

# Agapegram

July 2026



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A NEWSLETTER OF  
ETERNAL SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH  
& LITTLE LAMBS PRESCHOOL

[www.eternalshepherd.org](http://www.eternalshepherd.org)



## LCMS Convention & a WI Youth Visit

*God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will overflow in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8 EHV*

A few bits of news and current events. 1. In case you missed it, excerpts from an article in the Lutheran Witness on some of the key topics that will be addressed in the Synod convention in July. 2. The Synod President election occurring before the convention. 3. Some guests from WI that will be visiting ESLC in July.

### **1. Overture Overview: Big Topics at the LCMS Convention 2026**

\*Pastoral Formation/Routes to Ordination – How should our Synod form, train, certify and supervise its pastors? Should we reaffirm our... two seminaries as the exclusive institutions for training...? Should we consider additional formation options..., such as an online M.Div. program?

\*Dispute Resolution/Ecclesiastical Supervision – One effect of the internet has been enabling matters of local controversy to blow up nationally, often with little context, to an unprecedented degree. Do our processes of dispute resolution and ecclesiastical supervision of pastors need updates to handle this new reality?

\*Lutheran Identity – Our culture continues to shift rapidly away from Christianity. Amid these shifts, what does it look like for Lutheran congregations, schools and other institutions to remain faithful? ...To what standards should we hold our educational institutions?

\*Demographic Shifts – ... How should we adjust to a context of smaller congregations and schools, some of which face serious financial pressures and may be unable to call a full-time pastor or workers? How can we reach out to those outside of the church who are without the hope of Christ?

\*Structural Questions – Are there ways that we can better order our life together by making structural changes to our boards, committees, offices, electoral circuits, processes and the like?

## **2. Election of the President of Synod**

The election of the Synod's president occurs before the actual convention convenes so that we know who will be at the reigns for the next term when the delegates gather. Rev. Matthew Harrison was first elected president in 2010 as the 13<sup>th</sup> president of the LCMS. He is currently serving his fifth term after repeated reelections and has run again this year. This election was unique in that it required three rounds of voting to get a majority victory. A number of candidates have garnered some small percentages of votes, but the real contest was between incumbent president Harrison and St. Louis seminary professor challenger Rev. Joel Biermann. In the second round of voting there was only a 14 vote difference between the two! (And due to the other candidates drawing away a handful of votes, Harrison's 14 vote lead wasn't enough for him to achieve the majority). The third round of voting has now given Pastor Harrison the victory with a bare 50.1% of the vote. (Professor Biermann received 47.9%). May the Lord be with President Harrison as he soon begins his sixth term of leadership over the LCMS, granting him wisdom, faithfulness, and an openness to the hopes of the half of the Synod that was looking for a shift in focus or direction for the LCMS.

## **3. Youth Group Visit from Wisconsin**

From July 8<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 20 youth and adult leaders from the dual parish of St. John's Lutheran in Algoma and St. Peter's in Forestville will be visiting Oconee County and ESLC. They are coming to the area to enjoy the Upstate's lakes and mountains and serve in the community. They will be sleeping on the floor here at ESLC, cooking their own meals in the kitchen and, in return for our hospitality, doing some projects for the church like spreading mulch and other tasks. Our youth are invited to join them for some of their other events and they will join us for worship on Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>. Welcome them when you see them!

*Look, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!*  
Psalm 133:1 EHV

*~ Pastor David*



# Deaconess' Musings

## Monotonously Beautiful Living

*Wake up. Get the kids up. Feed the kids. Drink a cup (or three) of coffee. Do morning devotions. Get ready for the day. Drive to work. Drive home. Play with the kids. Eat dinner. Do a load of laundry. Spend time with the spouse. Watch an hour or two of TV. Go to sleep. \*Repeat indefinitely. Enact variations for vacations and Sunday mornings.*

Monotonous? Perhaps. God-pleasing? You bet.

*Vocation* is a term we Lutherans love to throw around, season our speech, and flavor our thinking. And for good reason! For our many and varied vocations are present every moment of every day. Your vocation(s) will differ yet remain similar from person to person. Some are mothers or fathers, some are married or single, some are accountants or teachers. Each of these stations/places in life find their center in Christ, for in all the different "titles" we hold we are called to serve others.

*Yes, this is all well and good, and we totally understand it. Great! Now go and find joy in your work. Even the normal stuff? Yes, even the normal stuff (mine previously mentioned) is cause for joyful service. Especially feeding/playing with the dog!*

Finding joy in doing dishes? Making sure your kids brush their teeth? Taking care of an aging parent or spouse? Adhering to deadlines at work? Taking time to spend with your spouse? These seek to serve others and ultimately aim to reflect the love of Christ to those whom we serve.

*Teach us to number our days in such a way, that we bring a heart of wisdom... Let your deeds be seen by your servants and your majesty by their children. May the kindness of the Lord our God rest upon us. Establish the work of our hands for us. Yes, establish the work of our hands. ~Psalm 90:12, 16-17*

God establishes the work and, out of love and gratitude for what Christ has fully accomplished for us, we set our minds on the work at hand. The littlest and most seemingly insignificant thing you will do today in service towards those around you is now a beautiful offering of thankfulness towards the One who forsook the grandeur of heaven, lived and worked a perfect human life, died in your place, rose to a resurrected life that assures the forgiveness of your sins and lives forever to one day bring you into eternal life.

So even when you fail to love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and when you fail to love your neighbor (spouse, child, parent, coworker, friend, enemy) as yourself (*Mark 12:30, 31*), Christ's forgiveness of sins is there to restore you. And to strengthen you to those exact same acts of love and service. Even if they seem a tad bit monotonous.

What a monotonously beautiful life of service we are called to live.

~ Deaconess Holly

## Comfort Dog News

At the end of May, we were blessed to be part of a multi-agency effort to minister to the people of Spartanburg who are still struggling with the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. We partnered with Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) Disaster Response, Southeastern District of the LCMS Disaster Response, Lutheran Servants of Christ, Samaritan's Feet, Bomba Sox, United Way, American Red Cross and volunteers with Spartanburg County Emergency Services. Shoes, socks, towels, quilts, backpacks, To-Go packs, First Aid kits and so much more were handed out and gratefully received by many of the residents! Seth and team were part of the LCC K9 Comfort station – we were joined by Faith Comfort Dog's team (Hickory, NC), and Zoara Comfort Dog's team (Hilton Head, SC). Our goal was to offer comfort, love and understanding as residents shared their stories with us. We witnessed tears, smiles, and gratitude for just “showing up”. We originally were giving LCC Comfort Dog stuffies to just the children but before we knew it, we had adults requesting one for themselves, which we happily gave them.

**Lilia Millner of the Spartanburg County Emergency Management Department** summed it up like this *“The real help — the real gift — that LCC and others gave today was not just the things that were handed out, but a reminder [to residents] that they still exist, a reminder that we're still here for them, a reminder that we're still tracking their cases. That they're not forgotten”.*

### NEWS ALERT:

Seth turns 9 on July 10! We will celebrate with cake and other delicious goodies on July 26 when we host the coffee/Bible study hour between services. Come join us in celebrating Seth and his team for sharing the love of Jesus in our community and beyond!

*To God be the Glory,*

*Kyra Carbone  
Top Dog for Team Seth  
864-932-8308*



## **PRAYER SHAWLS ARE AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO GIVE!**

The ESLC Prayer Shawl Ministry started in 2014 and we have given over 200 (full) prayer shawls to families, friends, and strangers that are need. These prayer shawls (or afghans) are made by women in the congregation. They usually take between 40 and 80 hours to make. They come in many different colors, patterns and the crafter prays for the person that will receive it while it is being made. It is a tangible reminder of God's support and love which is available to them and also tells them that others care and are concerned for them.

Anyone in the congregation can give a prayer shawl to a family or friend that they are concerned about. You do not need anyone's permission.

The prayer shawls are available in the Fellowship Hall by the closets. You will see a prayer shawl displayed. Beside it are three bins with prayer shawls that are ready to be given. Please select the one that you think the person would like. All that we

ask is that you give use your name, the date and who you are giving it to on the log sheet above the bin. If you personally give the prayer shawl, we ask that you pray with that person when you give it.

Last month, five prayer shawls were personally delivered and given with prayers to residents at Lila Doyle.

Sue Hauser, Stewardship



## **DID YOU KNOW ... ETERNAL SHEPHERD HAS A CHURCH BUS!**

It was recently brought to my attention that some or many of you may not realize that ESLC has a church bus. It was a gift from one of the members of this congregation in 2000, just as the Pandemic was underway. It is a 12-passenger minibus with 2 wheelchair capabilities. It can be used by any group within the church. It has been used by Comfort Dog Ministry, Youth, LWML, Disaster Relief, Lutheran Towers, Honduras Team, etc. It has also been used to transport members to doctors and dentist appointments and to bring members to Sunday Services, although usually it is done by private car.

It is available for any group within the congregation to use. We have a group of trained and certified drivers for the bus. Would you like to be on the list of drivers? There is no CDL license required. Please see Jean Dombi if you would like more information. All reservations need to go through Jean as well.

Sue Hauser, Stewardship



## Waiting On The Lord

*(Elder's Path)*

*Have you gone through discouragement, uncertainty and disappointment? I have.*

*Have you ever been anxious, restless, unsettled and impatient?*

**I have.**

Have you ever asked...

- *What does the Lord have in mind for me?*
- *How long does the Lord want me to....?*
- *Why doesn't He give me some sign, some clue?*

**I have.**

When the Lord gives us a task He doesn't need to give us additional direction until we have finished the task. It was a divine hand that placed you where you are. You may think that you are finished, but the Lord obviously does not.

Get busy! Busy completing the task you have been given.

All of us get tired of waiting and we become anxious, troubled, impatient and discontented. We get in a hurry, even before His task for us is finished.

In the mean time, there is such a thing as holy waiting that is good, essential and necessary. We need to be like the Apostle Paul who wrote, "I have LEARNED....to be content".

**Pray With Me ([cjbluhm@gmail.com](mailto:cjbluhm@gmail.com)):**

God, you have given me all I am and have. I return it to you to stand in your will. Give me the strength and persistence to finish the task you have given me. Let me be content as I wait for your direction. In Jesus name we pray.



WAIT FOR THE LORD;  
BE STRONG AND LET  
YOUR HEART TAKE  
COURAGE; YES, WAIT  
FOR THE LORD.

Psalm 27:14

## STEWARDSHIP NEWS

We encourage everyone to find a way that they can serve within this ESLC congregation or in the community within their time and ability constraints. Every month in the Agapegram, **JOBS, Joyous Opportunity for Believers**, identifies ways to serve. These volunteer positions are also posted in the Church Bulletin Board.

Do any of your likes, skills or passion coincide with the positions listed below? If so, please contact the person identified. One reason that Eternal Shepherd is such a great community of believers is because of all the service that we freely give.

The Church Council will also be recruiting people to serve on Church Council. We have four empty positions for 2027. They are Treasurer, Hospitality Chairman or Co-Chairmen, Board of Christian Outreach Chairman and Stewardship

### **Eternal Shepherd J.O.B. Board Joyous Opportunities for Believers**

#### **Sunday School Nursery Helpers Needed**

Volunteers are needed in the nursery during the Sunday school hour, either one or two Sundays a month, to watch over our youngest members. If you are interested, please contact Nicole Beattie at 864-710-7574.

#### **Altar Care Members**

Serve as a member of the Altar Care team. Timeframe is one month a year and training is provided. The main duties include preparing the altar before the service and changing paraments during the assigned month. Please contact Tracy Cochell at 404-433-7338 for more information...

#### **Handicap Ramp Building Assistance**

If you like to build things, please join the team that builds ramps throughout the community. Please contact Deek Decker at 864-356-2135 for more information

#### **Ushers and Readers**

If you are interested in serving during worship services, please contact the church office at 864-882-3209 or email [office@eternalshepherd.org](mailto:office@eternalshepherd.org).

## Eternal Shepherd **J.O.B.** Board **Joyous Opportunities for Believers**

### **Prison Ministry Volunteers**

If you are interested in visiting, distributing Bibles, leading devotions or baking cookies quarterly for the Oconee County Detention Center, please contact Delane Dukes at 864-247-4282 for more information.

### **Property Management Volunteers**

If you are concerned about the upkeep and maintenance of the church facility and property, please consider assisting with special projects or on as need basis. Please contact Paul Sherman at 864-602-3262 for more information.

### **Church Website Webmaster**

The webmaster manages and maintains the Eternal Shepherd's website. Key responsibilities include ensuring that the site is running smoothly, updating contents, maintaining security and troubleshooting technical issue. Please contact Pastor Hammer or Denise Stewart at 864-882-3209.

### **Toys for Gods Kids Volunteers**

Help is needed in cutting out the car bodies using a scroll saw or band saw. If this is something that you would like to do, please contact Pastor Ray Ramsburg at 904-583-1214 or Mike Hauser at 864-719-0474 for more information.-

### **Hospitality Members**

If you like to cook or entertain, please join the team that assists in the kitchen preparing food for various church functions; please contact Colleen Hesemann at 864-784-0421.



## MISSION BOARD NEWS

### ESLC MISSION IN HAITI

Many of you have asked about the political situation in Haiti, and how it impacts our church/school in Pas Bonbon, located in the Central Plateau of the country. The official news is stated as:

*Haiti's executive authority is currently led by Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, who became the country's de facto leader and head of state following the dissolution of the Transitional Presidential Council (CPT). The government is actively working to restore security, organize delayed federal elections, and address severe humanitarian crises.*

The school (Pas Bonbon) with all 320 students continues through the summer. This is important since the meal served at the school is the only meal that many of the children get for the entire day. We continue to pay the staff year round since jobs are very scarce and their pay is used to support their family, which typically will include their parents as well as their children. When I went to the home of

Pastor Samuel, founder of Pas Bonbon church and school, his mother, wife, and Aunt lived with him. His wife is the cook at the school and so very thankful for the kitchen we at ESLC had built for the school. Cooking outside over an open fire in the tropical summer heat was unbearable. The kitchen is a stand-alone building fully



enclosed.

Your support of this awesome mission is a tremendous blessing to the students, the staff, and the extended families. Thank You!

Lars, Mission Board Chair



## **Disaster Response Reconstruction Team Update**

The Disaster Response Reconstruction team traveled to Camp Linn Haven in North Carolina in the first quarter and completed several remaining projects in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Our Eternal Shepherd Disaster Response Team volunteers were able to assist a veteran's family after a tree was downed on their roof, and the local Habitat for Humanity Center in updates to their facility which supports Disaster Response Teams that deploy in the area. Additional projects are being assessed in Spartanburg, SC and Linn Haven, NC for future deployments in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.





## **Ministry of the Month: Operation Christmas Child**

Operation Christmas Child (OCC) is a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, which is part of The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Its focus is on providing gift filled shoeboxes to children around the world in order to introduce them to "The Greatest Gift" which is Jesus Christ. This year will mark our 18<sup>th</sup> year as a participant in the ministry. July is the month that we focus on raising donations to purchase the items that will go into our shoeboxes each year. This year Eternal Shepherd will pack

420 shoeboxes. Shipping alone for that many boxes will be \$4,200.00! Donations are accepted year-round, and can be made online through the church's website (Just look for the Flying Shoebox Tile!) or through your regular offering. **Please make checks payable to "ESLC" and write 'Operation Christmas Child' on the memo line.**

### **The following events have already been scheduled for 2026:**

**We'll be hosting our fourth annual Project Leader Workshop in the Fellowship Hall on Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:30, and dinner will be provided.** This community outreach event is where the Foothills SC OCC Team invites other churches in our area to Eternal Shepherd to teach them how to grow the shoebox ministry at their church, shares ideas on how to involve their church members in the ministry and also gives them ideas for packing their own shoeboxes. This year's event will focus on information about hosting a shoebox packing party and there will be speakers from churches that pack thousands of boxes each year.

**Our 11<sup>th</sup> annual churchwide Shoebox packing party will be held on Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> from 2-4pm** in the fellowship hall. Please join us for this wonderful fellowship event and experience the joy that comes from sharing God's love with a child.

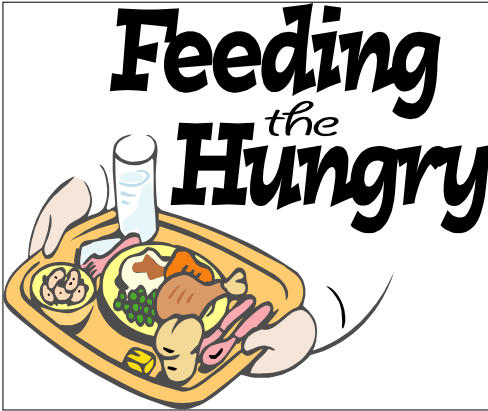
**National Collection Week will take place from Monday, November 16 – Monday, November 23.** We will once again collect filled shoeboxes as a community drop-off center for 2 hours each day during the eight days that are National Collection Week. We will need your help with this vital aspect of the ministry, so if you think you might want to join us, please add your name onto the volunteer sign-up sheet on the table in the Narthex. Our hours will be the same as last year, and a schedule will be with the sign-up. Feel free to let me know which hours will work best for you. More information will be sent to everyone who signs up in September.

If you'd like to learn more about the ministry, be sure to check out the displays in the Narthex and the Fellowship Hall, and feel free to come to our next OCC Committee meeting which is scheduled for August 23rd **during** late service, in Room 302. Experience the JOY that comes from blessing the lives of children all around the world!

As always, empty shoeboxes are available throughout the year for anyone wanting to pack a box. Please feel free to take an empty box, fill it, and bring it back to church. You'll find a helpful flyer and a label, inside the box.

Please contact me with any questions or for more information. Thank you so much for your continued support!

Terri Baumann, Project Leader



## Feed The Hungry Dates in 2026

Saturday, January 17

Saturday, April 11

**Saturday, July 11**

**Saturday, October 10**

Please add these dates to your calendar and remember that we will also need cookie bakers for those dates as well.

Our next Feeding the Hungry Ministry Event is **Saturday, 7/11/26**. To prepare for this event, we need approximately 8 volunteers to help assemble the sandwiches and pack the lunches.

### PLEASE NOTE THE SCHEDULE:

We will meet at church in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30am on Saturday, 7/11/26. It will take approximately one hour to complete this task. Then later on that same morning, Saturday, 7/11/26, we will need approximately 8 volunteers to assist with the delivery, set-up, and handout of the lunches to the Our Daily Bread home. We need to be there by 11am. If you would like to volunteer for either of these times, please call Mark Kunkel at (248) 766-8002 and let me know? Thank you for your support!

### FOOD BANK NEWS:

Please help us in collecting preferred needed canned, or boxed grocery items each month to help restock the Golden Corner Food Pantry's shelves. **July's preferred product is "Mac & Cheese" (Please place your items in the containers marked Food Bank down by the Fellowship Hall).**

*~Thank you for your generosity and support.*



## FOOTHILLS CARE CENTER BABY BOTTLE DRIVE



It is time for our annual Baby Bottle Drive to benefit the Foothills Care Center (FCC)! Eternal Shepherd has been supporting FCC for over 14 years with the baby bottle drive and other donations. We will provide an envelope for the donations. **The Baby Bottle Drive will run through Sunday July 26<sup>th</sup>.**

Your generosity throughout the years has been greatly appreciated by FCC and the clients that frequent the center for hope, assistance, guidance, and love. Most importantly, precious babies' lives are saved! Please prayerfully consider supporting the Baby Bottle Drive this year.

Special envelopes will be placed in your church mailbox. Please make checks out to Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church, write "Baby Bottle Drive" on the memo line. If you prefer to donate online, use your existing Eternal Shepherd online account. Then select the Foothills Care Center tile.

We will donate the money we collect to the Foothills Care Center in August. For questions or more information call Tracy Cochell at 404-433-7338.

**ON-LINE GIVING** Remember you can give on-line. Just go to our church website at [www.eternalshepherd.org](http://www.eternalshepherd.org) and click on the On-line Giving bar in the top right corner on the homepage. ~Thank you for your faithful support.



## July Birthdays

1 - Betty Bruggeman  
Mary Coffman  
3 - Rick Schmidt  
Sam Woike  
4 - Sandra Bury  
Parks Canipe  
6 - Jane Fireovid  
7 - Julie Gambrell  
8 - Stephen Beitz  
Emilie Hammer  
Steve Hundsorfer  
9 - Charlie Hill  
Jenna Zirbel  
10 - John Munro  
David Phillips  
14 - Paul Fredrickson  
Marla Moseley  
Beth Phillips  
Ethan Severance  
Reed Severance  
Janet Walker

15 - Mike Kunce  
16 - Sandy Alford  
Tracy Cochell  
18 - Amy Dutka  
Griffin Eslinger  
19 - Kristin Gemkow  
20 - Dylan Chamberlain  
Todd Getchell  
Don Seigler  
Sandy Severance  
21 - Marilyn Bode  
Sue McCart  
22 - Curtis Dombi  
23 - Alivia Beck  
24 - Mike Dutka  
25 - Karen Findlay  
28 - Charlene Seiff  
29 - Hunter Henderson  
Brian Keefer  
Vivienne Scott

## July Anniversaries

1 - Dennis & Jean Hippchen  
5 - Steve & Chris  
Christensen  
6 - Rudy & Kyra Carbone  
Steve & Tina Hundsorfer  
8 - Phillip & Carol Welte  
9 - Bob & Kristin Morriss  
15 - Ken & Sue Schneider  
18 - Dennis & Meryl Love  
19 - Mike & Amy Dutka  
Steven Alexander &  
Michele Schaefer  
22 - Stephen & Renee Beitz  
26 - Fred & Elaine Massa  
29 - Jeff & Diane Williams



## **SERVICE TIMES**

8:30 a.m. Worship Service  
(Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays)

9:45 a.m. Sunday School  
& Adult Bible Study

11:00 a.m. Worship Service  
(Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)



## **THOSE WHO SERVE**

Pastor: David Hammer

Deaconess: Holly Cox

Office Manager: Denise Stewart

Preschool Director: Gina Cote

Choir Director: Rick Schmidt

Choir Accompanist: David Phillips

Organist: David Phillips

## **MISSIONARIES**

David & Dr. Arianna Shirk, Kenya

Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church  
220 Carson Rd.  
Seneca, SC 29678