

The Grace Lutheran

Newsletter of Grace LCMS – Greenwood, Arkansas

September 2025

From Pastor's Pen...



“For All the Saints...”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I’m willing to bet that you read the title above and immediately knew the hymn I’m referencing. You probably even started humming it or singing it. *“For all the saints, who from their labors rest, Who Thee by faith before the world confessed, Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!”* While we *may* hear this song on All Saints Sunday, we *always* hear this song at a funeral... at least all the funerals I’ve done here over the past seventeen years, most recently with the funeral of Mary Clark.

Every time I hear this hymn I can’t help but think of the wise words of a faithful Christian who lived and died over 1,600 years ago in the region of Hippo, North Africa (modern-day Algeria), a guy by the name of St. Augustine. *“Our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O Lord.”* So simple, yet so profound (and true). St. Augustine’s observation of restless hearts only finding rest in Christ makes perfect sense when we consider it through the lens of death and funerals. All the suffering, sorrow, and pain experienced in life... has now been laid to rest. The one who has fallen asleep in Christ now truly, in every sense of the term, “rests in peace,” for they now rest in Christ.

HOWEVER... is St. Augustine’s observation true *only* for those who’ve passed away in the faith?

Does the hymn we so typically sing at funerals *only* refer to the dearly/faithfully departed? Can’t it *also* refer to us in the “here and now”? Maybe that’s not the right question. Of course it *can* refer to us! ***But does it?*** St. Augustine *never* put a stipulation on this, as if our hearts can *only* rest peacefully in Christ once we die. St. Augustine was speaking to the present reality of living the Christian faith in the “here and now.” *“Our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O Lord.”* Could it rightly be said of you that you “rest from your labors” in Christ? Could it be rightly said of you that our once-restless heart is now at rest in Jesus, or... would you be stretching the truth (if not outright lying) if you were to say such a thing about yourself?

I’ve been really “laboring” with these last couple of questions quite a bit since Mary Clark’s funeral. It’s not at all uncommon for people to come out of the funeral service and tell me that they want their funeral service to be ***“just like that”!*** I’ve heard it many times over the years. I understand the sentiment too. Mary did rest in Christ, even in life, even (and especially) in the end-stages of life. She wasn’t anxious over the “mammonly” things of this world. She wasn’t concerned with being rich in the things of this world, but rich in the things of God, which is why she rested so peacefully in Christ ***even as she suffered here in time.*** The same was true for Al, Lenora, Lou, and many others I didn’t name here for the sake of time/space. ***But could the same [truly] be said for you?*** Could you have the same funeral service if your life of faith wasn’t nearly the same?

What will your obituary say? Will it be true, or will it be more like a “Christmas letter,” you know... ***a bit embellished?*** Where will the focus of your obituary be? Will you be known/remembered for your love of Christ, or will your obituary boast of other things? Is that how you want to be remembered? If the obituary boasted of a love for Christ, would people even know that it was referring *to you*? What Scripture passages will be read at your funeral service? What hymns will be sung? Will these passages and hymns speak to the faith that you actively lived out in daily life, or will

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Pastor's Pen, continued...

there be a bit of a “disconnect?” What will your funeral sermon sound like? Could I (or whoever the pastor may be at that time) **honestly** stand before God and the congregation, and praise the repentant faith of a baptized child of God who held fast to Jesus and showed forth Jesus and rested in the peace of Jesus, no matter the time, place, or circumstance (like I could with Mary, Al, Lenora, Lou, and others)? Would what you want it to say (and maybe even expect it to say) **actually be true?** Would the fruits you bear in the “here and now” confirm or contradict this desire/expectation? Do you have a bit to work/labor on when it comes to “walking the walk” of repentant faith? I know I do.

And the “blessedly ironic” thing out of all this is the fact that the more we tend to “labor” in walking the walk of baptismal faith; the more we tend to “labor” in holding fast to Christ and putting Him first in all our priorities, cares, and concerns, the more we find the rest and peace that surpasses all human understanding; the rest and peace that is known and understood only in Jesus Christ. The more we “labor” and carve out time for Him; i.e., making time to read Scripture, to attend worship, to attend Bible study, to pray; **the more we “labor” in these good and Godly ways, the more rest and peace we find in Christ.** “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28).

The more we “labor” in the things/ways of Christ Jesus, the less the cares, concerns, and ways of the world will affect us. Said St. Paul, “*For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's*” (Rom 14:8). That’s resting in the peace of Christ... even in the midst of trials and tribulations the likes of which none of us has ever come close to knowing. Luther put it great when he penned these words in the famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress” – “*Take they our life, Goods, fame, child and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth.*”

This is a man who certainly knew sorrow, trial, and tribulation (far more than you’ve ever known)! And yet... here is a man who, in the midst of all this tremendous sorrow, trial, and tribulation,

rested peacefully in Christ. “*I have so much to do today, that I must rise three hours earlier for devotion and prayer.*” The more Luther labored in the Word/will of God, **the more the peace of Jesus abounded in his life; the more he rested in Jesus.** ***Luther knew this Christ-centered peace and rest in the midst of his daily life... and it showed.** The fruits he bore in his daily life confessed his living and active faith. The same can be said for Mary, Al, Lenora, Lou and all the faithful, whether they’ve fallen asleep in Christ yet or not. **Could the same be said of you?** Are you “actively at rest” in Jesus? Would the fruits you bear confirm this or contradict this?

“*I want my funeral service to be just like that!*” Excellent! Now show forth the same good fruits of faith that would make it good, right, salutary... and true.

Pastor Zirbel

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TO THE GLORY OF GOD

*I honor of the
life and death
Of*

Mary Alice Clark

June 18, 1929 – August 6, 2025

LIFE in CHRIST

Pastor Zirbel's **Wednesday Bible Study** continues in the book of Lamentations. All are encouraged to attend the study that begins at 10:00 am.



As noted in the August Newsletter, our new LWML year will kick off on Tuesday, September 2. The first meeting of the year will be at the home of Irma Mullen at Spur Lake at 12:30 PM. Bring your favorite salad to share. Following lunch, we will be brainstorming and planning ideas for the new year. If anyone would like to carpool, please meet at Grace parking lot at 12:00 noon. For more information: Linda Hansson (479) 806-8363. Input from all ladies would be so welcome – Please join us!

Fellowship Opportunity - Mark your calendar and pull out your favorite recipe! Potluck Sunday is 9/28 after the 10:15 worship service.

NEW: Grace Classified Ads

Available for FREE – Gas Dryer, good condition. Please contact Luke Giessen 479.252.1730.

September Birthdays

- 2 Jo Martin
- 5 Pat Conaway
- 9 Mike Bass
- 11 Helen Hirsch
- 17 Glen Fleer
- 28 Tristan Gieschen



September Anniversaries

- 8 Joe & Jeanne Henderson
- 19 Mike & Judy Bass
- 25 Richard & Tiffany Willadsen
- 29 Michael & Delsey Guse

Remembering in Prayer:

Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! Psalm 141:2

For the sick—Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, look with favor upon those who suffer illness and infirmity. Assure them of Your mercy, deliver them from the temptations of the evil one, and give them patience and comfort in their illness. If it please You, restore them to health, or give them grace to accept this tribulation with courage and hope.

For those who grieve—Heavenly Father, into whose keeping we entrust our loved ones, help us to look to You in our time of sorrow, remembering the cloud of faithful witnesses with which we are surrounded, Grant that we may one day share in the joys of those who now rest in Your presence.

For the joy of the resurrection among us; for the fruit of faith nourished by the Word and the Sacraments.

For faith to live in the promises of Holy Baptism; for one's calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.

For those outside the Church that all would repent and live. Merciful God, take away their iniquity, and turn them from their false gods to You, the living true God. Gather them into Your holy Church to the Glory of Your name, through Jesus Christ.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God!





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Worship & Bible Study Opportunities:

Sunday Worship 8:00 & 10:15 AM

Sunday Adult Bible Study & Sunday School 9:00 AM

Wednesday Adult Bible Study 10:00 AM