



“Superstition”

by Rev. Thomas Chryst

Recently during Sunday Morning Bible Class, a discussion ensued about “superstition”. This was in the context of the disciples seeing Jesus walking on water and thinking he was a ghost (Mark 6:45-52). We talked about different examples of superstitions, from knocking on wood to bad luck when a black cat crosses your path. And we discussed a working definition of superstition.

With some more time to think about it, I’d put forward something like this: **Superstition** is “**looking for help (or fearing harm) from the supernatural world *apart from what Scripture reveals*”.** A related concept, **Enthusiasm**, would be “**looking for the work of the Spirit in places he hasn’t promised to be, that is, outside of the Word of God and the Sacraments**”.



Superstition really violates the first table of the Ten Commandments – placing our trust in other things besides God (1st), misusing God’s name (2nd) and despising preaching and his word (or, at least, looking elsewhere) – the 3rd Commandment.

Easy for us to look askance at those foolish, superstitious disciples. Of course, we don’t believe in ghosts. We laugh at people who take horoscopes seriously. We don’t really believe Friday the 13th is bad luck, do we?

But let’s not let ourselves off the hook so easily. Christians, even today, can fall prey to various forms of superstitious belief (and even practice!) Many Christian traditions permit, or even encourage seeking the Spirit’s work outside of the Means of Grace. Then there are the various forms of syncretism, or blending of beliefs with other religions, that have been known throughout the church’s history. But I would submit that even individual Christians, and sometimes yes, even Lutherans, can fall into a sort of “Christian superstition”.

For instance, take an example in which someone has to make a big decision in life. The Christian naturally prays about it, considers what God’s will might be, and wants to do what is God-pleasing, of course. While it is certainly a good practice for Christians to ask for guidance in all things, especially major life decisions, the trouble comes when we expect that God will give us “signs”. There is simply no promise that He will do so. And quite often, what we interpret as “signs” are simply of our own making - large or small.

Now, God does use his word to guide us in a more general way - and as we consider it prayerfully, along with life decisions, we come to conclusions which we might call something like “sanctified common sense”. But we shouldn’t confuse these determinations with an air-tight “message from God” on a particular matter. For instance, God’s word teaches us to serve our neighbor - but he gives us great freedom to decide how, when, and where to best serve our neighbor. He teaches that marriage is a good and honorable estate - but he gives us freedom in whom to marry - and once we are married, then the 6th commandment applies to us and our spouse.

Often, God blesses the decisions we make - even if we do so with less than perfect motivations (and, honestly, when are we entirely pure anyway?) I find, though, that even pastors tend to muddy these waters and look for some special, extraordinary, divine guidance (especially, for instance, when considering a call) that is simply not promised. If I accept this call, I know it will be

Inside this Issue:

Stewards Under the Cross	3
Church Council Corner	5
MLCA News	6
2020 College Graduates	8

*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

valid and God will bless me and my work there. But if I stay at my present call, it will be valid, and God will bless me and my work there. God doesn't "bonk you on the head".

The Lutheran Confessions teach us, in the Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article 8:

*In a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power [life], and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. **Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments.** It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. For God wished to appear even to Moses through the burning bush and spoken Word; and no prophet neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments [or spoken Word]. Neither was John the Baptist conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without the voice of Mary. And Peter says, 2 Pet. 1:21: The prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Without the outward Word, however, they were not holy, much less would the Holy Ghost have moved them to speak when they still were unholy [or profane]; for they were holy, says he, since the Holy Ghost spake through them. **In other words, look for God (and God's guidance) where he has promised to be, and not elsewhere.** (emphasis added – TC)*

You can see what sort of a playground for funny spiritual business, false doctrine, and all sorts of other mischief it can be when we impute things to God that he hasn't said or done (false doctrine, cover for our own sinful desires). Sometimes this ends up relatively harmless though, and God blesses us in spite of our "finding him in the tea leaves". But I'd rather we have the clarity of what is and isn't promised, and put our faith on the solid ground of **divine revelation**.

Five Reasons to start Reading with CPH

(submitted by) Vera Sweet

Why not pledge to read more this year with the [CPH Reads](#) program? In fact, I have five great reasons why you and your family should join this new reading adventure.

Keeping Up Outside of School—The summer reading slump is normal; school is out, and there are no more required reading assignments. Reading for pleasure is not every kid's forte, and getting a child to read outside of the classroom can be difficult for working moms and dads. The CPH Reads program will encourage your child to read during the summer, helping them to maintain their reading level and not fall behind.

Reading Lists for All Ages—Although many reading programs are meant for children, CPH Reads is designed for everyone, from tiny little ones to grandparents. There are [reading lists for every age group](#), allowing the whole family to compete together to see who can read and learn the most. Make CPH Reads a family event this year and create time to read together daily.

Reading Closer to Christ—Every book on the reading lists, from early childhood to adult books, is meant to bring you closer to Christ. Whether it's through simple daily devotions for children or in-depth books on apologetics for adults, each and every book you complete will bring you closer to your Savior. Perhaps each title will help your child understand Christ's love for them more clearly or will help you see parts of the Bible with a new perspective. No matter what, the most exciting thing about CPH Reads is that it's entirely focused on being Christ-centered.

Fill In the Family Bookshelf—One of the saddest things for an avid reader to see is an empty bookshelf in the house. Use the reading program to stock your bookshelves with new titles for your collection. In the future, your children will thank you for saving their beloved books so that they can pass down their favorite picture stories and the love of Christ to their children.

Amazing Prizes to Win—Although the best prize of all is reading God's Word and growing in Christ, the CPH Reads program has a handful of prizes that readers can win. For eligibility, individuals must log their books to earn points. The deadline to log points is Friday, August 7. Compete with readers across the country for the grand prize, or read for leisure and a chance to win a Bible, children's book, or the new [Illuminated Hymnal](#) coloring book. As always, read to focus on the ultimate prize of knowing your Savior and all the gifts that He provides.

Reading programs are a great way to keep children engaged in something educational throughout the summer. With options for adults to join CPH Reads, this can be a great way to bring your family together around a good book and the love of Christ. Block out some time for your family to sit down and read together today.



STEWARDS UNDER THE CROSS

The Board of Stewardship is doing something a little different this month in the way of our regular newsletter in view of everything that has been going on since early March. This has obviously been a difficult and challenging period for everyone and everything – individuals, families, communities, businesses, churches – the list goes on. The public health menace that was thrust upon us has altered so much of what we assumed, probably somewhat foolishly, would just go on without interruption until the end of the age.

God definitely has a way of getting our attention! By now we all know that pandemics are nothing new or even necessarily out of the ordinary. In 1527, the deadly bubonic plague struck Europe, killing millions of people, including tens of thousands living at the time in the German city of Wittenberg. One well-known citizen in Wittenberg at the time was Martin Luther. While many of the people that could get out of the city did so, Luther and his wife, Katharina, stayed behind and opened their home to take care of the sick and dying in their hometown. Luther did what the church must always do no matter what calamity befalls humankind, trust in God and care for its neighbors in love.

A calamity such as this pandemic is one way in which God calls us to step out of ourselves and to live in Him by faith. The staff, leaders, and members of Messiah Lutheran have responded throughout this crisis in such a way that the church has been able to press on in terms of our stewardship of the Gospel, thanks to the dedication and passion of our pastor and staff, the resourcefulness of our church leadership, and in very **LARGE** part to the ongoing, faithful commitment of our members to the financial support of our ministry of the Gospel. Our level of weekly monetary gifts and offerings, while admittedly lower on average than what it was prior to the lockdown (refer to the graph in the Church Council report), has been remarkably steady and fruitful. Thanks be to God for your ongoing support and stewardship of our ministry!

While the darkness that is this crisis fades away and life in our communities begins to return to as close to normal as it may get, Messiah Lutheran will continue to shine the light of the Gospel in a world yet still darkened by grievous sin. Please know that your continued financial stewardship and support is not just about paying bills or making a budget work - it is so much more. It is recognizing, in the gifts God has entrusted to each of us, the precious treasure provided by the cross of Christ and His empty tomb. At the core of stewardship are the Lord's Word, the Lord's House, and the Lord's Table. As difficult as this period has been, the reality is that none of these have been lost to us. What great comfort this should bring to all of us as we press forward in the months and years ahead!

In the weeks ahead we will be sharing other important information in connection with our life as stewards under the cross. In the meantime, keep up the good work and know that your faithful support of this church means so much to so many!

THANK YOU AND BLESSINGS TO ALL!

Board of Stewardship



Save up to \$35 on ESV Bibles and theological texts through July 17.

Treasurer's Report

by Herbert Herrmann—*Treasurer*

April offerings of 65.8K (16,400 per week average) remain strong despite a couple of mid week and Easter services being canceled. The combined fiscal year end close of church and school, June 30th. 2020, should be balanced if we receive \$15,500 per week for the next 5 weeks.

Our total cash and investments, exceed our non-mortgage liabilities by \$26K. Our investments are improving, after the reduction in value due to market conditions. Our CEF loan #3, old line of credit, has renewed at an increased rate of 3.5%. However, our minimum payments are less per month, due to our additional principle payments donations received in the last few years.

Any members are free to call or email if you have any questions or concerns.

Remember this is your church too.

May 20 Meeting Notes**Elder's Report—Steve Latham, board Chairman**

Member attendance letters have been put on hold due to COVID-19. Confirmation 3 has completed their course work. The current plan is to have the examination and banquet on July 31 and the Confirmation service will be August 2. The elders continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will make adjustments as necessary to services.

Evangelism Report—Bruce Dana, board Chairman

Swaddling Clothes conducted a successful drive thru diaper and wipes pickup on May 9th in the church parking lot. Swaddling Clothes is currently working on a plan to have families schedule individual times during the week and weekend in June with strict rules for entering MAC building.

Christian Education Report—Matthew Latham, board Chairman

A hybrid style physical Adult Sunday School started May 31. The sign up is capped at 50 and will be adjusted as needed. All ages are encouraged to attend in whatever form they choose. Physical Sunday School for the youth will return in some form.

MLCA Board Report—Clay Brandt, board Chairman

MLCA has concluded the 2019/2020 School Year. This year did not end as we expected due to the pandemic. We are continuing our normal work schedule planning for the upcoming school year. We fully expect and are making the necessary plans to have on campus education start back up in the fall as close to normal as possible.

Stewardship Report—Bill Stone, board Chairman

Stewardship board has been tracking weekly giving since the onset of COVID-19 shutdown. Weekly offerings are down, on average, but have remained remarkably resilient in the face of a period of lower-than-usual attendance due to the shutdown/lockdown. A growing percentage of offerings are online.

Board of Trustees Report—Paul Lara, board Chairman

New facility maintenance companies are being interviewed this month. Performex RTU, a disinfectant for COVID-19, will no longer be applied in the interior of Messiah. The hardwood floor installation in the sanctuary has been completed. Thank you to Dave Schultz for his hard work restoring the existing flooring and adding the hardwood flooring to the altar area.

Special Announcement

The Church Council continues to work on finalizing a FY20-21 budget to present to the Voters Assembly. We will hold a special Church Council budget working session on June 12th. The budget that results from that session will be finalized and then provided to the Voters for consideration at our July Voters Assembly meeting. More details will follow.

Bitter Sweet, Last day of School

by Alison Smith—Principal



As the 2019-2020 school year draws to a close, so many things were different about this year; but so many things stayed the same. As is custom at MLCA, the students were able to have their final day ice cream social in the parking lot. There was lots of fun, ice cream, reunions and good byes. Thank you to all the students and parents for your patience and understanding as we improvised the way forward during COVID-19. Thank you also to the teachers and staff for all the hard hours getting those lessons ready to present in a way you might never have thought you could in the past.



God's Blessings
on your Summer!

See you next year.



Christ Academy

by Pamela Buhler—Deaconess

Christ Academy: High School (13-18yr olds)

July 26-August 2, 2020

Christ Academy is happening this summer! It was shortened to one week and moved to July 26th.

Christ Academy High School consists of three important elements: confessional catechesis, liturgical worship and a fun life together. Christ Academy is comprised of two schools, Timothy School for men and Phoebe School for women.

During their stay, students will be taught by the faculty at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Learning also takes place informally in the invaluable discussions over the dinner table and in dorm groups every day. Students also experience the joy of living a life of worship as we gather together around God's Word four times a day. All of our worship is drawn from the Lutheran Service Book and is focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Our students will have the opportunity to witness to their faith while serving the greater community. Finally, students have fun at Christ Academy. The academy is packed full of great activities and our students both enjoy themselves and build lasting friendships along the way.

Whether you are interested in becoming a pastor or are just interested in theology, Christ Academy is the event for you.

Contact Deaconess Buhler at 972-342-7697 for more information.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CLASSICAL ACADEMY

NOW ENROLLING FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

- FIVE-DAY TRADITIONAL K THROUGH 8TH GRADE
- THREE AND TWO-DAY COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROGRAM K THROUGH 8TH GRADE
- PRESCHOOL 2'S THROUGH PRE-K

1308 WHITLEY ROAD
KELLER, TX 7628



817-431-5486

WWW.MLCATEXAS.ORG



Streaming information

Our first service will be streaming live via Facebook. Don't have Facebook? Don't worry! The stream will also be posted to our website. You can view the service there at any time before the next service.

Adult Sunday School will be a hybrid of streaming live via Facebook like the service and in person. There will be a sign up genius for in person attendance. Be sure to look for the link in the weekly A Look Ahead email.

If you are looking for another bible study, **Pastor's Class** meets **Thursdays from 6:00pm to 8:00pm**. Anyone is welcome to join! The meeting ID is **399-811-879**; password is **pastor**. This class is working through the Small Catechism.

The **Men's Bible Study** group has also resumed. The group will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall from 7am to 8am. This group meets on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month.



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org

Congratulations! 2020 College Graduates



Over the next two months, we will feature a few of our members who have graduated this year during this unprecedented time. Their last semester of school was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and they fought through to make certain to accomplish the final goal of earning their degree.

Congratulations to them! We will

keep these young people in our prayers for them to have a prosperous future with whatever path God has chosen for them.

Cassie Muñoz graduated Magna Cum Laude from UT Arlington. She earned her Bachelors Degree in Broadcast Journalism with a Minor in Advertising. She is excited and actively seeking a position as a journalist at a TV station. **Congratulations Cassie!**



Melinda Buhler graduated from Concordia University Nebraska this spring with her bachelor's degree, triple majoring in Criminal Justice, Psychology, and Behavioral Science. Melinda has accepted and begun the position as a Child and Family Services Specialist for the Department of Health and Human Services in Lincoln Nebraska. **Congratulations Melinda!**