

Immanuel Lutheran News

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From Pastor Wright

I recently read this post on our synod's website, written by Matthew C. Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I am sharing it with all of you.

“René Descartes (1596–1650) ... [is] credited as a foundational thinker in the development of Western notions of reason and science. His philosophy was built on the idea of radical doubt. ... The only thing that remains true is that there is a mind or consciousness doing the doubting and believing its perceptions, hence the famous formulation, ‘I think therefore I am.’” (Kalantzis & Cope, [Works & Days](#))

Modern-day thinkers have built a thoroughly humanistic worldview based on Descartes' statement. The result? God has been dismissed as the essential cause of all things. This includes the removal of His Law and His moral authority. The theory of evolution moved philosophy and science to view life as the random result of chance events instead of God's speaking and creating. In evolutionary theory, the family, the state, the church and notions of morality are human constructs that have resulted from myth, power, environment, chance and the will to survive.

Much of what we see today in society results from philosophies and teachings that, like those of Descartes, elevate humanity and thereby eliminate God and His Law. Man has become his own god. Without God's Word, humanity finds morality in temporary constructs that may be adjusted to current circumstances. If there is no God, human life has no necessary, inherent or eternal value. A billion human lives have been sacrificed by abortion, a human “right” promoted by policies and governments. Some have killed babies as part of an international effort to “save the planet” from overpopulation, while animal suffering, death and extinction is opposed as great evil. Without God, humans decide the value, or lack thereof, of life. When mankind is not viewed as made in the image of God, human life has no more value than that of an animal.

Descartes' idea, “I think, therefore I am,” shifts the basis for man's identity away from God's action to his own mind's ability to conceptualize himself. Descartes' teachings taught man to look inside himself — as man thinks he is, he is. It's a short trip from “I think, therefore I am” to “I think I am male; therefore, my female body does not determine the reality of who I am.”

According to these ideas, the internal, hidden world of the mind trumps the visible, external world of the body (a self-destructive rejection of the Creator and the laws of science). Even small children, therefore, must be allowed to alter their bodily reality to align with their thoughts, and anyone who refuses to allow hormonal treatments or “sex change” surgeries stands in the way of the child's “reality.” Absent any God-given sense of morality or a trust in the external visible reality of the created body, a child may be convinced that he or she is a she or he, or even an “it” or “they.” As the culture cheers, precious young lives are forever damaged.

A place for sinners

The cause of sexual dysphoria is complex, but the result is irrationality. The NCAA's promotion of men competing in women's sports demonstrates the absurdity of it all. Rational female athletes say, “Unfair!” Disney bears Descartes' ideology as well, with its ubiquitous messages of “Follow your heart” or “I dream, therefore I become.” All this runs smack into common sense. Ideology has run afoul of natural law.

Consider other fruit of this way of thinking. The marriage rate is at its lowest in U.S. history. Pornography allows the indulgence of lust and every form of perverse inclination of the human mind. Loneliness, suicide, sexual abuse (particularly by adult males living with non-biological children), adultery and children born out of wedlock are at record levels. The sexual revolution has left record numbers of women as single mothers, a scenario that is, statistically, the No. 1 determiner of poverty. Recent stats show that homes in which only the mother attends church (as opposed to those in which both parents attend church with the children) have a much smaller likelihood of the children becoming adult churchgoers.

The socio-economic, psychological and even spiritual devastation caused by the decline of the nuclear family is devastating. The church is a welcome home for all of us sinners and must always be a place of compassion for hurting people, but the compassion must be formed by the Word of God.

Why are people suffering? Why such vast confusion? St. Paul lays it out clearly in Romans. The cause is sin, especially the grand sin of the rejection of the Creator, His

creation and His law. It's no wonder that the bishop of our Finnish partner church was prosecuted by the Finnish state for hate crimes, in part for producing a pamphlet that quoted the first chapter of Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation. ... So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. ... God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. ...

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (Rom. 1:18–32)

Paul does not limit his accusations to matters of sex. He hits the culture head on. He also condemns all of our sins of deed and thought. Christians recognize their own sins. Jesus' call to repentance is for all: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

Thanks be to God, Paul delivered the Gospel in the same opening chapter of Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

So long as we are the church, we shall humbly preach this message of Law and Gospel for the eternal salvation of all who hear and believe. Indeed, we all suffer from our sin, and the church is always a place for sinners, of whom "I am chief."

Descartes was wrong. It is not "I think, therefore I am." It is, "I have a Creator and Redeemer, therefore I am." The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison is president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Posted April 28, 2022

Immanuel Church is a place for sinners—as all of us are. Our Creator invites us to be restored as we hear his word and take it to heart. Jesus is rest for our souls.

*Yours in Christ,
Pastor Wright*

Congregational News

The Voters' Assembly has formed a sanctuary refurbishment planning committee that is considering how to restore and update the pews and flooring in the worship space. A plan is being put together that will be presented for consideration at an upcoming Voters' Assembly.

The congregation has also formed a call committee to staff a full-time position for youth, family, and music areas. The committee is composed of the president, two elders, two members of the Parish Board of Education, one representative from the Board of Stewardship, and the pastor. They will report to a future Voters' Assembly.

The restrooms on the north side of the sanctuary are closed for renovation. New stalls, fixtures, and thermal insulation are being installed. The flooring will be upgraded with the sanctuary project. Worshippers may use the Parish Hall restrooms until the project is completed.

Living with Grief is a new support group for survivors. We will have an initial meeting on Tuesday, June 14, 10:00 AM at Immanuel. All are welcome. The group will meet monthly at area LCMS churches. Lunch together afterward is optional. See pastor for more details.

Adoption Fund Project The Lutherans for Life of Illinois Executive Board is excited to announce a new life-affirming project for Lutheran families in the state of Illinois. Adoption is an expensive endeavor and due to the high costs many couples do not consider adoption as an option in growing their families. The LFL of IL Board would like to work to meet this need for families who have a desire to adopt. We are partnering with Lifesong For Orphans ministry to create an adoption fund to be made available to LCMS families in Illinois who need financial assistance as they go through the adoption process.

As of right now, we have a few LFL Life Teams that are interested in fundraising for this adoption fund. We are asking for more Life Chapter teams to prayerfully consider helping us financially to build this fund as well. Once the fund has grown to \$8,000, we would open the fund up for LCMS families to use as they go through the adoption process. Families will be able to submit an application for an adoption grant and Lifesong will review the application. Then Lifesong will give the LFL of IL a recommendation of the amount that could be granted to the adoptive family according to their financial needs.

Here is a video link with more information about Lifesong for Orphans: <https://vimeo.com/139492632> (password is lifesong). Our hope is to make this fund available by the

end of 2018. If you have any questions or are interested in helping in this project, you may contact Valerie Boehne at 309-210-4747.



We are fortunate to welcome not one, but two, new additions to our church staff. Both Carla Cornett and Sherri VonBehren are familiar faces at Immanuel and make an excellent team as they share our secretarial office position.

Regardless of the day, you can find either Carla or Sherri to greet you during office hours. We want to introduce and welcome them in their new roles!

2022 Lutherans For Life National Conference

October 21-22 | All day Friday until Saturday at noon.
Rock Island, Illinois (Quad Cities) *Scheduled speakers ... so far:* Melissa Ohden | Jeanne Mancini | Steve Deace. For more info go to: <https://lutheransforlife.org/conference/>

60th Regular Convention Central Illinois District July 17-19, 2022 Pastor Wright and Don VonBehren will attend as our delegates in Springfield, IL. A report will be given in Sunday Bible Class on July 24.



150th Anniversary Committee

God With Us, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

All members are encouraged to participate in Altamont's Memorial Day parade on May 30th. The "people mover" will begin loading at 8:30AM at Immanuel and depart at 9:15 to transport to the high school. You may also go directly to the high school where the parade will begin at 10 AM. We hope to increase community awareness for our upcoming 150th Anniversary.

150th Anniversary t-shirts available online at <https://immanuelc150years.itemorder.com> or come by the church office for an order form.

Ladies Aid Thursday, June 2nd at 7PM. Devotion by Deb Winter, topic by Andrea Dahnke. Hostesses are Ellie Franzen, Loretta Pfenninger and Karen Richter.

We are again participating in the Family Life Center/ Silk Purse Community Give Back Program. We ask that you donate items directly to Silk Purse. Donations may be dropped off at the purple door on the east side of the Silk Purse building. Please tell the person at the door that the items are from Immanuel in Altamont. Tagging items may

help ensure we receive credit. Additionally we need volunteers to work at Silk Purse during the month of June. A sign-up binder is located by the Parish Hall Lobby. In return, Silk Purse will donate up to \$3000 to Immanuel's Ladies Aid. If you are unable to take your donation to Silk Purse, we will hold a "Drop Off Day" in the Parish Hall on Monday, June 13, from 9 AM-12 PM. If anyone has large items, call Ruth Spilker (618-267-7478) or the church office to make arrangements for pickup / delivery.

Prayer Corner

- For healing: Debi Bernahl, Tom Campbell, Heather Davis, Abbey Franzen, Wayne Franzen, Keith Green, Pam Kepley, JR Newby, Ruth Ann Owens, Theda Rinker, Declan Robertson, Jenny Wendling, and Dave Wolf
- For Lutheran missionary Ted Krey & Family
- For our government, for protection of unborn children and elderly
- For peace in the world, an end to violence, and for harmony among nations—especially Ukraine
- For those persecuted for their faith in Jesus
- For police, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and those who serve in our military and their families

Thank you for your generous memorials in Honor of my husband, Gerald. Your kindness and sympathy is deeply appreciated.
-- Linda Holste

From Andy and the LYF

Immanuel Youth Group is preparing for the 2022 LCMS Gathering in Houston, TX. The theme for this Gathering is In All Things based on Colossians 1:15-20. Every month until the Gathering, I hope to dive into a bit of what we are learning as we prepare and what we will learn while we are at the Gathering.

The reason these kids are going on the Gathering trip is the same reason you send your kids to Vacation Bible School or ALIS. It is another way to be fed by the Spirit and grow our faith and knowledge in the God. These events are not a grand scheme to fix every problem and bring never-ending joy. They are avenues to allow young people the opportunity to meet and know the Savior that does fix every problem and bring everlasting joy.

Parents, it is your role to teach your children who God is, what He has done for us, and how much He loves us! Thankfully, the church offers you help with that, but it doesn't want to be your replacement... You should have faith conversations in your house. You should read the

Bible with your children and pray with them! You should be an example of a follower of Christ in your everyday life. A parent is one of the most influential people in a person's life.

Saying all this doesn't mean I think you should be perfect. Only Jesus is perfect! But it does mean that you should be actively engaged in your faith! How do you do that? Exactly how you expect the church to do that at VBS or the LCMS Youth Gathering! By reading the Bible, praying to God, and worshiping inside and outside the church. In All Things is the theme for the Gathering this year. And that is precisely how we want you to share your faith with your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Letting the Words of the Bible speak to you so that they are involved in all things in your life; every kickball game, cookout, and grocery store run. If this seems daunting, pray to God for guidance, and then you've already taken the first step.

*Through Christ In All Things,
Andy Dahnke, Director of Youth & Family*

Baby Bottles for Family Life Center are available and need to be turned back in by Fathers' Day with your contribution. Make checks payable to Family Life Center.

Young Women Bible Class will meet on Wednesday, June 1st, 15th, & 29th at 7PM. It will be led by Andy in the Parish Hall. Next Wednesday, June 1st we will be studying, *It's All Under Control*.

Immanuel's VBS starts on Tuesday, May 31st! This year's theme is Tree of Life: God's Promise of Salvation. We will talk about different times where God shows His promises to us! And learn how He keeps those promises! Children 3 years old to entering 6th grade are welcome to sign up! Sign-up forms are available in the Narthex and on our website. **All VBS volunteers will meet at 8 am on May 31st in the Sanctuary.**

Tour of France from November 1-12, 2022. Nice, Monte Carlo, Lyon, Loire Valley, Chateau Country, Mont St. Michel, Bayeux, Normandy, Rouen and Paris. \$3,679 per person from Chicago (includes airfare, motorcoach, quality lodging, most meals and \$520 taxes/surcharge). See Pastor Wright before the July 1st deadline.

Library Addition: Marlene Krenzke, a former Immanuel choir director, has written her memoirs of life as a pastor's wife. The book is entitled *"As for Me and My House: Faith Journey of the little farm girl."*

ALIS Summer Office Hours will be May 24th–August 7th, 10am-2pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. The building will be closed June 12th-July 4th. You may also contact the office via email or phone, which will be checked regularly.

Coaching Position Altamont Lutheran is looking for a 5/6 basketball coach for the 2022-2023 school year. If interested or for more information please contact Bethany Nelson at bnelson@alisrockets.com or 217-240-0556.

Open Arms Child Enrichment Center is looking for a full-time school age teacher and part-time cleaning help, approximately 1 hour a day. Please contact Lena at 618-483-6136.

St. Paul's Wheeler's 150th Anniversary Celebration is on June 4th & 5th. An open house is planned on June 4th from 12-4pm with memorabilia of the church's history. Worship service on June 5th at 10am with guest pastor, Reverend Gary Fortkamp.