. It is a wonderful blessing to hear God’s promises of forgiveness, life and salvation, and to receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament. But you can do better, and it will only be a blessing to you. There is a better way, and I’d really like you to try to attain it.

We should approach the topic of tithing with a similar conversation. The tithe is not specifically commanded in the New Testament, but it sure seems like the implicit expectation of both the Old and New Testaments. So, we’re ecstatic that you’re giving, and that you’re giving in all these various ways — time, talents and treasures. But there is a better way. And that will only be a blessing to you, just as the Word of God — Old and New Testament alike — promises. Can you try increasing your gifts over the coming weeks, months and years? Can you put your trust in the God who sent His Son to take away your sin and give you everlasting life? And if He did this for you, if He did not spare His only Son, how will He not give you all things? He will not disappoint.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



HOW YOU CAN HELP THOSE IN NEED

Here is a list of ways you can help those in need in our community and congregation:

- ☛ **FLC Esther Fund.** This fund helps provide emergency housing to the homeless in our community. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please write “Esther Fund” and the amount you wish to contribute on your offering envelope.
- ☛ **FLC Good Samaritan Fund.** This fund helps members of First Lutheran who have a financial need. If you are a member struggling with a financial need, please contact the church office to apply for help. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please write “Good Samaritan Fund” and the amount you wish to contribute on your offering envelope.
- ☛ **Helping Hands Food Bank.** You may make donations at FLC or directly to the food bank: 621 Jefferson St., Charlotte. For questions please call the food bank at 517-543-8737.
- ☛ **Pregnancy Center for Eaton County.** The pregnancy center helps women in need and encourages those considering abortion to choose life instead. We are collecting donations of diapers (size newborn thru size four), wipes, sleepers (size newborn thru one year), receiving blankets, and maternity clothes (of all sizes). The center is also in need of monetary donations. Please send monetary donations directly to Pregnancy Center of Eaton County, PO Box 480, Charlotte, MI 48813. Volunteers are needed to help clean and organize at the pregnancy center (337 State St., Charlotte), and help greet clients, Thursdays from Noon - 3pm. Questions? Please contact Gina at 517-543-7077.
- ☛ **SIREN Eaton Shelter.**
Please make donations directly to the shelter:
520 Robinson St., Charlotte, MI. For questions please call the shelter at 517-543-0748.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Scripture Alone

We believe that the Holy Scriptures in their entirety are the inspired and infallible Word of God and that they alone are the only source and norm of faith and life for the Christian. We believe that the Bible is complete and requires no additions from any other source and that it clearly reveals God’s plan of salvation for mankind.

Faith Alone

We believe that man was originally created holy by God but later rebelled against God and is now, by his nature, spiritually dead and blind. Only when man is brought to faith by the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God is it possible for man to be saved. Faith is God’s work - not man’s work - and comes only by hearing the Word of God. Man is justified before God by faith alone and not by good deeds.

Grace Alone

We believe that we are saved by grace alone and that man cannot earn his way into God’s favor. Grace is the undeserved love of God who sent His Son Jesus into the world to take our place under God’s law and to suffer and die to pay the penalty for our sins. Whoever trusts in that redemptive act of Jesus Christ will not perish but have everlasting life.