

Reflections

Ascension Lutheran Church

3801 Oakwood Avenue NW | Huntsville, AL 35810

A NEW BEGINNING

COMING IN OCTOBER!

As our pastors rotate for one last month at Ascension, we thank God for their service to us and their willingness to drive the distance to serve!

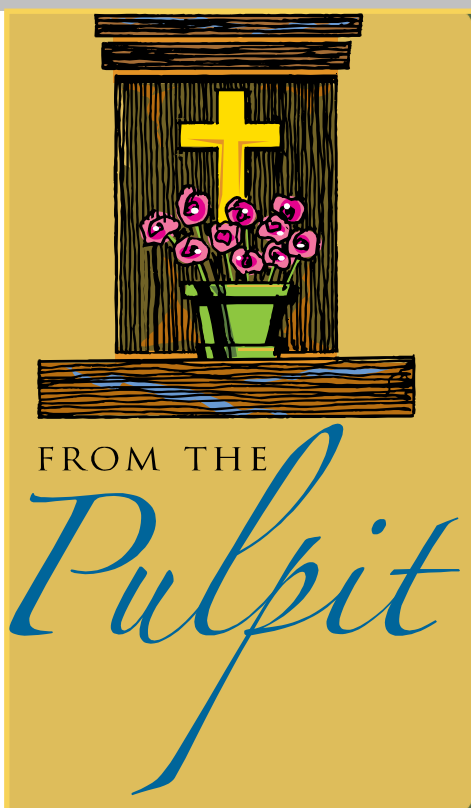
October 1 - Rev. James Garnett

October 8 - Rev. Keith Enko

October 15 - Rev. Doug DeWitt

October 22 - Rev. Gary Nagy

October 29 - Rev. Gary Nagy



INSTALLATION SERVICE

October 29, 2023 - 3:30 PM

Join us for the installation of
Pastor Derek Waffel.
There will be a meal served

after the service and all are
welcome! Sign up in the
Narthex how many in your
family will be coming to the
meal (We need to know!)



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Worship Times

Sunday - 8:00 & 10:45 AM

Monday - 6:00 PM

SS/Bible Classes - Sunday - 9:30 AM



VISIT US ONLINE www.ascensionhsv.org



The Book of Isaiah is the first of the writings of the prophets in the Bible, and Isaiah, the author, is generally considered to be the greatest prophet. He was probably reared in an aristocratic home. In the beginning of his ministry, he was well-liked. But like most prophets he soon became unpopular because his messages were so difficult to hear. He called the people to turn from their lives of sin and warned them of God's judgment and punishments.

Isaiah 64:1-8

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!

*As when fire sets twigs ablaze
and causes water to boil,*

*come down to make your name known to your enemies
and cause the nations to quake before you! For when you did
awesome things that we did not expect,
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.*

*Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,*

*no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
who remember your ways.*

*But when we continued to sin against them,
you were angry.*

*How then can we be saved?
All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

*No one calls on your name
or strives to lay hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have given us over to our sins.*

*Yet you, LORD, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.*

God's Creative Genius

Sometimes we may wish, as Isaiah does, that God would rend the heavens and come down with His awesome power so all people would tremble at His presence. Centuries after Isaiah recorded these words, God did come

to earth to share His astounding love, forgiveness and salvation through His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.



God's appearance is so intense that it is like a consuming fire that burns everything in its path. If we are so impure, how can we be saved? Only by God's mercy. The Israelites had experienced God's appearance at Mt. Sinai. When God met with Moses, there was a thunderstorm, smoke and an earthquake. If God were to meet us today, His glory would overwhelm us, especially when we look at our "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

God has revealed Himself especially through Christ and His Word - and also through His creative genius, which is seen clearly in each human being He forms. We are truly "fearfully and wonderfully made." For example, God created in each of us a three-pound hard drive (our brain) that can store 15 trillion pieces of information. He also crafted for us an engine (our heart) that beats over 2 billions times by the age of 70 and seldom needs repairs.



Psalm 139:14

*"I praise You because I am fearfully
and wonderfully made; Your works
are wonderful, I know that full well."*

Psalm 139: 1-5

*"You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my
lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me. "*

Sometimes we don't let people get to know us completely because we are afraid they will discover something about us that they won't like. But God already knows everything about us, even to the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30), and still He accepts and loves us. God is with us through every situation, in every trial - protecting, loving, guiding. He knows and loves us completely.

Psalm 139:6-14

*"Such knowledge is too wonderful for
me, too lofty for me to attain. Where
can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your
presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are
there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you
are there. If I rise on the wings of the
dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast. If
I say, "Surely the darkness will hide
me*

*and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well."*

God is omnipresent. He is present everywhere. For those who know and love God, this is good news: no matter what we do or where we go, we can never be far from God's comforting presence.

God's character goes into the creation of every person. When we feel worthless or even begin to hate ourselves, remember God's Spirit is ready and willing to work with us. We should have as much respect for ourselves as our Maker has for us.

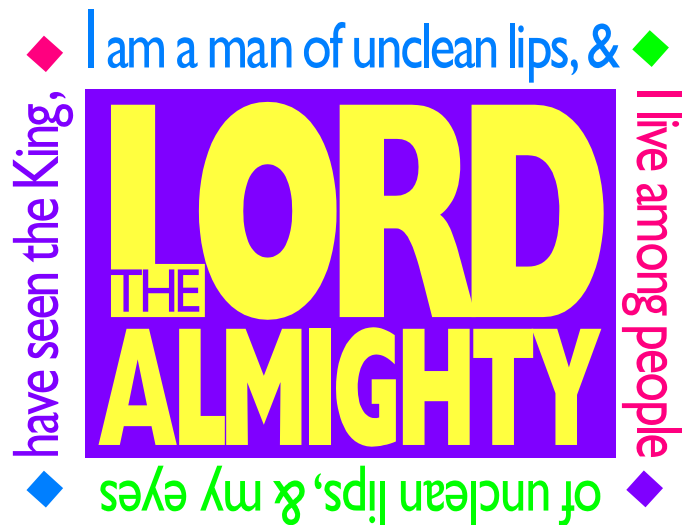
Even more remarkable is the spiritual heart God has given us. Because of our sinful human nature, our heart is so polluted that our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. But instead of driving us to despair, this realization leads us to our Redeemer, who shed His blood on the cross so we might be cleansed of our sins and live with Him forever.

As we read Isaiah, imagine this strong and courageous man of God, fearlessly proclaiming

God's Word and

listen to his message in relation to our own life - return, repent and be renewed. Then trust in God's redemption through Christ and rejoice. Our Savior has come, and He's coming again!

Because He is without sin, He alone can help us with our sin. It is only right that we regard Him as supreme in power and moral perfection. We must never treat God as common or ordinary. He alone deserves our devotion and praise. He is always truthful, fair and just.



Isaiah 6:5

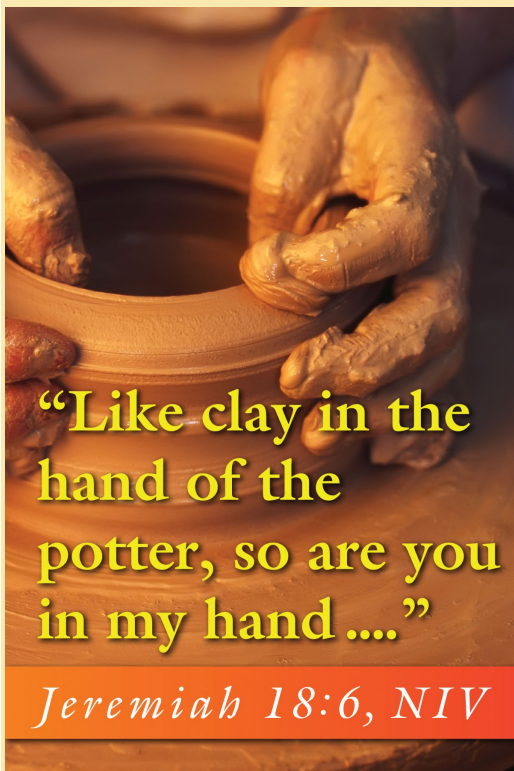


We must trust in God alone and fulfill His commands. We cannot forsake justice nor give in to selfishness. If we harden our hearts against His message, punishment will surely come to us.

Christ died to save all those who turn from their sin and come to Him. Salvation is from God alone. No amount of good works can earn it.

God is highly exalted above all His creatures. He is morally perfect and sinless in all His actions motives; He is in control of His power, judgment, love and mercy. His holy nature is our standard for morality.

Creator Father, we are the clay and You are the potter. We praise You for knitting us together and giving us a new heart that knows You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.



“Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand”

Jeremiah 18:6, NIV



FROM THE DCM

Carla Jo Peebles

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

Ephesians 3:1

The verse above is one of my “go to” verses. It speaks to me in that everything has its place and time. It may not be my/our time, but it is the Lord’s time. Just as it is in the Lord’s time that the seasons change, it was in the Lord’s time that a pastor accepted the call to our congregation. It is now time for the change of seasons here at Ascension.

As is also quoted from the Bible “take off the old and put on the new” (Col. 3:9b-10a). We are ready for a new chapter in the life of Ascension Lutheran Church. The Lord has blessed this congregation for almost 60 years. As we walk in the newness of this shepherd may He continue to bless our way.

The CDC continues to run smoothly. As always, we can use part-time and substitute staff, but are thankful for the dedicated staff that serves daily. October is going to be a busy time for us. We have Muffins with Mom on Friday, October 13, followed by school picture day on Monday, October 16. We are also celebrating Halloween for the first time in many years. We are having a door decorating contest – in which we will need impartial judges. We are looking forward to the trunk-or-treat on October 28, and plan to have a costume day on October 31.



Welcome to our new Ascension LWML President, Nadine Hartwig, who presided over our first meeting this year on September 9.

Our first discussion involved the upcoming and ongoing projects in which we have been involved and supported in the past. Lynne Heape continues to send cards to our members who are no longer able to physically come to church. Roberta Willenberg faithfully keeps the Cradle Roll and stays in contact with families of baptized infants. Marcia Pate has collected large amounts of pill bottles for the Huntsville Community Free Clinic. Our members are continuing to generously give canned goods and box dinners for our CDC Food Pantry. Lastly, many thanks to all those who helped prepare and serve the funeral meals for the families of Chloe Hunt and Nancy Lawson.

On August 24, a baked potato meal was served at The Rose of Sharon Soup Kitchen on Arcadia Circle. Our LWML group decided that due to the need in our community, this facility for the homeless and needy will be our focus and priority for service projects. We circulated a sign-up sheet for individuals to donate potatoes, chili, sour cream, butter, bacon bits and onions. Currently, we are the ONLY group

doing this type of meal and activity at this facility. We have been serving this baked potato lunch for several years on the last Thursday of the month. If anyone needs reimbursement, please put receipts with your name on it and mark it "Rose of Sharon" and put it in the Board of Social Services box in the church office. I will sign a voucher and pass it along to Kathy Linden for payment. For any contributions to the Board of Social Services, checks may be made to Ascension with Board of Social Services written in the Memo.

The Ascension Garage Sale sponsored by the LWML will be Saturday October 21 from 7 AM to 1 PM. Come by and shop, grab a free donut and a water from Jennifer Hartwig who will be at a table representing the Board of Evangelism and have witnessing material available. Items may be brought in beginning Monday October 16 and placed in the sunken room.

The Gulf States LWML Retreat will be held on October 13-15 in Cullman. For more information, contact Nadine Hartwig.

LWML Sunday will be October 15 and all donations will go to The LCMS Seminary Fund.



It was also mentioned in the meeting that the Board of Education and Board of Evangelism will hold a Trunk or Treat on October 28. Donations of candy and the use of vehicles are needed.

We highly anticipate Pastor Waffel's installation on October 29 and we will be asked to assist in various activities to help his family set up their new home. There will be a collection of items for a "pounding" which entails donating staples such as sugar, flour, canned goods and cleaning products they may need. This endeavor will be headed up by Marcia Pate.

Our numbers in LWML at our church are increasing. We will soon have a new pastor and we look forward to meeting him and hearing his ideas about what more we can do in our group to serve Him. Thank you for your support and remember us on LWML Sunday!



Saturday,
October 28
3:00 - 5:00 PM

Still needed for this special event - more candy and treats! Any deliveries should be placed in the cauldron in the Narthex.

Also, some more trunks can be left in the parking lot behind the church.

Everyone,
welcome!

LWML Sunday

Sunday, October 15

*Freewill Offering will
go to Seminaries*



The man in the middle is our future pastor, Rev. Derek Waffel. He has a soft spot for supporting the K9 unit and also the police by delivering brownies, candy and other treats for all. We look forward to having him here in Huntsville. Installation will take place at Ascension on Sunday, October 29, at 3:30 PM.

Saturday
October 28
8:30 AM



**Save Your
Items for Our
Rummage Sale**



October 21, 2023

**Ascension Lutheran
(Indoors)**

7:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Rummage Sale!

It's time to rummage through your unused, done-used, never-used items and bring them to the Sunken Room to be sorted and placed on tables in the Fellowship Hall and hallway.

Beginning October 16 through October 20 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM, there will be someone in the Sunken Room to let you in and take your treasures for the sale.

This is sponsored by the LWML and proceeds will go somewhere to make a "mite-y" big impact.

Come by and shop, grab a free donut and a water from Jennifer Hartwig who will be at a table representing the Board of Evangelism and have witnessing material available.

And remember - LWML Sunday will be October 15 with a freewill donation gathered to be sent to the seminaries.

Fall Service Opportunities

Just in time for Fall and the arrival of the Waffel family! The Property Board is hosting a clean-up day for us to get the grounds and buildings looking great! On Saturday, October 14, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, you can come and bring a shovel, rake, hoe, work gloves and whatever else you might need to beautify the property - and most importantly of all, a willing spirit!

Following the clean-up, there will be a cook-out with the meal provided by donations and freewill offerings. More information will follow as menus and plans are laid out.



**Saturday,
October 14**



SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES



THE HEART OF A SINNER AND SAINT

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 7:23-8:1)

Paul struggled with his inability to avoid sinning. Despite his sincere desire to obey God's commands, Paul found that his flesh was weak and that he simply could not live without sinning. This frustrated him greatly, causing him to refer to himself as a "wretched man" and "chief of sinners". The Holy Spirit was obviously hard at work within him, keeping him humble, contrite, and repentant.

On the other hand, Paul, just before his death, referred to himself as having run the good race and fought the good fight. He stated that none of the other apostles had worked as hard, nor faced the same level of adversity, as he had. Before he died, Paul was at peace, content that he had given his best to serve his Lord and Savior.

Although Paul's writing at times seems almost schizophrenic, his feelings upon self-examination are typical of a Christian, someone who is simultaneously both a sinner and a saint. When the Holy Spirit works on a Christian, exposing his many sins, contriteness followed by repentance is the inevitable result. We are truly poor, miserable sinners deserving of both temporal and eternal punishment and this recognition drives us to our knees begging God to have mercy upon us. On the other hand, our faith in God, combined with His promises and the terrible, atoning price paid by Jesus on the cross, gives us great joy and hope for the future. We are truly simultaneously both saints and sinners, a combination of sad, repentant sinners with joyful, forgiven saints.

With His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus took on the punishment that rightly was ours, exchanging His perfect righteousness for our sinful filth. By His death we have been redeemed, the eternal punishment we so deserve has been paid for and replaced by adoption into God's family, by the promise of eternal life, and eternal bliss, in the presence of the almighty God! This is such an incredible gift that we can only stand in awe of what God has done. We can never thank Him enough, nor begin to repay Him, for this gracious, totally undeserved present.

While the Holy Spirit uses our sinfulness to drive us to contriteness and repentance, the devil and his cohorts use our sinfulness to discourage and dishearten us, to convince us that we are completely undeserving of God's forgiveness, that a just God could not find us anything other than guilty and deserving of eternal damnation. Paul realized the difficulty of this constant battle between the forgiven saint with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. His answer to this challenge was to first put on the armor of God and then join in the fight. Only when we are garbed with the armor of God are we ready to fight the good fight, to run the good race, to face our enemies on the spiritual battlefield all around us.

A Christian is truly a miserable sinner but also a forgiven saint. As His forgiven saints, we have been commissioned to be His representatives to a fallen world. We are to let our light shine, to share Christ by our words and actions. So, if we are not doing it already, let's put on the armor of God and join in that fight!



MULTIMEDIA HUB AND SATELLITE CHURCH WEB SITES

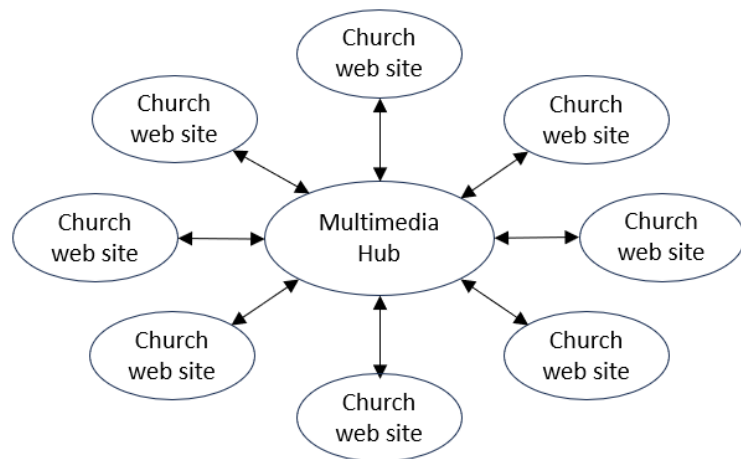
This article is purely technical. It has no theological content and, therefore, does not begin by quoting scripture nor are there any references to Bible passages within it. For this reason, I debated including it in Reflections. However, since my last two articles dealt with artificial intelligence (AI) and I don't like to leave a topic open-ended, this article will attempt to bring the AI subject to a logical conclusion. Note that the conclusions presented in this article are my own and have not been submitted to anyone else for their approval or concurrence.

In my last article I discussed the possibility of using a large language model (LLM), that is at the heart of the various commercial chatbots and is available to developers wishing to create their own chatbots, to develop an LCMS-specific chatbot by training it on the Bible, the Book of Concord and other LCMS-approved documentation (including audio and video recordings). The Roman Catholic church is doing the equivalent to this, developing a "Magisterium AI" chatbot trained on over 1,000 approved documents (a good article on this topic can be found

at <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2023/08/new-magisterium-ai-adds-ecclesial-twist-to-artificial-intelligence>). Other church denominations are undoubtedly contemplating doing something similar, although I am unaware of such developments.

ChatGPT recently announced a voice recognition-based UI that can be used to interact with ChatGPT. This, as well as other technology discussed in this article, either already exists or is highly likely to exist within the near future. Therefore, the conclusions within this article are not pie-in-the-sky and far into the future, but, if not already in existence, will soon become available.

The core of the approach that I recommend is a "multimedia hub and satellite church web sites" approach. This approach is displayed in the following diagram. This approach consists of a centralized LCMS multimedia hub that is connected in both directions to LCMS satellite church web sites.



The multimedia hub could be a single web site or, more likely, a set of centralized web sites, each of which supports a subset of the hub functionality. Each church web site would be a unique web site for that specific LCMS church. While there should be a significant amount of common functionality to all the church web sites, as described by this article, there can also be functionality within the church web site unique to that specific LCMS church.

Included in the multimedia hub should be all functionality that is common across all the LCMS churches. This includes the following:

- LCMS-trained chatbot that accepts voice and textual input and that produces voice and/or textual output. The output should include hyperlinks (only for textual output) into the documents used to train the chatbot such that clicking the



hyperlink will take the user directly to that site. Note that the referenced sites (i.e., the ones used to train the chatbot) can be textual or audiovisual (i.e., videos or voice recordings) as well as standard links and links to Concordia-published books.

Google map-based (or equivalent map-based) church locator showing locations of LCMS churches. Clicking on the locator for a church should take the user to the web site for that specific church.

“What we believe” web page that summarizes what the LCMS church believes on a wide variety of topics.

“Frequently asked questions” web page that answers the most asked questions. The display for this web page should probably parallel the “What we believe” web page. This web page could optionally include a preprocessor wrapped around the LCMS chatbot that provides canned answers to many questions and passthrough (to the LCMS chatbot) for other questions.

Link to web sites for KFUD radio and Lutheran Hour broadcasts and archives

Link to Concordia publishing web site

Links to other LCMS web sites currently available via the already-existing LCMS web sites

Online training classes (ala Baptist Bible Institute (BBI))

Other LCMS-wide functionality not spelled out in previous bullets

Each church web site should provide access to the multimedia hub and should not replicate functionality provided via the hub. A template church web site should be made available to the churches that predefines the ties into the multimedia hub and provides a skeleton for functionality common to LCMS churches but for which the data is church-specific (e.g., information about the pastor and other church staff). This template should facilitate smaller churches developing their own web sites. Alternatively, a default web site (probably simply a dynamic web page) can be created from this template for each church based on information (i.e., location, pastor, etc.) within the LCMS database.



EVENTS



Jordan Strain	10/01	Janel Skrabanek	10/12
Corwin Fick	10/01	Jessica Cowart	10/15
Eric Dunn	10/03	Alexander Burhans	10/16
Mason Lee	10/04	Stephanie Lee	10/16
Glen Huling	10/06	Rebecca King	10/20
Jeremiah Burhans	10/08	Scott Patterson	10/23
Sharon Ball	10/10	Elise Patterson	10/25
Susan Bridges	10/12	S. Mwkabumbila	10/26
Jerry Heape	10/12	Tyler Arends	10/30

Todd & Laura Ballentine	10/11	(37 Years)
John & Jennifer Hartwig	10/25	(15 Years)
David & Kathy Linden	10/27	(44 Years)
Cameron & Stephanie Lee	10/30	(24 Years)



OCTOBER MISSIONAL OUTREACH

Every week, members of Ascension join together and visit two different groups of people on two different ends of town. This month, the groups will visit Regency on Max Luther Drive on October 12 and 26 at 12:30 PM. They will visit HHR on Chris Drive on October 4 and 18 at 10:15 AM.

Every Sunday morning, the group goes to Regency to do a worship service at 9:45 AM.

Welcome

Song One

Song Two

Scripture Reading - OT

Song Three

Song Four

Scripture Reading - NT

Song Five

Song Six

Scripture Reading - Gospel

Song Seven

Message

Song Eight

Song Nine



OCTOBER CALENDAR



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	2 6:00 PM - Worship	3 10:00 AM - Ladies' Bible Study	4 10:15 AM - HHR 6:00 PM - Choir	5	6	7
8 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	9 6:00 PM - Worship	10 10:00 AM - Ladies' Bible Study 7:00 PM - Board of Directors	11 6:00 PM - Choir	12 12:30 PM - Regency	13	14 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM - Church Clean-up Day 10:00 AM - LWML 3:00 PM - Cook-out after Clean-up
15 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	16 6:00 PM - Worship 1:00-5:00 PM - Drop off Rummage Sale Items	17 10:00 AM - Ladies' Bible Study 6:00 PM - Board of Elders 1:00-5:00 PM - Drop off Rummage Sale Items	18 10:15 AM - HHR 1:00-5:00 PM - Drop off Rummage Sale Items 6:00 PM - Choir	19 1:00-5:00 PM - Drop off Rummage Sale Items	20 1:00-5:00 PM - Drop off Rummage Sale Items	21 7:00 AM - 1:00 PM - Rummage Sale
22 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	23 6:00 PM - Worship	24 10:00 AM - Ladies' Bible Study	25 6:00 PM - Choir	26 12:30 PM - Regency	27	28 8:30 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast 3:00 PM - Trunk or Treat
29 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency 3:30 PM - Installation with Meal	30 6:00 PM - Worship 7:00 PM - Meal at Jordan Chinese Restaurant	31 10:00 AM - Ladies' Bible Study				